



Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE)

Second and Third Combined Periodic Report (2014-2019)

**On the Implementation of
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)**

December 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
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| ACERWC | African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children |
| ACRWC | African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children |
| AIDS | Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome |
| ANC | Antenatal Care |
| ART | Antiretroviral Therapy |
| BCG | Bacillus Calmette Guerin |
| CBGH | Community Based Group Home |
| CBRD | Community Based Rehabilitation and Development |
| CCWL | Children in Conflict With the Law |
| CEE | Complementary Elementary Education |
| CHD | Congenital Heart Diseases |
| COVID-19 | Corona Virus Disease - 19 |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CSS | Child Survival Strategy |
| CWD | Children with Disability |
| ECD | Early Child Development |
| EEBC | Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission |
| EPI | Expanded Programme on Immunization |
| ELFS | Eritrean Labour Force Survey |
| EPLF | Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front |
| Eri-TV | Eritrea Television |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Ratio |
| GoSE | Government of the State of Eritrea |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IDDD | Intellectual Developmental Disability |
| IEC | Information Education Communication |
| IECD | Integrated Early Childhood Development |
| IE | Inclusive Education |
| IGA | Income Generating Activities |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMNCI | Integrated Management of Neonatal and Child Illness |
| IYCF | Infant and Young Child Feeding |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| MIS | Management Information System |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |

| | |
|--------|---|
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoI | Ministry of Information |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice |
| MoLG | Ministry of Local Government |
| MoLSW | Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare |
| MoLWE | Ministry of Land, Water & Environment |
| NCC | National Coordinating Committee |
| NCD | Non-Communicable Diseases |
| NCEW | National Confederation of Eritrean Workers |
| NCH | National Child Health |
| NER | Net Enrolment Ratio |
| NFPS | National Forces of Police and Security |
| NSO | National Statistics Office |
| NSP | National Strategic Plan |
| NUEW | National Union of Eritrean Women |
| NUEYS | National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students |
| OAG | Office of the Attorney General |
| OPD | Out Patient Department |
| OPWDS | Organization for PWDs |
| ORA | Office of Refugee Affairs |
| OVC | Orphans and Vulnerable Children |
| PMTCT | Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission |
| PFDJ | Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice |
| RHD | Rheumatic Heart Diseases |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMCP | Saving and Micro-credit Programme |
| TB | Tuberculosis |
| TCCE | Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea |
| TPCE | Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea |
| UAM | Underage Marriage |
| UHC | United Health Coverage |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UPR | Universal Periodic Review |
| VCT | Voluntary Counselling and Testing |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

INTRODUCTION

1. Eritrea signed and ratified the ACRWC in the year 2000. Eritrea's initial report on the status of implementation of ACRWC covering the period from 2000-2013 was discussed with the ACERWC at its twenty eighth session held in Banjul, The Gambia, from 21st October to 1st November 2016.
2. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) avails this occasion to thank the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) for considering the initial report of Eritrea on the status of implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and sending its concluding recommendations thereupon. The GoSE solemnly took notice of the concluding recommendations released in January 2017 and welcomed many constructive recommendations.
3. The GoSE is pleased to present to the Committee this Second and third combined Periodic Report dealing with the implementation status of the ACRWC during 2014-2019.
4. This 2nd and 3rd combined Periodic Report has been prepared pursuant to Article 43(1) (B) of the ACRWC guidelines regarding the form and contents of periodic reports to be submitted by states parties.
5. In principle and in practice, the GoSE dearly treasures the rights, welfare and best interests of the child as its cornerstone in the building of a developed nation in which all Eritrean people enjoy peace, prosperity and social justice. In spite of the tremendous socio-economic challenges inherited from the protracted armed struggle for independence, the border war and external hostilities, it can be claimed with high degree of certainty that Eritrea is among the few countries on our continent where people live in peace & human dignity.
6. In spite of the COVID- 19 pandemic which continues to plague the planet, inflicting heavy social and economic tolls, the GoSE has diligently prepared this periodic report through a participatory process while observing social distancing and other preventive norms. The fact that there have been only six deaths due to the pandemic from the disease in Eritrea is clear evidence of the seriousness with which GoSE looks at the principles, policies and practices for the protection and advancement of the Eritrean people, of which children constitute the majority.
7. The present report updates Eritrea's initial report and highlights significant changes in policies and programmes that occurred between 2014 and 2019. It also responds to the concluding

recommendations of the Committee regarding Eritrea's initial report. Where relevant, this report contains cross-references to relevant parts of Eritrea's initial report.

8. The concluding recommendations of the Committee was discussed among the appropriate public and civil society stakeholders with the view of taking concerted stalk of the diverse issues raised. The preparation process of this consolidated report was participatory, involving all public and private sector stakeholders, namely the Ministries of Education (MOE), Health (MOH), Justice (MOJ), Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Local Government (MOLG), Finance (MOF), Agriculture (MOA), Land, Water & Environment (MOLWE), National Police & Security Office (NFPS), National Statistics & Evaluation (NSEO) as well as National Associations such as the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW), the four national Associations for People with Disabilities (PWDs}, "Bidho" (challenge) Association of People living with HIV/AIDS.
9. The draft report was shared among these partners and their feedback considered and incorporated as appropriate. Community-based committees for ensuring women & child rights and combating harmful traditional practices also actively took part in the discussions of the draft report. The National Coordinating Body on the ACRWC and CRC made input to the final report. The MOLSW led the process as the focal institution designated for the coordination of the implementation of the ACRWC and the CRC.
10. The GoSE has not spared any effort and resource within its power in the promotion of the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and reaffirms its devotion to the furtherance and guarantee of the rights and welfare stipulated in ACRWC and other international and regional conventions it is a party.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE PARTY

Emerging Peace and its dividends

11. The new dynamics of peace and friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia which came into effect through the Joint Declaration on Peace and Friendship of 9 July 2018, and the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation signed on 16 September 2018, has revitalized and broadened areas of cooperation at bilateral and regional levels. At present, priority is given to consolidate peace, create complementarity and lay down the requisite infrastructural and administrative/legal frameworks to enhance cooperation.

12. The peace and friendship agreement is of immense significance, as reflected in the five pillars of the agreement, which include peace and friendship and cooperation in the political, economic, social and security sectors as well as joint endeavours to ensure “regional peace, development and cooperation”, and the unequivocal implementation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission (EEBC) decision.
13. Despite the manifest political goodwill, and positive progress so far made in a short span of time, building a durable peace is not a simple undertaking that will materialize overnight with the signing of agreements. There are forces with vested interests – local and otherwise – bent on derailing or impeding the process in motion. Consequently, progress in the implementation of some of the pillars – notably the EEBC decision – yet remains to be realized. The lifting of the unjust UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea for almost a decade is also a welcome new development.
14. With the advent of peace and regional dynamics, Eritrea has declared a new development paradigm. This aims at redoubling national efforts to create macro-economic growth and stability, strengthen the institutional and organizational basis and consolidate the political process of nation building. Despite the challenges of the global COVID 19 pandemic, the 2019-2020 transitional programme has been implemented, laying the basis for the implementation of the new development paradigm in a post COVID 19 development prospect aimed at the consolidation of social justice predicated on the fundamental principle of equal right and opportunity sanctioned by Eritrea’s national law.

Eritrea’s resilience and the promising progress under a challenging situation

15. The sizeable investments in social services and infrastructure of the government have enabled the country to rise from the ashes and score remarkable progress in the social sector strategy including in health, education and improving the standard of living. The government’s resolve and achievements is reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in the health, education and child protection spheres where substantial changes have been made.
16. Transforming the lives of people residing in rural areas, as well as remote and scattered pastoral and semi-pastoral communities (in Anseba, Gash Barka, Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea regions) is a significant achievement. The GoSE has heavily invested in various social security programmes, including operating affordable fair price shops for basic food commodities and supplies, providing relief food assistance to the most vulnerable households, granting cash transfers to martyr’s families, mobilizing communities to assist vulnerable households in farm activities,. As part of the social sector strategy and

programmes free health and educational services to citizens across all levels of education, micro-credit schemes, and other measures that meet the special needs of particular groups have expanded.

17. Poverty reduction in general and malnutrition of under-five year children in particular have remained top Government priorities. The food security strategy is anchored mainly on the improvement of agricultural productivity through the structural transformation of the sector, including resorting to modern irrigation, where modest progress has been achieved. Soil and water conservation is a basic undertaking that drives environmental security and the fulfilment of food security. The Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP) has contributed in the transformation of household food self-sufficiency and nutrition, and income generation. Citizens, including female-headed households and small-scale farmers, have benefited from this intensive and integrated agricultural intervention with small land holdings, where rain-water harvested in the form of check dams or micro-dams is used judiciously. Such initiatives have made direct bearing on the well-being of children. The scheme is now being transformed into a dynamic strategy of Small and Medium Commercial Farmers Strategy (SMCFS) since May 2019
18. The majority of the Eritrean population is agrarian. According to the land proclamation of the Government of the State of Eritrea, access to agricultural land is a right given to all village households in the country. The usufructuary land tenure system is egalitarian and gives equal status to women who may or may not have children. Such land right contributes towards their economic emancipation and contribution.
19. Access to safe and adequate drinking water and sanitation constitutes an entitlement to every individual without discrimination. The programme of Ministry of Land Water and Environment (MoLWE) which is guided by the water security policy and strategy of the Government fits into the social sector policy and strategy reflects the Rights Approach and major international commitments including the CRC and ACRWC as well as the SDG 2030 water security goals. This has contributed greatly to the health security of the population and the healthy upbringing of children. .
20. The Eritrean Government's water policy serves as the overall legal and institutional development framework for the water sector, to ascertain the present and the future benefits. Integrated water resource management, is promoted as a means of ensuring sustainable management and utilization of water resources by creating an enabling environment for the provision of a minimum core level of equitable access to water. The gender perspective is given critical consideration. All major water infrastructure and supply projects developed, have so far ensured 80% access to safe water in rural and 95% of the urban population by the year 2019 (Refer Table 1 below for details).

Table 1: Access to safe drinking water supply in urban and rural areas in Eritrea

| 2012 | | 2019 | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| 67.5% | 95% | 80.2% | >95% |

Source: WRD, RWSC & FSS, 2012 Reports and Report, 2019

21. Construction of mega dams, provision of potable water pumps or taps, rural toilet facility in most of the villages are taking place with priority to the disadvantaged population, benefiting primarily children, girls and women. Despite these significant achievements, there still remains a 15% deficit in the provision of full access to safe water.
22. Despite the immense challenges it faces, Eritrea continues to make significant strides in all areas that are pertinent to the implementation of the ACRWC and CRC. Life expectancy at birth in Eritrea rose from 48 years in 1990 to 67 years in 2018. The number of schools rose from 132 in 1991 to 1987 in 2017 of which 80% were in rural areas; the availability of a health care facility within a radius of 10 km increased from 46% in 1991 to 80% in 2019; access to electric power supply stands at 43.5%, and road transport service covers 85% of villages. These are a few indicators of the changing trends of living standards in Eritrea.

II. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARTER

A. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

23. The General Measures of Implementation, comprising of the legal instruments and policy directives prepared to guide the implementation of the ACRWC are as much as possible, dealt with in the following paragraphs. The Committee’s previous recommendations on the initial report are treated in the appropriate sections.

Legislation

24. In direct reference to children, The National Charter of Eritrea (1994) states that the objective is to ensure the rights of children as well as to safeguard them through proper upbringing and care, with more focus on the vulnerable children including orphans.
25. National Laws – the Labour Proclamation (LP) No.118/2001, the Civil Code of Eritrea (CCE), Penal Code of Eritrea (PCE), and the Penal and Civil Procedure Codes of Eritrea (CPCE) were published in 2015 and campaigns to popularize them have been on-going and efforts are underway for their enforcement. They provide the legal basis for the protection of the rights of children. The LP No. 118/2001 and the new legal codes have specific child-friendly provisions.

‘The Minimum age of Work’ and ‘The Best Interest of the Child’, has been clearly spelt out as a guiding principle in the Civil Code. The Codes also expressly provide for the right of the child to express his/her views and stipulates how and in what matters the child should be heard. In addition, all children are entitled to have names and citizenship.

26. In conformity with the requirements of the ACRWC and other instruments to which Eritrea is a party, the principle of non-discrimination is firmly incorporated in the Codes. They recognize that children have the right to know and be cared for by their parents or guardians and have access to education, medical care and protection from all forms of exploitation and abuse. There are provisions which safeguard the rights, integrity and care of children and child offenders and which are, in many respects, compliant with the principles and requirements of the ACRWC and the CRC. There are also provisions dealing with the apprehension, prosecution and conviction of persons in conflict with the law. The LP No.118/2001 specified the minimum age of work at 14 years of age.
27. The sacrosanct rights and welfare of the child are also enshrined in almost all social, economic, judicial and policy documents of the public institutions, national civil society organizations. The family as a social institution plays responsible role in the promotion of children’s rights and welfare.
28. The functional tasks and responsibilities for policy, monitoring, training and human resources development rests primarily on line ministries. Moreover, regional administrations shoulder governance responsibilities and organization of implementation. The elected regional assembly (established by Proclamation 86/1996) provide leverage for citizens and communities alike the oversight mechanisms on public affairs. Local governance structures (in 2862 villages, 751 localities) serve as the instruments of judicious governance.
29. During the reporting period 2014-2019 the GoSE ratified the following international instruments:
 - a. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2014;
 - b. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2014;
 - c. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2014.

- d. The ILO “Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention”, 1999, (No. 182), in June 2019, thereby completing the ratification of all ILO Core Conventions.

Policy & Strategy

30. The MoLSW in collaboration with other government institutions, regional administrations and civil society organizations developed a Comprehensive National Policy on Children in 2016. Moreover, a Comprehensive National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, including children with disabilities, have been developed and discussed in a consensus building workshop convened in 2016.
31. The Community Based Approach, one of the strategies of the MoLSW – guarantees the primary strategy for the care, protection and support of Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC). In general, children’s right and welfare is central in all sector development policies, strategies and programmes and in particular in Education, Health and gender matters.
32. The Government’s education policy ensures education rights of every Eritrean citizen. It provides free access at all levels from the primary level to the tertiary levels. Affirmative measures are taken to enhance the participation of girls through concrete measures including the establishment of boarding schools for those coming from remote places, building separate female sanitation facilities in schools, providing affordable/free sanitary towel supply, free school uniforms and books to economically disadvantaged girls, and awarding bicycles to best achievers. Children lacking educational opportunity due to distance, unavailability of opportunities and social/cultural constraints, are beneficiaries of ‘Areaiot’, a special program of Complementary Elementary Education (CEE), to avail and ensure education opportunities.
33. The National Health Policy of 2020 and the National Health Sector Strategic Development Plan (2017 – 2021) reviewed every five years, give due attention to Family and Community Health Care Services in all health facilities. In this regard, the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) and the Integrated Management of Neonatal and Child Illnesses (IMNCI) are key strategies for the delivery of integrated child health services through the improvement of health workers’ skills, improved infrastructure and better equipment. The interventions address critical health issues in health facilities and family care practices contributing to viable child survival, growth and development.
34. Five years **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** 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.

Coordination

35. The Committee's recommendation in paragraph 4, on the establishment of a separate ministerial institution responsible for the coordination of the rights of children has been noted. The MoLSW is mandated with functional responsibility and overall organization and coordination on the rights and welfare of children (refer to the initial report paras.17-22). There is an established, functioning inter-sector coordination mechanism. Few amendments were made to the TOR on the five tiers of coordination mechanism, to include the NUEW in the Inter-ministerial National Coordinating Body. The MoLSW chairs the coordinating body tasked to oversee the follow up of international and regional obligations and reporting under the ACRWC and CRC as indicated in the initial report.
36. The MoH, MoLSW, NUEW, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) formed additional high-level National Steering Committee (NSC) and National Technical Committee (NTC) to provide policy and technical guidance to ensure women & child rights, and combat harmful traditional practices. The committees reinforced the community-based child protection mechanism by establishing women and child rights committees in six regions, 67 sub-regions and 701 localities (kebabis).
37. A National Coordination Body (NCB) for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), led by the MoFA and involving 10 other ministries, agencies and national civil society organizations also functions to oversee the implementation of relevant recommendations. The NCB has recently developed a five year UPR plan (2020-2024) to implement the 3rd Cycle accepted UPR recommendations which incorporate a sector plan of the MoLSW addressing the 11 recommendations pertaining to child rights and well-being.

Institutional Framework for the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child

38. Please, refer to paragraph (32-33) above and the initial report (paragraph 17-22). Besides, the MoLSW has established promotional and protection mechanism including child labour inspection, safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaints receiving and reporting mechanism to address violence committed against children. It has assigned 400 social workers to closely monitor and establish strong social interaction with children all over the 67 sub- zonal administration.
39. Committees established for the purpose of ensuring women's and children's rights, as well as CRC & ACRWC coordinating committees at sub-zonal administrations embrace high school children as members so that the voices of the children are also heard.
40. During the period under review the MoLSW conducted extensive awareness raising campaigns about the ACRWC and closely monitored the situation of children in the communities. Complaint hearings of children were held in communities, parent teacher

associations' meetings organized by social workers of the MoLSW together with members of the women and children' rights committees established in the sub-zonal and village environs. Within their respective domains, the committees have the duty of following up and monitoring the implementation of activities concerning children. They advise parents and families on proper handling of children, especially vulnerable children.

Training for professionals working with and for children

41. There are several opportunities for training professionals working with and for children. One of them is the higher learning institution available in the College of Business and Social Sciences where young people graduate with first degrees in sociology, social works and psychology. Many of the graduates are recruited as social workers and labour inspectors by the MoLSW.
42. During 2016-2018, the MoLSW also enrolled 60 of its employees in the College of Business and Social Sciences to be trained in especially tailor-made 9 month courses in labour and social welfare and protection related subjects. 180 social workers, 60 persons annually, (out of which 40% females) graduated with certificates.
43. The MoLSW conducts in house training & TOT to update the 400 social workers delivering child protection and social protection services across the nation yearly. The in-service training focuses on articles of the ACRWC and four main principles of CRC, Eritrea's legal and policy provisions, social and child protection related topics.
44. To promote child-friendly spaces for CCWL, during the reporting period of 2014 – 2019 the MoLSW, in partnership with partners, organized capacity building training courses for about 240 officers working as judges, police officers, social workers, members of child rights committees and others involved in the process of child justice in six regional administrations.

Budgetary allocation and actual expenditure

45. The GoSE regularly allocates annual budget towards the implementation of diverse national programmes, including the promotion and protection of children's rights. The government budget is topped by the periodic Eritrea-UN-Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (SPCF) and other sources.
46. Despite the absence of a separate children's rights based budgetary approach, stipulated by the Committee's guideline (para. 15c), the budget needs for the implementation of programs planned to enhance the rights of the child have been met, within the ability of the State party's economic resources.

47. In summary, the budget allocated and utilized by key ministries for children-related programmes is presented in table 2 to show the partial magnitude of annual financial resources invested in child rights, welfare and development.

Table 2: Example of financial expenditures related to children’s rights in various sectors

| Year | Health services | Education | Welfare and protection | Information | Sports and leisure |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 2017 | 432,908,000 | 1,112,695,300 | 483,056,500 | 90,186,500 | 42,156,557 |
| 2018 | 576,500,000 | 1,310,400,000 | 479,300,000 | 129,700,00 | 60,134,558 |
| 2019 | 548,165,200 | 1,162,935,200 | 470,313,200 | 107,380,900 | 63,024,100 |
| Other sources (2017-2019) | 79,500,423 | 53,526,699 | 83,415 | 2,801,658 | 1,187,510 |
| External source (2017-2019) | 766,291,754 | 272,428,146 | 41,966,795 | | |
| Total | 2,403,365,377 | 3,911,985,345 | 1,474,719,910 | 330,069,058 | 166,502,725 |

Source: Data gathered from respective institution, 2019

Cooperation with non-state actors

48. The GoSE recognizes the complementarity of non-state actors such as civil society organizations in implementing the ACRWC provisions and achieving child rights and child protection outcomes. In Eritrea the NUEW, National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) and National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) at the national level and with their decentralized branches at the zonal and local level are actively involved in the implementation of child-right related activities. Moreover, the four National Associations for PWDs also play an important role in the promotion of the rights and protection of children with disabilities. Bidho, an association of persons living with HIV/AIDS also plays significant role in sensitization against the stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS. Further, MoLSW, MOE, MOH, MOJ have strong collaboration with the local (decentralized) branches of the above-mentioned civil society organizations in ensuring their participation in child protection affairs.

49. The GoSE also enjoys cordial relationships of cooperation with the UN specialized agencies in the country through the Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework 2017-2021 (SPCF). It maintains working relationships with the ILO through the Tripartite Labour partnerships, with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the Commission of the African Charter on Human & People’s Rights and African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC).

Dissemination of the Charter and previous concluding observations of the Committee

50. Eritrea continues to widely publicize the ACRWC through the media, workshops, focus group discussions and during events marking the Regional and International Children's Day, the International Disability Day and, International Women's Day. These kinds of activities and mobilization of communities are done through involvement of the civil society such as NUEW, NUEYS, NCEW and community based organizations. The Charter is also disseminated via the members of the ACRWC & CRC coordinating committees and its network of offices across the country.
51. The recommendations of the committee on the initial report was also shared with all stakeholders. Moreover, the initial country report on the progress of implementation of the ACRWC report of Eritrea was also disseminated to all state and non-state actors including committees which work with ensuring women and child rights at the national, regional and sub-regional levels.

B. DEFINITION OF A CHILD

52. As indicated in the Committee's recommendation (paragraph 5) on the definition of the child, Eritrean law does not directly define the term "child". Nonetheless, Article 198 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea provides that a person of either sex who has not attained the full age of eighteen years is considered as a "minor". For all practical intents and purposes, the essence of the term "minor" is understood to mean a child. Therefore, the Committee need not worry because the reference age in both is 18 years and both deal about persons below that age limit. There are no inferred meanings or values other than age attached in both definitions.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Non-Discrimination

53. In response to the Committee's recommendation paragraph 6 on non-discrimination, Eritrean law forbids all forms of discriminations since it is generally constructed on the basis of the principle of justice and equality. Proclamation No.2/1991 on the Transitional Civil Code made tremendous contribution to espouse gender equality in the law.
54. Article 8(2) of the Transitional Civil Code prohibits any discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights of personality and liberties encompassed in those objectives and principles fought for by the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (E.P.L.F) in the struggle for independence. They are also backed by the National Programs of the P.F.D.J. Moreover, Article 4 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea provides in an unequivocal term that the criminal law

applies to all alike without discrimination as regards persons, social conditions, race or religion.

55. None of the GoSE legislation, policies and programmes discriminate children based on religion, ethnicity, age, gender, social status, language, and opinion in relation to access to administrative and social services. The appeal of the Government policy is in fact derived from the “unity in diversity”. This applies to religious and ethnic diversity. The state is secular on account of these considerations. Every citizen has the right to elementary education in one’s vernacular language. National radio programmes and daily newspapers are printed in various Eritrean languages. The overarching government policy and developmental strategy is anchored on the promotion of equal rights and opportunities. Eritrea is and remains an oasis of ethnic and religious cohesion and harmony in a turbulent region racked by cleavages along these fault lines.
56. The country has zero tolerance to discrimination in all its forms. The Committee’s claim that it “is however informed that children belonging to certain religions, economic status, and children affected with HIV/AIDS and minority groups face discrimination preventing them from accessing education and other basic services in their residence” is unfounded. The GoSE policies and strategies and delivery of services are anchored on equity, accessibility of services based on the principles of attaining social justice. Due to this reality, the Committee’s recommendation is inappropriate.
57. The GoSE has made relentless efforts to close the geographic developmental disparities by introducing various affirmative actions, including special educational programmes to nomadic and difficult to reach communities. In collaboration with partners it initiated mobile clinics and barefoot doctors services to reach the remote isolated communities, extensive rural primary health care campaigns using outreach health agents and micro credit facilities to improve livelihoods and wellbeing of vulnerable people, including children.
58. One of the priorities of the GoSE has been to give special attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, children affected by and/or infected with HIV/AIDS, and rural and remote nomadic people. The government has been working to ensure equitable opportunities to access services and wealth. The GoSE has been working relentlessly to bridge the gap, not only among regions, but also between rural and urban areas. The outcome is notable in the education, health and water supply sectors. As can be seen from the educational statics in this report, there was higher enrolment in rural and remote areas than in urban areas at all levels in the reporting period. In addition, more schools have been constructed in rural and remote areas than in urban areas at all the levels in the same period.

Best interests of the child

59. Unlike the Committee's expressed concerns (paragraph 7) the country's judicial and administrative systems are geared towards the best interest of the child. The principles of the best interest of the child are clearly reflected in the laws of persons, family, contract, labour and others, including, for example, succession, establishment of proof of paternity of a child, right to life and determining guardianship in default of parents.
60. Pursuant to Article 1 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea, a human person becomes a subject of rights starting from the moment of birth. Article 2 of the Transitional Civil Code protects the best interests of a child merely conceived, by considering him/her born where his/her interest so requires. The partition of the property of the deceased is suspended until the birth of the child and his/her viability is ensured (Arts. 2-4, 834, and 1063 of the Transitional Civil Code - TCCE). The best interest of a child begins to apply, therefore, before the birth of the child. In situations where a succession is opened from which the merely conceived child could have benefited if he/she were born, or when it is necessary to consider the merely conceived child as born for the sake of accepting a donation, the law could protect the best interests of the child. Unless it is to his/her best interest, he/she is not considered as a person until he/she is born.
61. Article 199 of the TCCE provides that a child shall be placed under the authority of a guardian considering the proper care of his/her person; and as regards matters concerning his/her pecuniary interests and the administration of his/her property, he/she has to be represented by a tutor. This protection of the law, that is put in favour of a child, is clearly intended to ensure that adults would not take advantage of his/her immaturity. Where third parties enter into a contract with a child and payments are made, such payments are considered null and the child is immune from making repayment (Article 316 of TCCE).
62. The interests of the child prevail over the testamentary statement of his parents where his interest so requires. In this regard, Article 209 of the TCCE empowers the court to revoke or modify restrictions or conditions imposed by the surviving parent on the powers of the guardian or tutor of the child where the interests of the child so requires.
63. Where a testamentary guardian or tutor is to be appointed by the court to protect the interests of a child, Article 211 of the TCCE requires the court to decide the matter having regard solely to the interests of such child. Where the court has to appoint or remove a person as guardian or tutor of a child, Article 235 of the TCCE requires that it has to decide having regard solely to the interests of such child. In cases of divorce, the family arbitrators are required to decide custody and maintenance of children born of the marriage having regard

solely to the best interests of such children pursuant to the provisions of Article 681 of the TCCE.

64. Pursuant to the provisions of Article 805, adoption is required to offer advantage to the adopted child for it to take place. In order to ensure that the contract of adoption is entered into in the best interests of the child, a contract of adoption is required to be approved by the court before it could produce legal effect. In furtherance of ensuring that the best interests of the child is given paramount regard, the legislator specifically requires the court to hear the adopted child himself/herself before making its decision where the child is over ten years of age [Article 804(2)]. Among other reasons, this requirement is clearly put to ensure the best interests of the child.
65. The programs such as the community based reunification of orphans, adoption of orphans' group homes and street children managed by the MoLSW for orphans and street children are also testimony to the commitment of the GoSE to the best interest of the child.

The right to life, Survival and Development

66. The state party solemnly took note of the Committee's allegation in its concluding recommendations (paragraph 8). It does not require any castigating to understand that the right to life is the supreme inalienable right of a person. One has to exist in order to exercise and enjoy all of the other human rights and freedoms. That is why the Eritrean laws provide protection for a born, as well as the merely conceived embryo's life as well as to the mother. Abortion, is legal only in special circumstances such as when the mother is underage, medical reasons or cases of incest.
67. Under the Transitional Penal Code (TPCE), the child's right to life is protected in two main ways. The first is by imposing penal sanction against those who commit, attempt or incite or in any way abet murder or other acts likely to lead to death, including aiding suicide and committing genocide. This sanction can even go to the extent of protecting the life of the unborn child (Art.529-536). Any act that tends to threaten the life of the unborn child constitutes a crime against one's life. Self-induced abortion is also prohibited. Those who perform an abortion on another or assist and self-induced abortion are also punishable under the TPCE.
68. The second protection pertains to children. Under the TPCE it is absolutely prohibited to impose death sentences on children below the age of eighteen years, however grave the offence may be. This by itself constitutes one of the mechanisms of protecting the survival and right to life of a child.

MDGs and the new peace-time Development Drive

69. Notwithstanding the obstacles and existential challenges caused by external threats for over two decades, including the war unleashed against Eritrea under the pretext of a border dispute, the country has registered notable achievements on key social indicators of national development. In this regard, Eritrea's MDGs achievement and in particular in the health goals have been hailed globally. Eritrea achieved most of the goals before the target date of 2015 and was reported to the concerned bodies.
70. Eritrea's 2016 closing MDG report, produced in collaboration with the UN specialized agencies, and other recent sector reports give highlights of Eritrea's progress in achieving MDGs and the SDG targets and the following are some of the landmarks:
- Life expectancy jumped from 48 in 1991 to 66 years (male/female) in 2018.
 - Adult literacy rate from 20% to above 80%.
 - Student population from 200,000 to around 700,000; and at tertiary level from 1,200 to 14,000.
 - Access to adequate and safe drinking water jumped from 30% to over 80% of households.
 - Access to electricity reached 43.5%.
 - Maternal mortality rate dropped from 998/100,000 in 1995 to 185/100,000 in 2019
 - Under-five child mortality dropped from 153/1000 in 1990 to 136/1000 in 1995 to 63/1000 in 2010 to 30/1000 in 2019
 - Communicable diseases- malaria and tuberculosis are almost controlled and HIV prevalence dropped to 0.63%
 - Vegetation coverage of the landmass rose from 1% to 13%
71. After over two decades of existential external threats imposed on Eritrea, since mid-2018 Eritrea has started to direct its efforts to the dual tasks of nation-building and reconstruction. The new situation and dynamics entail policy implications on a range of vital domestic and regional issues and the development paradigm is accordingly geared towards macro-economic growth and stability and strengthening regional peace and cooperation.
72. The goal is to achieve a qualitative leap and the development paradigm is being consolidated along two dimensions, namely, accelerating internal dynamics and enhancing dignified engagement and international cooperation based on partnership. In this context, Eritrea in 2019 declared 11 strategy and policy areas to embark on a sustainable development effort. The essence of the declaration states the following and outlines the strategy/policy area saying, "In order to pursue our nation building endeavours with a steady pace by marshalling our resources, and to capitalize on the momentum for greater rapid growth, we need to

rigorously review fundamental programs that will buttress real economic growth through higher productivity and increased output...”.

National Service and allegations “on children found in Sawa”

73. The allegation that children are found in the Sawa military training camp is simply an unfounded and against the tradition of Eritrea for not involving children in war during the liberation era. Proclamation No. 82 of 1995 of the National Service Program is crystal clear on the issue of age.
74. Pre-university education consisted of 11 years of schooling prior to 2003. The MoE undertook a comprehensive curriculum review, duration of secondary schooling and other crucial issues. Within this revised program, 12th Grade schooling for all High School Students was extended by one year to a total of four years and had been determined to take place at the Sawa High School. Aggregating students in the last year of secondary education in one place from the Eritrean perspective has multiple comparative advantages including a level playing field that ensures unity with diversity as well as higher worthy competition.
75. The Sawa Secondary School administered by the Ministry of Education and the Sawa National Service Training Centre are two separate entities. All Eritrean students after completing 12th grade and participating in the National High School Leaving Examination do participate in the national service training in the adjacent Sawa Training Centre.
76. In this regard, according to the Eritrean Zero Wastage policy, those who achieve passing marks join the higher learning institutions spread throughout the country. On the other hand, those who do not succeed are given the opportunity to join the various vocational and technical training centres to gain technical minimum skills and eventually be deployed to places of work.

“Shoot to Kill Policy”

77. The allegation on the existence of “shoot to kill policy” is another ludicrous story concocted to tarnish the image of the country.
78. Desertion from active military service remains by law a serious crime punishable with rigorous imprisonment. Hence, they are duly accounted through both the legal and administrative measures. In as much as possible this greatly takes into account the rights of the indicted citizen and whenever there is discrepancy or any degree of violations appears, both judicial and administrative remedies are made. It is to be noted that Eritrea has a military court system established by the first post-independence legislation of Eritrea, Proclamation 1/1991 of September 1991. Articles 4(2) and 6 of said proclamation

established a lower and higher military courts which entertain, on first instance basis, military offences of varying degrees of severity.

Migration and Human Trafficking and Children

79. The politicization of migration and the hideous crimes of human trafficking that Eritrea struggled against is one of the issues that Eritrea requested for an international inquiry through the UN with no attention given; Furthermore, the existential external threats including the illegal and unjust sanction that has now been lifted had tremendous effect on development and the destabilization of the social fabrics.
80. After the war imposed in Eritrea during 1998-2000 failed to achieve its aim, Eritrean youths became the main target of the migratory conspiracy and protracted psychological warfare to lure them away from national defence, national service and development participation by attracting them to a promising “luxurious life”. This has been consolidated with an asylum system that ensures a preferential treatment which declared automatic acceptance to Eritreans, serving as a big bonus in the pull factor.
81. Moreover, false and manipulated asylum cases have been orchestrated and used to imagine a perceived crisis intended to accuse the Eritrean Government. On the other hand, the automatic acceptance of many nationals from the horn of Africa countries has also been exploited by those who falsely claimed political asylum as Eritreans.
82. As a continuation to the failing strategy of mobilizing Eritrean migrant youth as a potential force against the government, the migratory phenomenon later targeted the family as a social institution aiming at destabilizing the social fabrics. The extent of the conspiracy is further reflected by the involvement of some countries, organizations, surrogate anti-Eritrean groups and pseudo-human right activists who have got secure sanctuary in many western capitals using illegal migration and human trafficking to realize the dream of regime change in Eritrea. This hideous crime is also meant to create generation gap and destabilize the social fabrics of the society.
83. Notwithstanding the above challenges and problems, Eritrea has been fighting against this crime and the Eritrean Law criminalizes human trafficking and transnational crimes committed against persons. Many direct and indirect beneficiaries of this scourge have been brought to justice. The Eritrean Government had requested for an independent UN sponsored international inquiry, but to no avail!
84. It is regrettable that the Committee disregards the objective reality and situation, the tangible progress reported periodically, as well as the critical challenges of national development

that influence children's rights and welfare. The State party wishes to call the attention of the Committee to the fact that regional and international cooperation demand partnership based on prudence and mutual respect rather than impulsive interjections.

Respecting the views of the Child

85. The TCCE reflects, to a large extent, the articles and provisions of the ACRWC, such as the best interest of the child. This principle requires primary consideration in all actions concerning the child. It also includes provisions for the right of a child who is capable of forming his or her own views to express them freely in all matters affecting once life.
86. To give due respect to children's views and children's involvement in defining problems and discussing solutions, GoSE organized a national forum in 2015 to analyse the situation of children in Eritrea. Ever since, the participation of children and youths is gaining momentum in the Eritrean context. There are 67 sub-zonal Women's Right & Child Rights Committees throughout the country, with 12 to 15 members each. Seats are reserved for two children (a girl & a boy 14-17 years old) to ensure that children's voices are heard. To enhance children's effective participation, the MoLSW produced a participation guide defining roles and responsibilities of the youth committee members. In 2019 trainings were given to 1,000 (30% females) youth committee members in five regional administrations.
87. NUEYS provides forums where children and adolescents get opportunities to develop their talents and to express their views. During the period under review, NUEYS established over 40 mini-media clubs and youth centres in all six regional administrations, and established an 'Idea Studio Eritrea' program aiming at unleashing potential of youth in entrepreneurship and problem solving.

III. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Name, Nationality, Identity and Registration of Birth

88. In response to the Committee's recommendation on name, nationality and identity issues (paragraph 9) Articles 2-6 of the Eritrean Nationality Proclamation No. 21/1992 provides how citizenship may be acquired by birth, naturalization, through contract of adoption of a child, and/or marriage. Article 2(1) of the Proclamation states that anyone born of an Eritrean father or mother, whether in Eritrea or abroad gets automatic Eritrean Nationality and Citizenship. Article 2(3) of same guarantees, in particular, the right of an abandoned child found in Eritrea and whose parents remain unknown to have Eritrean nationality. A child has the right to acquire Eritrean citizenship through the lineage of either parent or both, including a child born out of wedlock.

89. Proclamation No. 21/1992, also spells out that there is no distinction between men and women concerning the rights to Nationality and Citizenship. A child has the right to acquire Eritrean citizenship through either the lineage of either parent or both, including a child born out of wedlock. The citizenship proclamation is strictly enforced. Nationality is a fundamental right of any citizen regardless of sex, ethnicity, faith or other creeds. The acquisition of residence registration number at birth, issuance of Eritrean National Identity Card (ENIDC) at the age of 18 without any discrimination. Women/girls have equal access and opportunity free from the consent and approval of father or husband.
90. Pursuant to the TCCE, every natural person is entitled to have a name upon birth, and the full name of a person includes first name, the name of the father and grandfather. Articles 99-103 of the TCCE order for the mandatory taking records of birth of a child, including foundlings. In the case of abandoned children, Art 103 provides that abandoned children have the right to a name. Concerning adopted children, the law entitles them to take the name of their adopted family. Before drawing up the record of birth the first name or names of the child are required to be stated. Once a name is given to a person, it can only be changed where the court grants permission.

Registration of Birth

91. The State Party takes full note of the Committee's recommendation (paragraph 9) for the registration of birth and receiving of birth certificates along with the designation of dedicated organ of government to carry this out. Registering a child at birth and death is compulsory in accordance to the TCCE (Articles 47-153). Record of civil status is carried out 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 with some regional variations.
92. The Regional Administrations under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) shoulder birth registration responsibility through their respective civil registry offices. Nowadays, every child is registered at birth throughout the country where a residence registration number is duly given, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas and in big villages. More human and financial resources are needed to make registration a reality in all far away villages.

93. Bcille Calmette-Guerin (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 to enrol in any educational facility throughout the country.
94. To strengthen awareness, harmonize and consolidate the on-going birth registration system in all administrative regions of the country, the MoLSW, in collaboration with the National Statistics Office and the MoLG, conducted assessment meetings and discussed the way forward with the six regional administrators and representatives of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW). Moreover, concerted efforts are being carried out by MoLSW, MOH, NUEW, MOE and MOLG to sensitize the population in all settings to get their children registered.

Protection against abuse and torture

95. The GoSE is cognizant of the principles recited by the Committee (paragraph 10) in relation to this topic. Although it would be absurd to claim that Eritrea is absolutely free from incidents of crimes, one can proudly say that Eritrea is one of the few peaceful and safe places on the continent. The gross misrepresentation of the Eritrean reality by the Committee is regrettable.
96. The assertion that Eritrea has a military training of children where violence or torture of children may be plausibly carried out is totally erroneous and does not merit any response.
97. Prevention of all forms of violence in all settings is the priority action of child protection actors and stakeholders. Violence is prohibited in all its forms and in all settings by the TPCE. Corporal punishment and beating, as inhumane kinds of punishment, are abolished by Eritrean laws. The Committee's assertions and concerns are unfounded.
98. The Eritrean society holds a high moral ground in the sanctioning of rape and sexual harassment as immoral and sinful acts. Hence on the very rare and exceptional occasions that it occurs, it is dealt with severely, especially if it is perpetrated by adults on minors or by public servants. Although no one can condone minor incidents, the exaggeration of the issues as matters of concern is preposterous. The Eritrean people are law abiding and the government is responsible enough to enforce its laws holding to account anyone who commits such crimes.
99. The MoE prohibits all and any kind of corporal punishment in schools. The MoE has published a training manual on avoiding corporal punishment in Eritrean schools. The manual states that corporal punishment violates the human rights, physical integrity and human dignity of people in general, and students in particular. It also stipulates that school discipline be administered in a manner consistent with the dignity of the child and the rights

of the child. The MoE has provided extensive training on the basis of this manual. At the same time, it has made much effort to raise the general level of awareness in schools and to monitor implementation.

100. During the reporting period, the MoLSW conducted community mobilization campaign on positive parenting and preventing violence and abuse against children reaching out to 411,308 persons (230,686 females) including children and adolescents, social workers and parents/guardians.
101. MoLSW has established a community-based system to provide necessary psycho-social and other forms of support for the full recovery and social reintegration of child victims of sexual or other forms of abuse. Under the supervision and management of MoLSW sub-zoba branch offices, trained social workers and women and child rights committees at grassroots level and continuously conducts supervision to ensure that children are provided the necessary attention and support.
102. In general, the following legal provisions are strictly followed and applied to ensure respect and protection from sexual and other forms of abuse
 - Child molestation is punishable under Art. 10 of the TCCE. Articles 537-544 criminalize physical abuse offences, irrespective of the age of the victim, which entails a sentence of up to ten years imprisonment.
 - Article 548 criminalizes deliberate neglect, ill-treatment, over-tasking or beating a child who is under one's custody or charge in such a way as to affect or endanger gravely his/her physical or mental development or health. This is in fact without prejudice to any lawful and reasonable chastisement which falls within the meaning of an authorized act under Article 64 of the same law.
 - A sexual outrage on children is an offence that could entail imprisonment under Articles 594-595 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE).
103. Sexual offence against any person of any age is one of the most despicable crimes in Eritrea. Thus, rape, other forms of sexual outrages, seduction, trafficking of infants and young persons for prostitution, public indecency in the presence of young persons, intentional exhibiting, handing over or delivering indecent or obscene publications to an infant or young person, offering, lending, giving or selling to infants and young persons of objects, images or writings that unduly stimulate sexual instincts, incest with a young person etc. are punishable criminal offences in Eritrea.

104. Violence against girls including rape is a crime punishable by law, and any sexual exploitation and abuse is not settled or mediated outside the court of law. There is no provision of marital rape in the Eritrean laws. Rape cases fall on the jurisdiction of the high court, not the lower courts as it constitutes grave crimes. Parents of the victim, or the victim herself file complaints to the police after a 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 facility. Accordingly, the victim is given post-exposure prophylaxis injection within 72 hours as a preventive measure against HIV/AIDS infection. Both reports from the police and health facilities are then forwarded to the public prosecutor office for immediate action of detaining the perpetrator and follow up of legal proceedings. Compensation and rehabilitation as a redress for the moral and physical damages sustained by the victim are issued in accordance with Section 3/ articles 2090-2161 of TCCE.

105. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG), pursuant to Article 8 of the Transitional Criminal Procedure of Eritrea (TCPE), has the power to direct investigations of alleged crimes that may have been committed in violation of the TPCE and other pertinent laws and regulations. The OAG involves itself in investigating sexual assaults which may have been committed upon girls/women whenever credible information is provided.

106. Begging traditionally is not acceptable due to the extended family ties, and the deployment of children especially is despised as an act of exploitation or abuse. The MoLSW in cooperation with its national partners conducts continuous sensitization campaigns in all sub zonal administrations and communities through its social workers. The social protection mechanisms endeavour to alleviate such issues as poverty and livelihood problems of communities including children.

Freedom of Expression

107. As relates to recommendation on freedom of expression (paragraph 11) the Committee is advised that freedom of thought and expression is guaranteed by Article 14 of the TCCE. Every person is free to think and express his/her views or ideas. This right is enshrined to all irrespective of ethnic background, sex or age is provided in the TCCE under the chapter dealing with Personality and the Rights inherent to Personality.

108. MoE adheres to learner-centred and interactive pedagogy. Learner-centred and interactive pedagogy allows a child to express his/her thoughts freely among his/her peers and to teachers. MoE believes that the skills and knowledge which a child acquires at an early stage encourage him/her to express views more freely at home with family members and in the community at large. To raise the awareness of parents on this issue, frequent seminars

and meetings are conducted. This is pursuant to Article 7 of the ACRWC on respect for the views of the child and freedom of expression.

109. Children under 18 exercise freedom of speech and press through the main media channels of radio, TV and newspapers. At the same time the MOI with the cooperation of the NUEW and NUEYS sponsors several activities that enable children to enjoy full freedom of speech and opinion. The MoLSW annually organizes children's day to express their views and to sensitize families, children and the public at large on their rights choosing a special theme.
110. Children's TV and radio programs, as well as columns and articles that appear on publicly owned printed media, are very broad in content and produced with adequate weekly periodicity, the participatory aspect of these programs is huge since in most cases, children are the main and central actors and protagonists. The youth programs mostly focus on panel discussion on a variety of timely and relevant issues and they are fully and exclusively produced by higher learning institution students.
111. On television, Eritrea's publicly owned and globally broadcast (through Arab Sat and Nile Sat platforms, live internet streaming and U-tube) Eri-TV channel has three weekly children and youth programs in the Tigrigna language. These are i) Hello children (ሃለው ቁልፍ) ii) Fiorina (ፊዮሪና); and ii) Heritage/Maeger. Each program has a duration of 30 minutes and the aggregate contents cover the whole gamut of timely, relevant and popular themes, i.e health issues and sport events; social and ethical more; contests/materials; poems songs and music; Eritrean history; dramas; review of books; puppet show; college life and challenges etc. The TV and radio programmes are prepared and presented by children for children.
112. Radio outlets include, 15-30 minute children's programmes on academic, cultural, historical, science and technology, inventions and innovation, short educational/inspirational stories and fables, health issues, psychological and ethical themes are broadcasted in five local languages (Tigrigna, Tigre, Saho, Afar and Kunama). Broadcast time is usually on Saturdays-at convenient hours when children are likely to tune to the radio during the weekend break. The radio channels similarly broadcast programmes in local languages mentioned above including Arabic, Bilen, Saho, & Nara on nation building, arts and culture, societal values, rights of the youth, technological breakthroughs, as well as interactive discussions on current domestic, regional and international issues.
113. On printed press, the Tigrigna daily paper (Hadas Eritrea) has a weekly column entitled "Sunday with children" which covers mostly fables and stories that focus on ethical issues

and a Saturday column on broader social and educational themes. The Arabic and Tigre papers (published four and two times a week respectively) contain similar regular columns.

114. To promote participation and critical review, the MOI conducts periodic surveys through feedback from its domestic audiences through anonymous telephone calls. In November 2017, the MOI launched an extensive nation-wide survey of all its programmes by procuring the professional services of the Marketing Department of the College of Economics and Business Administration. (This was partially funded by partners). The feedback obtained from a wide spectrum of audiences (rural/urban, from all social groups and gender) are very positive in terms of the content and the participation of the children which were mainly from parents and other adults. The feedback mainly provided by parents and other adults is positive and demonstrates the popularity of the programmes.
115. The Television sector in Eritrea is deregulated. There are no legal restrictions for households to buy/import decoders whose cost hovers around 300 Nakfa or 20 USD. This is a one-time investment since the decoders last for 15/20 years. Eri-TV programmes are broadcast all over the globe through Arab Sat and Nile Sat platforms due to Eritrean large diaspora globally. Thus, households who have the decoders can receive up to free to Air (FTA) 1310 channels (some repeated on different frequencies) that can be captured on the footprint of Arab Sat and Nile Sat. The nation-wide surveys carried out in November 2017 ascertained that 91% of households in 20 urban and semi-urban cities in Eritrea possess satellite dishes and decoders. So the Eritrean public in general has wide access to over 1000TV channels including (BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, CGTN, MBCs, and sports, movies, documentary and other channels). Even subversive channels broadcasted from London and Paris are not prohibited.

Freedom of Association

116. Articles 404-482 of the TCCE include detailed provisions on associations. Workers' rights to organize are also respected under the Labour Proclamation. Over 1000 National Civic and professional associations, organizations, OPWDs, trade unions, interest groups established for promoting professional, economic, social/cultural interests and community level associations promote the rights to associations and contribute actively to the national development goals. They are autonomous bodies with memorandum of understanding and statues and once registered work independently.
117. Pertaining to the Committee's recommendation (paragraph 12) with regard to the National Union of Eritrean Youths and Students (NUEYS) there is an apparent misconception or misinformation. NUEYS is a civil society organization that aims at ensuring rights, growth and prosperity of Eritrean youth and children. It strives to build a disciplined self-confident, mature and responsible youth both within the country and in

Diaspora. It works to assure a comprehensive development of the Eritrean youth, and encourage their participation and foster their contribution in the ongoing process of nation-building. Moreover, the union has been working to ensure the rights and interests of Eritrean youth, students and children.

118. The highest authority of the NUEYS is its national congress which convenes every 4 years. The congress elects a central council which runs its affairs between two congresses, by electing a chairperson and executive committee. The central and zonal offices are responsible for the execution of NUEYS day to day activities. Its main objective is to enlighten and realize the hopes and aspirations of the youth in nation building via sensitization and empowerment.
119. NUEYS is a broad-based voluntary organization with membership throughout the country, both in rural and urban areas that stretches to the lowest level of village/neighbourhood administration. Its membership is composed of males and female students and other youths of all walks of life. A recent report of the union indicates that around 300,000 youths among whom more than 42% females have been organized as members of the union inside the country. Students in junior and secondary schools constitute a large proportion of NUEYS membership. The union has a vast network with offices in all 67 subzones, 87 kebab administration, in 350 out of 400 junior schools and in all 105 high schools and 8 higher educational institutes throughout the country.
120. In collaboration with MoE and the school administrations, the NUEYS organizes various clubs in neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and colleges. The male and female members participate in any of the clubs thereby expressing and developing their skills and talents of their choice. Club members play an important role in enhancing, influencing and campaigning to the broad based members of NUEYS on the relevant issues related to their lives. Therefore, capacity building which includes training activities as the first phase to formulate (establish) various clubs. These clubs and trained members are then fully equipped with the required Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials which support them.
121. NUEYS participates through committees, in several national platforms, whereby it advocates for the children and youth interests, views and needs. One of these committees is the National Committee for Ensuring Women's and Children's Rights which has the mission to combat harmful traditional practices such as FGM and under-age marriage. NUEYS is also represented in the zonal, sub zonal and neighbourhood administrative committees set up for the implementation and monitoring of the ACRWC. It is a member of the Steering Committee for the coordination of various Global Fund projects as well as

the multi-sectoral committee that deals with the Universal Periodic Report on Human Rights (UPR).

122. Eritrean women and girls enjoy full freedom of association and assembly and exercise these rights in various ways. The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) which was founded in 1979 has open membership for all Eritrean women above the age of 16 and the union has presently over 344,339 members. NUEW's mission is to ensure that all Eritrean women participate equally for their rights in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of the country and share the benefits. NUEW's structure is composed of the central council, executive committee, zoba, sub-zoba and kebabai level elected leaders. Its Central Committee convenes twice annually. NUEW strategy of advocacy and empowerment is regularly conducted by arranging meetings at different levels. Income generation and skills training for employment creation do serve the female headed families as a strategy too.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

123. Article 14 of the TCCE guarantees the right of everyone to think and express one's ideas which may only be restricted by the respect for the right of others' morality and the law. No interference with the exercise of the rights of religion is tolerated but such rights may not be utilized for political purposes or prejudicial to morality and public order.

124. With regard to the committee's concern about the freedom of thought, conscience and religion (paragraph 13), the GoSE reaffirms that these freedoms are protected by law. The Transitional Codes protect the right of individuals to be free from any discrimination and prosecution on account of their religion. Contrary to the Committee's observations, these rights are protected in principle and in practice. The alleged discrimination against particular religious sects is thus unfounded.

IV. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

Protection of the Family

125. In Eritrea, the family is the foundation of socialization, upbringing, and provision of care, love and affection, as well as survival and development of the child. Members of the extended family and local community are also socially obliged to serve as major vehicles for the socialization of the child, and all members of the community interact and play crucial roles. The State party refers to paragraphs 68-69 on parental guidance in the initial report.

126. The GoSE undertakes various social protection programmes for vulnerable families, including monthly cash transfers to martyrs' parents or families. Children in vulnerable households are given free school uniforms, educational materials and cash to pay for the nominal registration fee, donkey for school disabled children for transportation thereby

enabling them to pursue their education. Children affected by the loss of parents due to HIV/AIDS are given special assistance and care.

Parental responsibilities and protection of children

The State party refers to paragraphs 70-71 in the initial report on parental responsibilities.

127. Article 199 of the TCCE requires that a child be placed under the authority of a guardian to safeguard the proper care of his/her person. Regarding matters concerning his/her pecuniary interests and the administration of his/her property, a child is represented by a tutor. This legal requirement clearly has, as an objective, protecting the best interests of the child, as it would discourage adults from taking advantage of the immaturity of a child. Article 204 of the TCCE provides that the father and the mother of a child are jointly guardians and tutors of their minor children. In case one of the parents dies or is incapacitated, the other parent shoulders the responsibility of up-bringing the children (Art.205 (1)). Article 217 further entitles the father and/or the mother of a child to appoint a tutor to the child, reserving to themselves the functions of guardian. Pursuant to Article 265 and the subsequent articles, the guardian is responsible for taking decisions such as fixing the place where the minor resides, watching over his/her health, directing the education of the child, supervising his/her social contacts, receiving the income of the child and using it in the interests of the child, and others.
128. In addition, parents may decide, on behalf of their children, on their medical treatment, as required under Art. 20(3) TCCE. The guardian's obligation to educate a child is provided under Art.267, while at the same time the guardian shoulders the responsibility of making sure the child gets good education pursuant to Art.231. Article 280 provides that the tutor represents the minor in all civil matters; he/she, in particular, takes care of the pecuniary interests of the minor and administers his/her property as a "bonus paterfamilias". However, since parents are the joint guardians and tutors of the child, they shoulder all the responsibilities of a guardian and tutor as are laid down under Articles 204-327 of the TCCE.
129. The fact that ascendants have the obligations of support and maintenance vis-a-vis children is clearly provided under Article 821(c) of the TCCE. This was stated under the State Party's "Initial Periodic Report" (Paragraph No. 73). Article 821 lays down the order of debtors in the obligation of support and maintenance. Whosoever refuses or omits to provide the allowances, necessities of life or maintenance which he owes by virtue of family rights or of a judicial decision, to his ascendants or descendants, or spouse, or fails to meet his or her financial obligations, he/she is prone to criminal liability pursuant to the provisions under Article 625 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE). Article 626 of the same, in particular, holds a parent who is exercising paternal authority accountable.

130. The law does not discriminate between children born in wedlock and those born out of wedlock. Where divorce has to be declared in the case of children born in wedlock, the provisions of Article 681 of the Civil Code requires the family arbitrators to decide the custody and maintenance support of children, having regard solely to the interests of such children. In the case of deciding maintenance support for children born out of wedlock, the court itself exercises jurisdiction and determines the amount. Eritrean courts treat children born both in wedlock and out of wedlock equally, and in the same way as the law requires. In view of this, we have the opinion that the concern and recommendation of the Committee (paragraph 14) is not a valid one.
131. Among many efforts for the long-term care and best interest of children without parental care, the MoLSW adopted deinstitutionalization approach whereby the majority of orphans have been absorbed within extended families. To secure the welfare of children without parental care, several programmes and mechanisms have been put in place, namely i) Re-unification programme, ii) Community-based group homes, iii) Adoption iv) orphans hosted in orphanages and children hosted in families of martyrs' survivors v) supporting HIV/AIDS affected families vi) social protection programs for vulnerable families and children to mitigate illegal migration and vii) building coping mechanisms of female headed households. Moreover, families which host orphans in orphanages and children hosted in families of martyrs' are provided with financial support. This is mainly in order to make family reunification with extended families more sustainable and to avoid the psychosocial problems that arise as they grow up.
132. The Community-Based Group Homes (CBGH) for above five years old orphans has been designed as alternative care to institutional arrangements. It provides family care and protection, with a limited number of children having figure parents. The CBGH also builds a sense of belonging to community members and allows orphaned children to share community resources. During the reporting period, orphans were placed in community based group homes pursuing their education with their peers in the regional administrations.
133. The MoLSW put in place a mother figure and her assistant in each group home to provide the necessary basic needs and the affection required. Communities around group homes provide additional material and psychosocial support to make the orphans feel that they are part of the community. As a matter of policy, orphans hosted in group homes are children who don't have parents or whose relatives or member of extended families are not identified. The MoLSW has a structured mechanism with clear guidelines and directives for monitoring the situations of children in group homes.

134. Currently, there are five group homes with a total of 42 children. The table below shows the age, gender and number of orphans hosted in community-based group homes in 2014-2019.

Table. 3 Orphans placed in community based group homes, 2014-2019

| Age in years | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| 5-9 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 10-14 | 20 | 6 | 26 | 25 | 19 | 44 | 15 | 13 | 28 |
| 15-17 | 10 | 18 | 28 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 18 | 13 | 31 |
| Total | 41 | 34 | 75 | 37 | 33 | 70 | 37 | 30 | 67 |

| Age in years | 2017 | | | 2018 | | | 2019 | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5-9 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10-14 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| 15-17 | 19 | 15 | 34 | 20 | 14 | 34 | 20 | 14 | 34 |
| Total | 33 | 30 | 63 | 26 | 21 | 47 | 23 | 19 | 42 |

(Source: MoLSW, 2020)

Financial support enabling families to adequately give care to their children

135. Pregnant women living in hard-to-reach areas and mothers in their third trimester are encouraged to come to nearby health facilities and stay in maternity homes, where they can get skilled assistance during their delivery and postnatal care. During their stay in the maternity homes, mothers are provided with free meals and lodging and are provided with transportation back to their respective villages. Moreover, families which host orphans are provided with support in the form of food and other in kind assets. This is mainly in order to make family reunification with extended families more sustainable and to avoid the psycho-social problems that may arise as the orphans grow up.

The Re-unification programme for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs)

136. During 2014-2019, the MoLSW placed 3,933 orphans (1,864 females) in to 1,116 families, as a way of providing care and protection for the orphans in family environments. The GoSE supported the host families through financial support for Income-Generating Activities (IGA). The IGA is one type of community-based social assistance provided to vulnerable families hosting orphans and other vulnerable children in order to provide access to basic social services for the latter. The support provided includes livestock, small businesses, animal driven carts and agricultural inputs. This grant is one-time package worth USD 667.00 per family. According to the continuous field monitoring and follow-up, the

IGA resulted in improving access of the vulnerable families to basic social services, including education, health, protection, food security and nutritional status of children.

Table. 4 Orphans Re-Unified with Extended Families

| Age in years | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 193 | 229 | 422 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 45 | 41 | 72 |
| 5-9 | 321 | 250 | 571 | 7 | 4 | 11 | 74 | 76 | 105 |
| 10-14 | 250 | 351 | 601 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 87 | 67 | 152 |
| 15-18 | 410 | 231 | 641 | 19 | 11 | 30 | 53 | 59 | 173 |
| Total | 1174 | 1061 | 2235 | 40 | 29 | 69 | 259 | 243 | 502 |

| Age in years | 2017 | | | 2018 | | | 2019 | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 29 | 58 | 37 | 95 |
| 5-9 | 16 | 12 | 28 | 24 | 25 | 38 | 123 | 115 | 238 |
| 10-14 | 9 | 13 | 22 | 38 | 29 | 65 | 143 | 137 | 280 |
| 15-18 | 11 | 9 | 20 | 23 | 18 | 49 | 129 | 109 | 238 |
| Total | 42 | 44 | 86 | 101 | 89 | 190 | 453 | 398 | 851 |

Source: MoLSW, 2020.

Orphan Children Cared in Orphanages

137. Hosting orphans in orphanages is a last resort which has been continuously de-institutionalized. The cumulative numbers of orphans cared in orphanage centres from the year 2014 to 2019 were 1819. Out of the total orphans hosted in orphanage centres, 54.15% were girls.

Table: 5 Orphan Children Cared in Orphanage Centers

| Age in years | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|--------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 19 | 25 | 44 | 21 | 30 | 51 | 22 | 26 | 48 |
| 5-9 | 14 | 24 | 38 | 13 | 21 | 34 | 12 | 18 | 30 |
| 10-14 | 92 | 94 | 186 | 82 | 81 | 163 | 74 | 81 | 155 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 15-17 | 29 | 43 | 72 | 35 | 40 | 75 | 25 | 43 | 68 |
| Total | 154 | 186 | 340 | 151 | 172 | 323 | 133 | 168 | 301 |

| Age in year | 2017 | | | 2018 | | | 2019 | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 23 | 29 | 52 | 27 | 19 | 46 | 23 | 20 | 43 |
| 5-9 | 7 | 18 | 25 | 7 | 17 | 24 | 9 | 18 | 27 |
| 10-14 | 73 | 69 | 142 | 70 | 87 | 157 | 50 | 68 | 118 |
| 15-17 | 25 | 43 | 68 | 35 | 39 | 74 | 47 | 42 | 89 |
| Total | 128 | 159 | 287 | 139 | 152 | 291 | 129 | 148 | 277 |

Source: MoLSW, 2020

Adoption

138. Note is taken of the Committee's recommendation on monitoring the post-adoption processes (paragraph 15). The total number of orphans which was reunified with volunteer adoptive parents during 2014-2019 was 49 (24 females). A monitoring conducted by the MoLSW of the situation of adopted children in the Central Zone revealed that the orphans were in good health; all attended classes and enjoyed more meaningful lives than those hosted in group homes and orphanages. The State party would like to assure the Committee that there are no challenges in monitoring the post adoption processes. There already is a guideline for monitoring post-adoption situations and the Child and Family Welfare Division of the MoLSW being the responsible entity.

Table. 6: Age, sex and number of orphans or abandoned children each year.

| Age in years | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| <1 yr. | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 1-4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 5-9 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| 10-14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 2 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 10 |

| Age in years | 2017 | | | 2018 | | | 2019 | | |
|------------------|------|--------|----------|------|--------|----------|------|--------|----------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| <1 yr. | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1-4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| 5-9 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| 10-14 | - | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Total | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 10 |

Source: MoLSW, 2020.

Families of Martyrs

139. Under the facilitation of the MoLSW, a considerable amount of government funds continue to be extended as social protection support to a significant number of Martyrs' families each allotted 500.00 Nakfa. The fund reaches vulnerable families on a monthly basis in the form of social cash transfer through designated community-based distribution mechanisms, namely, banks and zoba/sub-zoba administration structures. During the reporting period, 38.8% of the annual budget for Martyrs families was allocated to children & youth. This has improved their livelihoods and provided them with better access to social services. Moreover, Eritrean nationals residing inside the country and in the diaspora have been supporting with additional material, financial and psychosocial supports for families of martyrs

HIV/AIDS-Affected Families

140. In response to the dire need of HIV/AIDS-affected children and families, the MoLSW, in collaboration with its partners has continued to mitigate their difficulties, despite the meagre resources available. The provision of cash has improved the households' consumption, in terms of meeting their daily needs. The MoLSW has largely providing overall care to HIV-affected families and children in terms of psycho-social support, facilitating cash-support and case-management.

Table. 7 Assisted HIV/AIDS infected and affected orphans living with families

| Age in years | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 133 | 237 | 370 | 77 | 56 | 133 | 51 | 32 | 83 |
| 5-9 | 375 | 225 | 600 | 60 | 86 | 146 | 162 | 120 | 282 |
| 10-14 | 395 | 435 | 830 | 109 | 61 | 170 | 263 | 241 | 504 |
| 15-17 | 692 | 508 | 1,200 | 88 | 103 | 191 | 136 | 130 | 266 |
| Total | 1,595 | 1,405 | 3,000 | 334 | 306 | 640 | 612 | 523 | 1,135 |

| Age in years | 2017 | | | 2018 | | | 2019 | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 0-4 | 80 | 66 | 146 | 74 | 76 | 150 | 71 | 67 | 138 |
| 5-9 | 172 | 165 | 337 | 188 | 160 | 348 | 117 | 135 | 252 |
| 10-14 | 274 | 222 | 496 | 320 | 305 | 625 | 205 | 245 | 450 |
| 15-17 | 145 | 145 | 290 | 167 | 150 | 317 | 181 | 219 | 400 |
| Total | 671 | 598 | 1,269 | 749 | 691 | 1,440 | 574 | 666 | 1,240 |

(Source: MoLSW, 2020)

Female-headed Households

141. The Savings and Micro-Credit Programme (SMCP) is one of the social protections programmes focused on women-headed households, aiming to empower them economically. The SMCP is a micro finance institution that provides access to loan and advice to people who lack collaterals to borrow from the regular financial institutions. The Majority of the beneficiaries are vulnerable, women-headed households, hosting orphans and vulnerable children. There has been 609 village banks throughout the country and a total of 65,032 clients out of which 36,012 (55 %) are female. The SMCP focuses on various income generating activities, including vocational training, entrepreneurship skills for small business and in agricultural activities. According to the management of the SMCP, the livelihoods of almost all of the women beneficiaries of this program have improved and enabled them to access to basic social services.

V. BASIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES

Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Mortality

142. During this reporting period a number of activities aiming at the reduction of maternal, new-born and child mortality were implemented. These include campaigns, community engagement, health promotion aiming at behaviour change, establishment of maternity waiting homes, establishment of Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU), antenatal care, intensified skilled deliveries at health facilities, etc.

143. Antenatal care is one of the strategies that can reduce maternal and neonatal mortalities. In Eritrea, the coverage of at least one antenatal visit has increased from 93% in 2013 to 98% in 2019. The country is working towards the implementation of eight antenatal visits by conducting massive campaigns.

144. When a woman dies in child birth, there is a significant chance that the new-born baby dies in the first week. Therefore, in order to solve or reduce these deaths, the MoH has adopted the Essential and Comprehensive Emergency Maternal and New Born Care as a main strategy for improving maternal and neonatal survival. The delivery strategy is based on the premise that all women should deliver at health facilities under skilled professionals.
145. Eritrea has shown significant improvements in the implementation of this strategy. According to administrative data, the coverage of skilled deliveries has increased from 34% in 2014 to 48.5% in 2019, whereas a population based study shows an increase in coverage from 34% of EPHS 2010 to 71% of LQAS 2019. The rate of live births was encouragingly high, standing at more than 97% throughout the years of this reporting period, while the percentage of stillbirths stood in the range of 2.3% -2.8%.

Table 8: Number Skilled Birth Attendants, Live Births, Still Birth and percentage of Live Births and Still Births in Health Facilities, 2014-2019

| Period | Number of Skilled Birth Attendants | Number of Live Births | % Of Live Births | Number of Still Births | % of Still Births |
|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 2014 | 42724 | 41570 | 97.3 | 1154 | 2.7 |
| 2015 | 44826 | 43676 | 97.4 | 1150 | 2.6 |
| 2016 | 44770 | 43522 | 97.2 | 1248 | 2.8 |
| 2017 | 43533 | 42512 | 97.7 | 1021 | 2.3 |
| 2018 | 49091 | 47835 | 97.4 | 1256 | 2.6 |
| 2019 | 52165 | 50812 | 97.4 | 1353 | 2.6 |

Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

146. In order to enable pregnant women living in hard to reach areas and mothers in their third trimester have deliveries attended by health professionals, Maternal Waiting Homes have been established near health facilities. In such maternity waiting homes, skilled assistance during delivery and postnatal care has been provided. During one's stay in the maternity waiting homes, mothers' free meals and lodging have been provided, with covering the transportation cost back to their respective villages.
147. During this reporting period, assessments, reviews and surveys were conducted on the status of the following diseases as described below:

HIV/AIDS

148. While the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the general population remained below 1%, the government of Eritrea continued to regard HIV/ AIDS as a priority issue for the country, in recognition of the critical importance of proactively establishing appropriate programs and systems that would curb the spread of the epidemic. HIV counselling and testing, condom programming, behavioural change communication, prevention of mother to child transmission, post-exposure prophylaxis, treatment of HIV positive with anti-retroviral medicines are some of the strategies implemented in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. It is interesting to observe that the prevalence of HIV in the young age group of 15-24 years' old who come to health facilities for voluntary HIV counselling and testing is very low and that it is encouragingly showing a declining trend.

149. There are 234 sites that provide HIV testing services for pregnant women in the country. These are integrated into ANC/MCH clinics, which constitute in 86% of all health facilities. Besides all the components of PMTCT that includes: primary prevention, Family Planning to avoid unintended pregnancy, provision of ARV for pregnant women and prophylaxis for infants, and early infant diagnosis for HIV exposed infants has been provided. During the reporting period, the number of ANC attendees who accepted HIV testing and received their results had been very encouraging, with a high coverage in the range of 87-98%. The positivity rate of HIV in pregnant women has decreased, dropping off from 0.36% in 2014 to 0.21% in 2019, thereby indicating that almost all babies born alive are free of HIV infection.

Table 9: Number of HIV-exposed infants tested with PCR and number & percent of those who tested positive for HIV, 2015-2019

| Year | Number tested | Number Positive | % positive |
|------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| 2015 | 219 | 1 | 0.5 |
| 2016 | 328 | 3 | 0.9 |
| 2017 | 156 | 1 | 0.6 |
| 2018 | 117 | 1 | 0.9 |
| 2019 | 124 | 2 | 1.6 |

Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

150. Table 9 above shows the number of HIV exposed infants tested with PCR and the number and percent of who tested positive during this reporting period. The low prevalence in both cases is an indication of the pre-elimination stage of transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies.

151. Eritrea conducts Antenatal Care (ANC) HIV sentinel surveillance in order to estimate its national HIV prevalence in the general population and to determine the socio-demographic and geographic risk factors associated with increased HIV infection.

152. The trend of HIV prevalence in the age groups 15-24 and 15-49 in ANC sentinel surveillance surveys conducted from 2003 until 2019 shows a remarkable decline in both age groups, with a reduction to 0.20% and 0.36%, respectively. During the reporting period, the prevalence across the years was in the range of 0.85% - 0.36% for the age group 15-49 and 0.43% - 0.20% for the age group 15-24 years.
153. Eritrea is undertaking a continuous expansion and strengthening of the existing antiretroviral therapy (ART) sites and is scaling the provision of ART in ANC sites so that pregnant women could receive treatments without referral to other sites. Currently, there are 53 ART sites in the country. It is estimated that the national coverage for ART in Eritrea is 80%.
154. The establishment of the association of persons living with HIV/AIDS (named Bidho, meaning Challenge) has assisted in avoiding stigmatization and marginalization of persons living with HIV/AIDS. The Eritrean Social Marketing Group of the NUEYS also promotes awareness programmes, support schemes and condom distribution to assist HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

Tuberculosis (TB)

155. According to the Global TB Report of 2019, Eritrea has an estimated TB Incidence of 89 per 100,000 populations, including HIV positive people. The WHO estimates case detection to stand at 61%. This means that the country is able to identify 61% of all suspected TB cases.
156. Table 10 below shows the number & % of all forms of drug sensitive TB case detection in 0-14 year old children and 15 & above year old adults during this reporting period. Children 0-14 years old comprise 12.5% - 16.8% of the total cases detected. In general case notification for Eritrea in 2019 is recorded at 65%.

Table 10: Number & percent of drug sensitive TB notification of all forms in adults & children, 2014-2019

| Drug sensitive TB notification of all forms (Bacteriologically confirmed & Clinically diagnosed), including previously treated | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| Year | 0-14 Years Children | 15 years & above | Total Patients | % children 0-14 Years | % 15 ears & above | |
| 2014 | 306 | 2119 | 2425 | 12.6 | 87.4 | |
| 2015 | | 321 | 1774 | 2095 | 15.3 | 84.7 |
| 2016 | | 356 | 1890 | 2246 | 15.9 | 84.1 |
| 2017 | | 350 | 1731 | 2081 | 16.8 | 83.2 |
| 2018 | | 293 | 1599 | 1892 | 15.5 | 84.5 |
| 2019 | | 230 | 1612 | 1842 | 12.5 | 87.5 |

Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

157. Table 11 below shows the number & percent of Multiple Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) notification where the rates for 0-14 year old children had been zero across the years of this reporting period. However, in 2019 one case out of the total 17 cases had been under-15 years old. That can be taken as statistically insignificant as the denominator is very small.

Table 11: Number and percent of multiple drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) notification all form in adults & children, 2014-2019 - Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

| Multiple Drug Resistant TB notification all form (Bacteriological confirmed & Clinical Diagnosis) | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Year | 0-14 Years Children | 15 years & above | Total Patients | % children 0-14 Years | % 15 years & above | |
| 2014 | 0 | 22 | 22 | 0 | 100 | |
| 2015 | 0 | 32 | 32 | 0 | 100 | |
| 2016 | 0 | 24 | 24 | 0 | 100 | |
| 2017 | 0 | 24 | 24 | 0 | 100 | |
| 2018 | 0 | 16 | 16 | 0 | 100 | |
| 2019 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 5.9 | 94.1 | |

158. During the same period, contacts of bacteriologically confirmed pulmonary TB cases were traced. As a result, a big number of under-5 children contacts were traced by health workers and TB DOTs promoters and were diagnosed as TB in the range of 3.6% - 16.5% across the years. In addition, 17.5% - 44% of children contacts were enrolled to Intermittent Preventive Treatment (IPT) prophylaxis.

Table 12: Activity of contact tracing among <5 children, 2015-2019- Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

| Year | Number of <5 contacts traced | Number and % Diagnosed as TB | Number and % enrolled to IPT |
|-------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2015 | 448 | 32 (7.1%) | 124 (38.3%) |
| 2016 | 805 | 43 (5.3%) | 142 (21.4%) |
| 2017 | 1025 | 37 (3.6%) | 153 (17.5%) |
| 2018 | 382 | 63 (16.5%) | 132 (41.4%) |
| 2019 | 388 | 36 (9.3%) | 155(44.0%) |

159. More than 99% of functional TB laboratories have participated in external quality assurance. Active case finding among high risk groups, including diabetics, miners, pregnant mothers, mal-nourished children and prisoners has been strengthened. The National TB Reference Laboratory has been equipped with LPA.

160. The Committee’s recommendation (paragraph 16) to ‘ensure to provide health care that is appropriate to children’s health needs and health services are adequately staffed with trained health personnel’, is taken care by the quantity and quality of human resources produced by in-country colleges, scholarships abroad and even recruitment of foreign professionals. In the National Health Policy of the State of Eritrea, the health workforce goal is “to get the right workers with the right qualification/skills in the right place doing the right things.”
161. The MoH document on “Definitions and Functions of Various Levels of Health Care Service Delivery in Eritrea”, which was developed in 2017, clearly defines the staffing norms at various different levels of the health care service delivery. The Health Sector has been revising its Human Resource Strategic Plan in line with the human resource requirements for achieving Primary Health Care (PHC) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Owing to UHC, disease patterns and the health needs, further expansion and strengthening of existing workforce has become a requirement for the ministry.
162. The public health workforce has been working to have the necessary competence to carry out essential public health functions, such as surveillance, monitoring, preparedness and response, as well as deliver population-based services in health protection and promotion (e.g. education campaigns) and disease prevention (e.g. food safety assurance and vaccination campaigns). Collaboration across sectors, with communities and with health workers has been particularly important facet of the public health workforce who plays a crucial role at the intersection of many components of the health system.
163. In response to the recommendation of the Committee to “increase budgetary allocation to the health sector and ensure health services are easily accessible to children in rural areas”, the State party has been committed to invest the possible available resources to deploy in the health sector.
164. Concerning the Committee’s recommendation to “implement measures to address the under 5 mortality rate and improve sanitation”, Eritrea is humble enough to inform that it is one of the few African countries that have achieved the health related millennium development goals among which under 5 mortality rates has been reduced. Vaccine-preventable diseases and malnutrition and maternal and child health are among the priority areas of intervention. Furthermore, Community IMNCI, community and facility-based feedings, supplementary child feeding and Vitamin-A supplementation and immunization are among the strategies implemented to reduce infant and child mortality. However, continuous efforts are needed that revisiting overall strategies for reducing child mortality including sanitation and hygiene is needed to reach the optimum level. Launching an all

aggressive strategy to make Eritrea Open Defecation Free by 2022 is a further step towards that.

165. Currently, Eritrea has introduced High Impact Nutrition Intervention (HINI) namely; (i) Maternal & child care, infection prevention & control, and direct feeding, (ii) Food security, (iii) Education and child development, (iv) Health, hygiene, water and sanitation, ((v) Special protection actions that address the socially excluded and (vi) Nutrition policy and information systems.

Neonatal, infant and under-5 children's health services

166. Paediatric services are integrated in all health facilities in the country, except for the Orotta National Paediatric Hospital which provides specialized services. There are Intensive Neonatal Care Units in all six regional and 10 other hospitals. In addition, there are eight facilities that solely provide maternal and child health services. To increase the skills of health workers and community health agents, 412 health workers were trained in IMNCI, 111 in essential neonatal care and 536 community health agents were trained in home-based maternal and neonatal care. Tetanus is no more a problem in Eritrea, since the country has virtually eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus since 2004, and was recognized as such by W.H.O in 2007. The successful outcome was the result of the incorporation of TT vaccine into routine and antenatal care, and an initiative providing tetanus inoculations to school-age girls.

167. According to the estimates Developed by the UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation in 2019, the Neonatal Mortality Rate was reduced by 49%, from 35 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 18 in 2018. In 2018, neonatal mortality in Eritrea accounted for 58% of the infant deaths and 43% of the under-fives deaths. The institutional neonatal mortality rate during this reporting period ranges between 1.9-3.4/1000 live births (Table 14). Similarly, the Inter- Agency Group estimated that the Infant Mortality Rate was reduced by 67%, from 94 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 31 in 2018. The under-five Mortality Rate was reduced by 73%, from 153 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 30 in 2019. The Sex-Specific under-five mortality rate for females was reduced from 139 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 36 in 2018, while the under-five mortality rate for males was reduced from 166 in 1990 to 47 in 2018. As compared to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa and the Africa Region as a whole, Eritrea is showing positive results in the level of under-5 mortality rates (Table 13).

Table 13: Institutional Number of Live births, Number of Neonatal Deaths and Neonatal Mortality Rate per 1000 Live Births

| Period | Number of Live Births | Number of Neonatal Death | Institutional Neonatal Mortality Rate /1000 Live Births |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 2014 | 41570 | 141 | 3.4 |
| 2015 | 43676 | 114 | 2.6 |
| 2016 | 43522 | 83 | 1.9 |
| 2017 | 42512 | 77 | 1.8 |
| 2018 | 47835 | 105 | 2.2 |
| 2019 | 50812 | 147 | 2.9 |

Source: MoH, Report 2019

Table 14: Comparison of Sex-Specific Under-five Mortality Rate/ 1,000 live births

| Sex-Specific Under-five Mortality Rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) | | | | | | |
|---|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | 1990 | | | 2018 | | |
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Eritrea | 166 | 139 | 153 | 47 | 36 | 42 |
| SS Africa | 189 | 171 | 182 | 83 | 72 | 78 |
| Africa | 186 | 168 | 165 | 81 | 70 | 71 |
| World | 96 | 91 | 93 | 41 | 36 | 39 |

Source: MoH, Report 2019

168. The number of children under-5 years who received services in all health facilities at the outpatient department (OPD) and inpatient department (IPD) levels and the number of deaths and the death rate per 1,000 cases ranged from 0.4 to 1.6. The leading causes of death among children in health facilities during 2014-2019 were respiratory system infections/pneumonia, septicaemia, malnutrition and diarrhoea. These are all preventable diseases associated with poverty and poor sanitation, against which the country is working aggressively to ensure child health.

Table 15: Number of Under-5 children who received services or died in health facilities at OPD and IPD

| Year | Health Station | Health Centres and Hospitals | | |
|------|----------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| | OPD | Diagnosis at OPD/IPD | Death at OPD/IPD | Death/1,000 Dx. at OPD/IPD |
| 2014 | 1361300 | 461666 | 198 | 0.4 |
| 2015 | 1086686 | 425058 | 665 | 1.6 |
| 2016 | 1147819 | 427337 | 629 | 1.5 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------|-----|-----|
| 2017 | 1312821 | 462361 | 625 | 1.4 |
| 2018 | 1861002 | 581051 | 702 | 1.2 |
| 2019 | 1861925 | 582170 | 802 | 1.4 |

Source: MoH, DHIS-2, 2019

169. Eritrea faces the twofold burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Regarding the recommendation of the Committee to “increase measures to eliminate communicable and non-communicable diseases and ensure they reach rural areas”, one has to recognize that Eritrea was again one of the few African countries to achieve the MDG-6 where prevalence, incidence and mortality rates of malaria, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis which have been reduced to a remarkable rate. Services are equitably distributed both to urban and rural areas. Continuous efforts are underway to reduce the sources of and to implement low-cost high-impact interventions in the prevention and control of prevalent diseases such as diarrheal diseases, vector-borne and water-borne diseases (Schistosomiasis, dengue fever, Chikungunya, and dysentery), Hepatitis and Leishmaniasis, etc.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

170. Among the most common communicable childhood diseases of public health concern had been tuberculosis, vaccine preventable diseases, Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), Diarrhoea, Malaria and HIV/AIDS. Eritrea has shown remarkable achievements in controlling communicable diseases during the past two decades.

171. The objective for NCDs is to ensure healthy lifestyles, reduce disabilities and premature death due to non-communicable causes. Basically, the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases focuses on the promotion of lifestyle and change of behaviour in relation to the risk factors of NCDs. Furthermore, it focuses on the early diagnosis and treatment of diseases that are either genetically acquired or caused by poor lifestyles.

172. Some of the NCDs that showed increased prevalence globally were: diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, substance abuse, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, cancer and injuries. The MOH has therefore given parallel attention to both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Table 16: below shows the major cases of non-communicable diseases diagnosed at health facilities and received care. The number of cases detected need careful attention for their prevention and control.

Table 16: Number of cases of major non-communicable diseases that gained care at health facilities

| Diseases | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Diabetes | 5,219 | 5,201 | 6,380 | 6,684 | 8,133 |
| Hypertension | 8,239 | 8,109 | 9,672 | 10,258 | 10,746 |
| Cardio-vascular Diseases | 4,324 | 3,883 | 4,822 | 5,502 | 5,145 |
| Cancer | 511 | 521 | 691 | 573 | 638 |
| Asthma | 8,198 | 7,741 | 9,011 | 10,229 | 9,135 |

173. Although NCDs were not previously common among children and adolescents in Eritrea, facility reports show that there are considerable numbers of cases of rheumatic heart diseases (RHD), congenital heart diseases (CHD) and diabetes among children. During 2012-2019, a number of valvular pathologies of RHD (Thickening of mitral valves, Aortic valve regurgitation and MV regurgitation & mild stenosis) and CHD have been identified. The MOH in collaboration with an Italian team of cardiologist (UNCORE UNMONDE MASSA) have introduced screening for RHD and CHD in school children since 2012.

174. Table 17 below shows the number of school children 5-18 years old screened for RHD and CHD. It is observed that a total of 18,076 students in 194 elementary, junior secondary & senior secondary schools were screened and that out of the total screened 992 (5.1%) and 323 (1.8%) were positive for RHD and CHD, respectively, Thus, posing an economic burden in medical and surgical care. The prevalence of RHD is very alarming as it nearly equals the upper points of the global prevalence that ranges between 3-6%.

Table 17: Number of school children screened for RHD and CHD, 2012-2019

| Year | Number of schools | Number of students screened | Number +ve for RHD | % +ve for RHD | Number +ve for CHD | % +ve for CHD |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 2012-2014 | 73 | 6,287 | 333 | 5.3 | 86 | 1.4 |
| 2012-2015 | 78 | 6,935 | 365 | 5.3 | 96 | 1.4 |
| 2016 | 3 | 507 | 24 | 4.7 | 8 | 1.6 |
| 2017 | 12 | 859 | 44 | 5.1 | 16 | 1.9 |
| 2018 | 13 | 1,143 | 55 | 4.8 | 29 | 2.5 |
| 2019 | 15 | 2,345 | 101 | 4.3 | 88 | 3.8 |
| Total | 194 | 18,076 | 922 | 5.1 | 323 | 1.8 |

175. Students whose ultrasound examinations were suggestive of rheumatic heart disease and congenital heart disease were referred to the national referral hospital to start adequate programs of follow-up and secondary prevention, while students with normal hearts have all been properly educated on primary prevention. The problem has very large dimensions and significant social implications associated with the fact that healthy children, following a trivial pharyngeal tonsillitis can become seriously ill and socially unusable.
176. The Extended Program on Immunization (EPI) is one of the most successful programs in Eritrea. So far, the State party has introduced 11 different vaccines into routine immunization services, to prevent vaccine preventable diseases which have been found out to be public health problems in the country. These are BCG, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis-B, Homophiles Influenza type B, Rotavirus vaccine, Pneumococcal Conjugated Vaccine (PCV-13) and Measles. Moreover, on top of integrating vitamin “A” supplementation with routine immunization services since 2016, biannual Vitamin “A” supplementation is provided every six months for children 6-59 months of age, to promote immunity development and infection prevention.
177. The strategies used in the EPI, among others, include awareness campaigns, sustainable outreach services (SOS), reaching every child/every district (REC/RED), encouraging community participation and Periodic Intensified Routine Immunization (PIRI). These strategies are aimed at providing services to nomadic population groups and people living in hard to reach or less accessible geographical areas. Eritrea is a country which has been scoring high vaccination coverage for the last decade. As a result of this the country has been awarded certificates at three different times, among which is UNICEF’s award given ‘‘In recognition of Outstanding Achievement in Vaccine Stock Management Tools and Indicators for Action and Utilization’’ on 29 August, 2016.
178. The MOH, in collaboration with partners, has been taking steps to scale up Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (C-IYCF), community education and therapeutic feeding programs at the community and facility levels. The admissions in Table 19 are severe cases of malnutrition in under-5 children while admissions in Table 20 are moderate cases of malnutrition. During the reporting period, the number of health facilities providing nutrition services was 260.
179. Micro-nutrient supplements, including iron-folate, vitamin A and zinc sulphate, are also provided at health facilities for pregnant women. Moreover, potassium iodate is provided to local salt producers for salt iodization.

Table 18: Community-based therapeutic feeding

| Year | Admission | Cured | Deaths | Defaulters |
|------|-----------|--------|--------|------------|
| 2014 | 10,321 | 9,588 | 13 | 720 |
| 2015 | 8,813 | 8,123 | 29 | 661 |
| 2016 | 15,484 | 14,279 | 146 | 1,059 |
| 2017 | 11,992 | 11,196 | 24 | 772 |
| 2018 | 4,139 | 3,827 | 14 | 298 |
| 2019 | 9,472 | 8,312 | 20 | 1,140 |

Source: MOH, DHIS-2, 2019

Table 19: Facility-based therapeutic feeding

| Year | Admission | Cured | Deaths | Defaulters |
|------|-----------|-------|--------|------------|
| 2014 | 3,875 | 3,699 | 124 | 52 |
| 2015 | 3,768 | 3,574 | 133 | 61 |
| 2016 | 4,751 | 4,432 | 227 | 92 |
| 2017 | 3,121 | 2,973 | 108 | 40 |
| 2018 | 1,568 | 1,540 | 25 | 3 |
| 2019 | 2,868 | 2,755 | 63 | 50 |

Source: MOH, DHIS-2, 2019

Table 20: Supplementary feeding program

| Year | Admission | Cured | Deaths | Defaulters |
|------|-----------|--------|--------|------------|
| 2014 | 40,187 | 37,887 | 100 | 2,200 |
| 2015 | 33,862 | 31,634 | 1 | 2,227 |
| 2016 | 50,679 | 46,775 | 126 | 3,778 |
| 2017 | 32,809 | 29,845 | 7 | 2,957 |
| 2018 | 16,387 | 14,343 | 351 | 1,693 |
| 2019 | 34,266 | 31,963 | 17 | 2,286 |

180. Concerning the recommendation made to ‘‘increase the number of health professionals trained on management of HIV/AIDS and the availability of ART to pregnant women and children with HIV/AIDS ensuring children in underserved communities or where the disease is most prevalent have access to ART, ‘’ developing human resource for HIV/AIDS is one of the priority programs of the Ministry of Health. The program has been in continuous improvement in relation to the ways it has been managed and the strategies it has used to serve the population. The services are made freely available to all without discrimination.

181. The State party follows the WHO guidelines of case notifications adjusted by a standard factor to account for under-reporting over diagnosis and under diagnosis to estimate the TB incidence. According to the Global TB Report of 2019, Eritrea has an estimated TB incidence of 89 per 100,000 populations, including HIV positive people with 3100 TB cases in 2019. Cognizant of the fact that case notifications yearly was below the target, the country took measures to use DOTs- promoters from the community. Furthermore, the MOH health promotion and TB program have been producing different promotional materials in tandem with the mass media campaigns.
182. Campaigns to increase the rate of breast feeding is highly emphasised in the MOH health policy and strategy. It is indicated that the nutritional status (including balanced, under and over nutrition) of the population especially amongst children, pregnant and lactating mothers shall be monitored and improved and the prevalence of protein, energy and micronutrient deficiencies shall be reduced using various nutrition interventions and nutrition and growth promotion activities. The strategic direction for improving nutritional status of the people is to promote breast feeding and growth monitoring activities, and to strengthen routine supplementation with vitamin A, iron, zinc, etc, including during ANC and the postnatal care of mothers. Campaigns, including practical feeding demonstrations, are conducted. These are aimed at exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and providing children with balanced diet derived from food materials available in communities. Such activities are conducted at health facilities and at the community level by social workers and agriculture agents.
183. The Breast-Milk Substitute (BMS) is already in use in the country in accordance to the health policy of the Government. In practice, the MOH promotes breast-milk substitutes only when these are absolutely necessary. In Eritrea over 98% of children are breastfed, and the median duration of breastfeeding of 22 months is among the highest in Africa. However, similar to the situation in other African countries, exclusive breastfeeding remains low with a median duration of only 2.5 months.
184. Health financing in Eritrea is heavily subsidized by the government. Except for the very minimum of out of pocket (OOP) paid by those who are able to pay, the population receives health services free of charge. Especially, maternal and child health services including ANC, skilled personnel assisted deliveries, postnatal care, immunization and all primary health care services are made available free of charge. Furthermore, patients with common chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental disorders etc. are treated free of charge. In the current National Health Policy of 2020, it is recommended that the country should look for other mechanisms of health financing to ensure the sustainability

and availability of services and to achieve UHC in its three dimensions (essential services availability, essential service coverage, and financial risk protection).

VI. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

EDUCATION POLICY

185. Eritrea's national education policy guarantees the right of education to every citizen. Basic education is compulsory, and education is free of charge at all levels. Moreover, students from poor families are given stationery, school uniform, etc. support and are exempted from nominal miscellaneous school contributions. To promote free tertiary education, the Government has opened eight colleges spatially distributed throughout the country. The previous University of Asmara is functioning as the Orotta School of Medicine and Health of Sciences as well as a centre for the promotion of research.
186. The Committee recommends (paragraph 17) a strict application of the National Service Proclamation (1994). The proclamation demands all concerned citizens (ages 18 to 40) to fulfil their national service obligations which under normal conditions entails 6 months of national service training and 12 months of participation in development activities. There is no underage involvement in military duties and no conscription of children in military duties. It is to be noted however, that the duration of the national service has been extended in the last 20 years as the country has to garble with defending its survival and national sovereignty under the condition of the protracted existential external threats for over two decade.
187. Continuous pre-service and in-service training is provided to teachers and this helps in improving their professional capabilities for delivering quality education. Moreover, the government has increased the salaries of civil servants, including those of teachers since 2015, thereby motivating more people to become teachers.
188. The 2010 National Education Policy, ensures the GoSE's commitment to promote equal rights and opportunities in education with equity consideration being given to prioritize vulnerable communities and social groups and un-reached areas and levels. The policy aspires to expand and promote quality education for all children at all levels:
- The number of schools at the pre-primary, elementary, middle and secondary levels increased by 28.8%, 5.8%, 14.8% and 3.8% respectively

- The number of schools in rural and remote areas increased by 35%, 8.2%, 18.6% and 15.7% at the pre-primary, elementary, middle and secondary level respectively. The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the elementary level; and the expansion of secondary and tertiary education opportunities are essential components of the education system.
- The education system also provides alternative routes to those who may not benefit from the formal provisions. These include Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) for children who fail to enrol in elementary schools at the right age, education for nomadic communities, and adult literacy, which targets adults as well as children who had missed out mainstream educational opportunities.
- The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the elementary level; and the expansion of secondary and tertiary education opportunities are essential components of the education system. The education system also provides alternative routes to those who may not benefit from the formal provisions. These include Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) for children who fail to enrol in elementary schools at the right age, education for nomadic communities, and adult literacy, which targets adults as well as children who had missed out educational opportunities.

Basic Education

189. In the Eritrean education system, basic education starts with two years of pre-primary schooling (ages 4-5). This is followed by five-years of Elementary Education, (ages 6-10), and with three-years of Middle School Education, (ages 11-13) which is compulsory for school-age children. This official school age has been effective since the 2012/13 academic year. The State provides free, compulsory education up to and including grade 8. Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education are also all free of charge.

190. Education in the mother tongue helps the child to express his/her ideas freely. It reinforces the learner's own identity and cultural identity, and enhances the acquisition of a language offering wider communication and greater practical opportunities. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has made considerable efforts to facilitate mother tongue education. The recruitment of teachers who could teach in each of the nine local languages in the country and upgrading their academic and professional competence are significant achievements in this regard. The number of schools teaching in the mother tongue has generally increased consistently. This has been the result of the measures taken to expand access to education, particularly for remote, rural areas.

Table 21. Elementary Education: Number of schools that teach in the mother tongue

| Academic year | Languages | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|-------|---------|--------|------|------|-------|----------|
| | Afar | Arabic | Bilen | Hidareb | Kunama | Nara | Saho | Tigre | Tigrigna |
| 2014/15 | 58 | 81 | 29 | 2 | 26 | 20 | 56 | 212 | 495 |
| 2015/16 | 59 | 81 | 31 | 4 | 26 | 20 | 58 | 211 | 491 |
| 2016/17 | 61 | 81 | 31 | 5 | 28 | 20 | 56 | 210 | 501 |
| 2017/18 | 61 | 78 | 31 | 6 | 30 | 22 | 55 | 217 | 510 |
| 2018/19 | 65 | 80 | 31 | 6 | 38 | 20 | 57 | 228 | 511 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

Pre-school Education

191. The perspective of the GoSE is that investment in early childhood education and development contributes directly to the promotion of child rights, poverty alleviation, sustainable human resource development, Basic Education for All, and Health for All. As indicated in the National Education Policy, the main objective of pre-school education is to develop children's knowledge, skills and attitudes and make them ready for the next educational level. Pre-school education facilitates the socialization, creativity, critical thinking and self-esteem of the child. In Eritrea, pre-school education is provided in formal Kindergartens and in non-formal Community Care-giving Centres or Rural, Community Children's Centres.

192. During the reporting period, considerable efforts have been made to expand early child education, with special emphasis on rural and remote areas. From 2014/15 up to 2018/19, the total number of formal pre-primary schools has increased from 483 to 622. This indicates a 29% increase. 67.4% of the total number of schools in 2018/19 were found in rural areas. Enrolment at the pre-school level increased by 9% in 2018/19, as compared to the 2014/15 academic year. Almost 49% of the total enrolment in 2018/19 was that of females.

Table 22: Pre-school Education: Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, by year and sex

| Academic Year | Enrolment | | | GER | | | NER | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 21,723 | 20,399 | 42,122 | 18.3 | 18.0 | 18.2 | 16.7 | 16.4 | 16.6 |
| 2015/16 | 23,264 | 21,969 | 45,233 | 19.4 | 19.2 | 19.3 | 17.7 | 17.5 | 17.6 |
| 2016/17 | 23,196 | 21,702 | 44,898 | 18.9 | 18.5 | 18.7 | 17.3 | 16.8 | 17.1 |
| 2017/18 | 24,231 | 22,965 | 47,196 | 19.4 | 19.2 | 19.3 | 17.5 | 17.4 | 17.4 |
| 2018/19 | 23,673 | 22,352 | 46,025 | 18.8 | 18.6 | 18.7 | 17.5 | 17.2 | 17.4 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19. Key: GER is Gross Enrolment Ratio and NER is Net Enrolment Ratio

193. From table 23, one can observe that there was a general increase in enrolment, both in urban and rural areas in 2018/19, compared to 2014/15. Moreover, comparing 2018/19 with 2014/15 the increase in enrolment in rural areas was almost 29.2%. At the same time, female enrolment in rural areas showed an increase of 30.3%. This being said, however, GoSE is aware that much more needs to be done, since the majority of children of the appropriate age do not yet have access to pre-school education. There are major challenges in terms of the availability of ECCE facilities, qualified teachers, etc.

Table 23: Pre-school Education: Rural /Urban Enrolment

| Academic year | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 2014/15 | 15,306 | 7,846 | 7,460 | 26,816 | 13,881 | 12,935 |
| 2015/16 | 18,309 | 9,312 | 8,997 | 26,924 | 13,952 | 12,972 |
| 2016/17 | 18,206 | 9,362 | 8,844 | 26,692 | 13,834 | 12,858 |
| 2017/18 | 20,616 | 10,622 | 9,994 | 26,431 | 13,530 | 12,901 |
| 2018/19 | 19,778 | 10,058 | 9,720 | 26,247 | 13,615 | 12,632 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

Elementary Education

194. In 2014/15 there were 955 elementary schools and these increased to 1010 in 2018/19. This shows a 5.8% increase. Out of the total number of schools in 2018/19, 82.8% had been established in rural and remote areas.

195. Enrolment at the elementary level has shown a small gradual decrease over the report period. This decrease could be either due to an actual decrease in enrolment or due to entry age adjustments. At the same time, GER has shown a decreasing trend from 2015/16 to 2018/19. On the other hand, there was a small increasing trend in NER in the same period. This indicates a decrease in the number of over age students. Nevertheless, a successful Complementary education Program (CEE) has been on-going to address the rights of over-age children who had missed to attend the formal program.

Table 24: Elementary Education: Enrolment, Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios by year and sex

| Academic Year | Enrolment | | | GER | | | NER | | |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------|-------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 197,898 | 163,786 | 361,684 | 110.6 | 98.0 | 104.5 | 84.7 | 79.1 | 82.0 |
| 2015/16 | 192,977 | 160,882 | 353,859 | 112.6 | 100.5 | 106.7 | 84.5 | 79.5 | 82.1 |
| 2016/17 | 190,231 | 156,776 | 347,009 | 105.9 | 93.4 | 99.9 | 85.9 | 80.4 | 83.2 |
| 2017/18 | 191,995 | 157,758 | 349,753 | 104.5 | 92.2 | 98.7 | 85.7 | 81.2 | 83.5 |
| 2018/19 | 190,502 | 156,980 | 347,482 | 103.3 | 91.1 | 97.4 | 85.6 | 81.5 | 83.6 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

196. Table 25 shows that total enrolment in rural areas at the elementary level increased in 2018/19 as compared to 2014/15, both for males and females. However, the enrolment in urban areas showed a decrease both for males and females. An overall assessment is being made to get a deeper understanding of the situation.

Table 25: Elementary Education: Rural /Urban Enrolment

| Academic Year | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 2014/15 | 223,858 | 125,109 | 98,749 | 137,826 | 72,789 | 65,037 |
| 2015/16 | 213,669 | 118,869 | 94,800 | 140,190 | 74,108 | 66,082 |
| 2016/17 | 209,848 | 117,468 | 92,380 | 137,161 | 72,763 | 64,398 |
| 2017/18 | 215,189 | 120,218 | 94,971 | 134,564 | 71,777 | 62,787 |
| 2018/19 | 226,256 | 125,890 | 100,366 | 121,226 | 64,612 | 56,614 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

Middle School Education

197. The total number of middle schools increased from 352 during the same period showing a 14.8% increase and 74.8% in 2018/19 in rural and remote areas. This is because most of the new schools were built in these areas. This is a result of the concerted effort made establish middle schools in rural and remote areas and minimize dropout.

198. Enrolment at the middle school level increased by 20% from 2014/15 to 2018/19. Female enrolment increased by 23.7% in the same period. At the same time, both GER and NER increased by 12.5 and 6.5 percentage points respectively.

Table 26: Middle School Education: Enrolment, Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, by year and sex

| Academic Year | Enrolment | | | GER | | | NER | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|---------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 80,882 | 66,149 | 147,031 | 80.3 | 72.4 | 76.6 | 37.2 | 38.4 | 37.8 |
| 2015/16 | 76,925 | 64,821 | 141,746 | 77.9 | 72.6 | 75.4 | 39.8 | 42.1 | 40.9 |
| 2016/17 | 85,628 | 72,495 | 158,123 | 84.6 | 79.2 | 82.0 | 42.2 | 45.3 | 43.7 |
| 2017/18 | 93,830 | 80,526 | 174,356 | 90.9 | 86.2 | 88.7 | 43.2 | 47.0 | 45.0 |
| 2018/19 | 94,989 | 81,545 | 176,534 | 91.4 | 86.6 | 89.1 | 42.5 | 46.3 | 44.3 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19.

199. Table 27 shows that enrolment at the middle level increased both in urban and rural areas from 2014/15 to 2018/19. In rural areas, enrolment increased by 29%. Female enrolment increased by 36% during these years.

Table 27: Middle level: Rural /Urban Enrolment

| Academic Year | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 2014/15 | 70,112 | 40,528 | 29,584 | 76,919 | 40,354 | 36,565 |
| 2015/16 | 64,521 | 36,837 | 27,684 | 77,225 | 40,088 | 37,137 |
| 2016/17 | 75,071 | 42,549 | 32,522 | 83,052 | 43,079 | 39,973 |
| 2017/18 | 82,850 | 46,512 | 36,338 | 91,506 | 47,318 | 44,188 |
| 2018/19 | 90,495 | 50,153 | 40,262 | 86,119 | 44,836 | 41,283 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

200. GoSE faces numerous challenges at the middle school level. Almost 56% of the appropriate age population's access to middle school education is not convenient and the number of middle schools and qualified teachers is far from adequate.

Elementary and Middle School flow rates

201. The concerted efforts of the GoSE to ensure access to education in all parts of the country has been crucial. The boarding schools in remote areas which have created opportunities for disadvantaged children from rural and remote areas in general, and girls in particular, to access education has been vital.

202. As indicated in Table 28, the dropout rate at the elementary and middle levels has decreased in 2018/19 as compared to 2014/15. This is partly the result of the additional boarding and para-boarding schools and hostels that have been opened in many parts of the country. Grade repetition which is a concern shows an increase both for male and female

students at the elementary and middle school levels in the same period and assessment is been made to identify the causes and address the problems.

Table 28: Elementary and Middle School Flow Rates, by year and sex

| Academic Year | Levels | Dropout% | | | Repetition% | | | Promotion% | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|------|------|-------------|------|------|------------|------|------|
| | | Male | Fem. | Tot | Male | Fem. | Tot. | Male | Fem. | Tot. |
| 2014/15 | Elementary | 8.7 | 5.8 | 7.4 | 8.8 | 6.5 | 7.8 | 82.5 | 87.7 | 84.9 |
| | Middle | 16.2 | 9.1 | 13.0 | 19.5 | 11.9 | 16.1 | 64.3 | 79.0 | 70.9 |
| 2015/16 | Elementary | 7.2 | 4.9 | 6.1 | 10.1 | 7.6 | 9.0 | 82.7 | 87.5 | 84.9 |
| | Middle | 9.5 | 5.1 | 7.5 | 19.7 | 11.6 | 16.0 | 70.8 | 83.3 | 76.5 |
| 2016/17 | Elementary | 6.3 | 4.4 | 5.5 | 10.4 | 7.9 | 9.3 | 83.3 | 87.6 | 85.2 |
| | Middle | 9.5 | 5.1 | 7.5 | 20.2 | 12.3 | 16.5 | 70.3 | 82.7 | 76.0 |
| 2017/18 | Elementary | 6.1 | 4.2 | 5.2 | 10.5 | 8.2 | 9.4 | 83.4 | 87.6 | 85.3 |
| | Middle | 9.5 | 5.2 | 7.5 | 22.0 | 13.8 | 18.2 | 68.6 | 81.0 | 74.3 |
| 2018/19 | Elementary | 7.1 | 5.0 | 6.1 | 10.9 | 8.4 | 9.8 | 82.1 | 86.6 | 84.1 |
| | Middle | 12.7 | 7.2 | 10.1 | 21.5 | 13.7 | 17.9 | 65.9 | 79.1 | 72.0 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

Secondary Education

203. The main purpose of secondary education is to prepare learners for further education and for the world of work through the provision of core occupational subjects that nurture deeper knowledge, skills, capabilities and attitude. Expanding secondary education was one of the efforts made during the reporting period, especially for hard-to-reach groups, in order to ensure continuity in particular for girls. In this regard, rural and remote area secondary schools encompassed 54.6% in 2018/19. However, enrolment at the secondary level both in rural and urban areas decreased by 14% between 2014/15 and 2017/18. But it started to increase in 2018/19 by almost 4%. Female enrolment also showed a similar trend during the same period.

Table 29: Secondary Education: Enrolment, Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios by year and sex

| Academic year | Enrolment | | | GER | | | NER | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 53,102 | 44,115 | 97,217 | 31.7 | 28.2 | 30.0 | 18.4 | 18.0 | 18.2 |
| 2015/16 | 46,383 | 41,281 | 87,664 | 28.8 | 26.4 | 28.3 | 18.4 | 18.6 | 19.0 |
| 2016/17 | 45,387 | 41,234 | 86,621 | 27.5 | 27.1 | 27.3 | 17.5 | 19.2 | 18.3 |
| 2017/18 | 43,408 | 39,835 | 83,243 | 25.8 | 25.6 | 25.7 | 16.3 | 18.3 | 17.3 |
| 2018/19 | 44,593 | 41,638 | 86,231 | 26.4 | 26.6 | 26.5 | 17.1 | 19.6 | 18.3 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2018/19

Table 30: Secondary Education: Rural /Urban Enrolment

| Academic Year | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 2014/15 | 40,139 | 22,329 | 17,810 | 57,078 | 30,773 | 26,305 |
| 2015/16 | 37,511 | 19,757 | 17,754 | 50,153 | 26,626 | 23,527 |
| 2016/17 | 35,885 | 18,989 | 16,896 | 50,736 | 26,398 | 24,338 |
| 2017/18 | 34,441 | 18,048 | 16,393 | 48,802 | 25,360 | 23,442 |
| 2018/19 | 38,263 | 20,194 | 18,069 | 47,968 | 24,399 | 23,569 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators

204. The dropout rate at the secondary level showed a decrease of 14% from 2014/15 to 2018/19. In the same period, the repetition rate decreased by almost 3%. But, although the dropout and repetition rates decreased, they were still very high.

Table 31: Secondary Education: Flow rates, by year and sex

| Academic year | Drop out % | | | Repetition % | | | Promotion % | | |
|---------------|------------|--------|-------|--------------|--------|-------|-------------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 30.3 | 24.0 | 27.5 | 19.8 | 10.5 | 15.6 | 49.8 | 65.6 | 57.0 |
| 2015/16 | 14.5 | 11.1 | 12.9 | 23.3 | 12.3 | 18.1 | 62.2 | 76.7 | 68.9 |
| 2016/17 | 14.5 | 10.8 | 12.8 | 20.0 | 11.0 | 15.8 | 65.6 | 78.1 | 71.5 |
| 2017/18 | 13.3 | 10.2 | 11.8 | 19.8 | 11.3 | 15.8 | 66.9 | 78.5 | 72.4 |
| 2018/19 | 14.8 | 12.0 | 13.4 | 16.1 | 8.9 | 12.7 | 69.1 | 79.1 | 73.9 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2014/15-2018/19

205. Grade 11 students from all over the country go to the Warsay-Yikealo Secondary School in Sawa to attend grade 12. All students who had achieved passing marks in the Eritrean Secondary Education Certificate Examination enrol in colleges: The College of Arts and Social Sciences (in Adi-Keih), the College of Business and Economics (in Adi- Keih), the College of Marine Sciences and Technology (until recently located in Massawa), the Eritrea Institute of Technology (at Mai- Nefhi near Asmara), the Hamelmalo Agricultural College (in the outskirts of Keren) and the Orotta School of Medicine and Health Sciences (in Asmara). Contrary to the Committee's assertion (paragraph 22) students who fail to meet the college entrance requirement are assigned to various technical and vocational training institutions.

Gender Parity Index (GPI)

206. MoE has endeavoured to effectively and equitably address the education needs of socially disadvantaged groups in general, and the girl child in particular. Expanding educational opportunities for girls and women, and establishing their parity with boys and men by reducing the gender gap have been major issues of concern. Much emphasis has been laid on ensuring the participation, retention and performance of girls. Although gender disparity still prevails, the Gender Parity Index has shown a promising trend both at the middle school and secondary levels.

Table 32: Gender Parity Index

| Academic year | Pre-primary | Elementary | Middle | Secondary |
|---------------|-------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| 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 |
| 2017/18 | 0.94 | 0.82 | 0.86 | 0.92 |
| 2018/19 | 0.94 | 0.82 | 0.86 | 0.93 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

207. The efforts made during the stated years have resulted in a gradual increase in female enrolment at the elementary, middle and secondary levels. Thus, an increase of 5%, 21% and almost 2% was observed in enrolment at the elementary, middle and secondary levels respectively from 2014/15 to 2018/19. The net enrolment ratio for female students also showed a similar trend at all levels during the same period.

Table 33: Net Enrolment Ratio by year and sex

| Academic Year | Elementary | | | Middle | | | Secondary | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | Enrolment | | NER % | Enrolment | | NER % | Enrolment | | NER % |
| | Total | Female | F | Total | Female | F | Total | Female | F |
| 2014/15 | 283,815 | 132,244 | 79.1 | 72,560 | 35,047 | 38.4 | 58,839 | 28,083 | 18.0 |
| 2015/16 | 272,188 | 127,347 | 79.5 | 76,909 | 37,585 | 42.1 | 58,691 | 29,126 | 18.6 |
| 2016/17 | 289,174 | 134,886 | 80.4 | 84,179 | 41,468 | 45.3 | 58,077 | 29,244 | 19.2 |
| 2017/18 | 295,978 | 138,993 | 81.2 | 88,492 | 43,884 | 47.0 | 55,900 | 28,449 | 18.3 |
| 2018/19 | 298,418 | 140,439 | 81.5 | 87,816 | 43,602 | 46.3 | 59,647 | 30,650 | 19.6 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

Interventions for Promoting Girls' Education

208. A number of strategies and interventions have been put in place to bridge the gender disparity that exists in the education sector. Equitable access to education has been expanded. The number of schools increased at all levels during the indicated period.
209. On the basis of studies about factors that affect girls' education, the MoE has prepared a Communication Strategy on girls' education. The main objective is to increase access to education for girls and other disadvantaged groups. This includes six strategy recommendations: build a nation-wide movement, develop a mass media campaign, create a coalition for change, conduct social mobilization and capacity enhancement, and build a media environment and institute prizes and awards.
210. Intensive awareness-raising campaigns were carried out on sending children to school in general and the girl child in particular, in collaboration with various partners, such as Communities, Local Administrations, NUEW, NUEYS and other non-governmental organizations.
211. A study on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Eritrean Middle Schools was conducted in collaboration with UNICEF (2017). The main objective was to identify challenges girls face in schools during their menstrual periods and to come up with recommendations for addressing these challenges. As a pilot project some schools are already providing sanitation facilities for girls in zoba Maekel.
212. To ensure equitable access to education, financial and material incentives, such as stationery and sanitary materials, had been provided to children at school. Girls in disadvantaged areas had been the main beneficiaries of these incentives.
213. A comprehensive study on out-of-school children was conducted by MoE in December 2016. The overall objectives of the study were to identify the distribution of out-of-school children and core causes for their exclusion from schooling, and to minimize the number of out-of-school children in the country. 213. Peer education, students' festivals, providing various incentives, such as free stationery, exempting needy students from school payments, etc were taken to redress the existing inequities, and thereby bring as many children as possible to school and to keep them there. NUEW shoulders responsibility for these motivational activities and incentives until such time as the proportion of female participation in education attains parity.

214. 1,546 girls who had been good academic achievers during the reporting period were awarded with different school materials and monetary support amounting to 1,599,435.96 ERN.

215. The Girls' International Day, through the coordination of NUEW, MOE and UNICEF, has been celebrated every year since 2017 and is being used as a platform for the advancement of girl's education.

Implementation of Affirmative Action

216. Some of the notable examples and initiatives include, entrance requirement for higher education is slightly lower for girls (2 GPA for boys and 1.8 for girls); reserving minimum of 30% participation allocation for girls in technical and vocational education and training; day-care centres 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 lamps, makeup classes , etc.

Provision of Education for Nomadic Children

217. The GoSE gives much emphasis to nomadic education, since the education statistics indicate that Eritrean nomads still are few in comparison with the national ladder for enrolment, participation, class-room performance, gender balance and progression rates. This is mainly because nomads live widely dispersed and constantly move from place to place. Secondly, the significance of children's contribution in the life style of these communities and their households makes it difficult for parents to allow their children to participate in formal schooling. . Nevertheless, the government is taking concrete measures to improve the educational situation of nomadic children. 65 schools served nomadic communities in Eritrea in 2016/17, and 10 of these were boarding schools. The total enrolment in these schools was 7,528, of which 46% were female students.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

218. The GoSE believes that skills development is essential for economic growth. Hence, TVET is considered a key strategy for equipping people with relevant, adaptable skills for wage employment and for self-employment. Besides, non-formal skills development has been adopted as a strategy to meet economic requirements. This is expected to help create self-employment and income generation for certain target groups in accordance with their needs and the needs of the nation.

219. The MoE has exerted much effort to produce skilled and semi-skilled workers, with the aim of creating opportunities for gainful employment. Various types of training such as

auto- mechanics, building construction, drafting, electricity, electronics, general metal, machine shop, wood work, computer maintenance, etc. are provided in TVET Centers. Students have been trained for two years after completing grade 10, or for one year after completing grade 12.

Table 34: Technical & Vocational Education & Training: Enrolment, by year & sex

| Academic year | Technical Schools | | | National Centre for Vocational Training | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------|-------|---|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 2014/15 | 850 | 718 | 1568 | 987 | 1068 | 2055 |
| 2015/16 | 667 | 666 | 1333 | 386 | 509 | 895 |
| 2016/17 | 1416 | 1264 | 2680 | 978 | 1089 | 2067 |
| 2017/18 | 1505 | 1317 | 2822 | NA | NA | NA |
| 2018/19 | 1525 | 1310 | 2835 | 1144 | 932 | 2076 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

NA= Not Available

Adult and Continuing Education

220. The Literacy Program targets adults and out-of-school children and youths, and focuses on literacy and numeracy skills. The Post- Literacy Program includes basic science and social studies. The medium of instruction in these two programs is the mother tongue.

Table 35: Adult Literacy, 2014/15-2017/18

| Academic Year | Total number of participants | Number of female participants | Number of female participants who completed the program | % of female participants who completed the program |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 2014/15 | 39,469 | 35,222 | 29,022 | 82 |
| 2015/16 | 38,417 | 33,502 | 25,579 | 76 |
| 2016/17 | 40,203 | 35,690 | 27,183 | 76 |
| 2017/18 | 42,962 | 37,706 | 28,821 | 76 |

MOE Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

221. In 2018/19, a total of 34,471 participants enrolled in the National Adult Literacy Program. 88% of the total participants were women, and 78% of them completed the

program. A total of 2,844 teachers were deployed in this program, and female teachers constituted 25%. In addition, the Adult Literacy Program sometimes provided short vocational skills training for employability and entrepreneurship.

222. Continuing educational opportunities have been provided at the middle and secondary school levels to adults and youth who have discontinued education for various reasons. During the 2018/19 academic year, a total of 2,458 people enrolled in this program, and 46% of them were females.

Complementary Elementary Education (CEE)

223. The MoE has been running a program of Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) for out-of-school children who are from disadvantaged and remote rural areas. The main objective of the CEE program is to provide three years of basic education for out of school children aged 9-14 years. This program is equivalent to the five years of formal elementary education provided to younger children. During the 2018/19, a total of 11,690 children (46% of whom were girls) were enrolled.

Table 36: CEE Program: Enrolment, Dropout and Completion, by sex

| Academic year | Enrolment | | Dropout % | | Completion % | |
|----------------------|------------------|--------|------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|
| | Total | Female | Total | Female | Total | Female |
| 2014/15 | 7,032 | 2,990 | 15 | 15 | 85 | 85 |
| 2015/16 | 6,538 | 2,930 | 18 | 17 | 82 | 83 |
| 2016/17 | 8,589 | 3,994 | 15 | 15 | 85 | 85 |
| 2017/18 | 13,286 | 6,002 | 14 | 13 | 86 | 87 |
| 2018/19 | 11,690 | 5,347 | 15 | 15 | 85 | 85 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

Schools and Teachers

224. Expanding access to education (with special emphasis on the disadvantaged) has been one of the main targets of the government. A number of schools have been constructed and rehabilitated during the reporting period. The number of schools at all levels increased from 2014/15 until 2018/19, both in urban and rural areas. In the same period, schools in rural areas increased by 35%, 8%, 19%, and 16% at the pre-primary, elementary, middle and secondary levels respectively.

Table 37: Schools by level, location and year

| Level | 2014/15 | | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Urban | Rural |
| Pre primary | 173 | 310 | 172 | 334 | 184 | 340 | 197 | 301 | 203 | 419 |
| Elementary | 182 | 773 | 186 | 772 | 187 | 784 | 198 | 789 | 173 | 836 |
| Middle | 99 | 253 | 103 | 259 | 105 | 266 | 115 | 267 | 102 | 300 |
| Secondary | 53 | 51 | 53 | 52 | 54 | 54 | 56 | 52 | 49 | 59 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics, 2014/15-2018/19

225. The GoSE recognizes that an effective and efficient teacher education system is core to the provision of quality education and subsequently to national development. Thus, MoE has been tirelessly making efforts to address the major challenges in teacher education. As a result, the total number of teachers increased, except at the secondary level. An increase of 29%, 12%, and 21% was observed at the pre-primary, elementary and middle schools levels respectively between 2014/15 and 2018/19. The number of female teachers showed a similar pattern during the same period.

Table 38: Teachers, by level and sex

| Level | 2014/15 | | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Female | Total |
| Pre-primary | 1418 | 1456 | 1558 | 1601 | 1503 | 1541 | 1538 | 1603 | 1751 | 1876 |
| Elementary | 3002 | 8346 | 3275 | 8524 | 3418 | 8842 | 3523 | 9028 | 3733 | 9375 |
| Middle | 675 | 3563 | 658 | 3507 | 852 | 3920 | 1001 | 4321 | 964 | 4307 |
| Secondary | 631 | 2800 | 536 | 2567 | 591 | 2547 | 713 | 2810 | 599 | 2516 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2018/19.

Pupil Teacher Ratio

226. This ratio represents the average number of pupils per teacher. As table 41 indicates the teacher to pupil ratio had decreased at three out of the four levels from the academic year 2014/15 to 2018/19. This has been the result of the sustained efforts that the Government made to train and recruit as many teachers as possible during the reporting period.

Table 39: Pupil Teacher Ratio, by level and year

| Academic Year | Pupil Teacher Ratio | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| | Pre-primary | Elementary | Middle | Secondary |
| 2014/15 | 29 | 43 | 41 | 35 |
| 2015/16 | 28 | 42 | 40 | 34 |
| 2016/17 | 29 | 39 | 40 | 34 |
| 2017/18 | 29 | 39 | 40 | 30 |
| 2018/19 | 25 | 37 | 41 | 34 |

MoE, Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators, 2018/19.

Leisure, Recreation and Culture

227. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities are integral parts of the education system in the country. Physical education is provided at all levels of the education systems. Sport competitions, games and cultural activities are institutionalized at the regional, sub-regional and school levels. As part of the co-curricular activities conducted in schools, students participate in a variety of sports and cultural activities. Every year, a large number of competitions are held among schools in various creative arts, cultural and sports activities, at sub-regional, regional and national levels. These activities help students to be physically, as well as mentally strong. Students do participate in cultural activities in schools, which include: debating, general knowledge contests, painting, arts and handcrafts, innovation or creativity, drama and music. Moreover, there are a number of youth recreational establishments in the six regions of the country with plans to expand them to sub- regions and schools.

228. Concerning the health and general wellbeing of students, a health focal person, who checks students' health conditions, is assigned in every school. Students with minor ailments are provided with first aid. Mobile clinic services are provided at school level, which are worthy to mention here. It includes checking of students for their dental health and provision of Colgate's and brushes for free; checking of their eye health and provision of corrective eyeglasses free of cost and referral systems. These are very routinely done annually and provided free of cost by professionals, dentist, ophthalmologists and other support staff. However, those with serious health problems are referred to clinics and hospitals for further follow up.

229. The NUEYS organizes Cultural clubs that promote the youths in all aspects of their life and addresses issues that adversely affect young people. Important information using

dramas and music regarding health, gender, and other educational messages is disseminated in artistic styles by the youth. Such kind of dramas has been used as tools for bringing behavioural change among young students. The book (reading) clubs enhance and cultivate reading habits among students and youths and undertake a certain topic for discussion.

230. Members of the clubs also organize debates and general knowledge competitions that help them to enhance their knowledge and their confidence to express their ideas. This also cultivates the persuasion and negotiation skills, as well as the ability to defend what one believes, and it disseminates information.

231. The mini media club is mainly responsible for preparing weekly mini newsletter at school and village level. Its main objective is to cultivate the culture of press, information production and dissemination. This forum has created amateur journalists that influence and provide information to young students in their respective schools. Information is posted on the billboards of schools concerning activities of all established clubs which are distributed in all regions.

232. During the reporting period of 2014-2019, there were 55,015 (female 26,047) youths organized in 2,466 clubs. Girls are encouraged to participate in all clubs without distinction.

VII. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

233. The Committee's recommendation in Paragraph 19 mentions the need to develop and continually update a national database of children living with disabilities for effective and inclusive response". The GoSE has intensified the development of comprehensive Management Information Systems (MIS) in sector ministries and civil society organizations (CSOs) to collect, compile and verify data, including that of vulnerable and children with disabilities. In this vein, sector ministries and CSOs have made unrelenting efforts to build and strengthen their respective MIS. Data and information thus collected are used for informed decision making and policy formulation, including for the effective

implementation of the ACRWC and other international obligations. The data reflected in this report is a result of that effort. The ELFS of 2015/16 reported 7% of the total population are PWDs, out of which 13% are children with disabilities in the age group (0-17)

Table 40: Percentage distribution of people with disability by type of disability, according to background characteristics

| Background characteristics | | Types of disabilities | | | | | | Total Population |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|------------------|
| | | Seeing disability | Hearing disability | Communicating disability | Walking or climbing steps disability | Remembering or concentrating disability | Self-care disability (washing all over or dressing) | |
| ERITREA | 7.0 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 2.9 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 3,200,000 |
| Male | 7.9 | 2.9 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 3.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1,547,675 |
| Female | 6.2 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 2.6 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 1,652,325 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | |
| 0-4 | 0.6 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 2.9 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 468,612 |
| 5-9 | 1.9 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 449,150 |
| 10-14 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 432,852 |
| 15-19 | 4 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 355,432 |

Source: ELFS 2015/16

Table 41: Child population by age and sex

| Age | Total | Male | Female |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------|
| 0-4 | 468,612 | 247,326 | 221,286 |
| 5-9 | 449,151 | 231,430 | 217,721 |
| 10-14 | 432,853 | 220,650 | 212,203 |
| 15-18 | 306,344 | 157,956 | 148,388 |
| 0-18 | 1,656,960 | 857,362 | 799,598 |

Source: ELFS 2015/16

234. The GoSE underlines that disability is a human rights issue and duly addressed it in the National Charter and in the Macro-policy. With regard to the Committee's recommendation (paragraph 19) on Children with Disabilities the following can be stated: The ELFS of

2015/16 reported 7% of the total population are PWDs (225,156), out of which 13% are children with disabilities in the age group (0-17).

235. The national disability policy is prepared to promote and protect the rights of persons with disability in line to the ideals of social justice. Under the coordination of the MoLSW and the participation of all stakeholders, a comprehensive review of the Disability Policy that adequately reflects Children with Disabilities (CWDs) was conducted in 2016.
236. During the same year, the Comprehensive National Child Policy, which includes policy orientation for children with disabilities, was reviewed with the participation of all partners. The child policy highlights the promotion of the rights & welfare of children with disabilities, including their rights to education, health, livelihoods, transportation, and communication and protection from environmental barriers.
237. Sector policies & strategic plans such as those of the MOE, MOH & MoLSW also provide policy guidance and important implementation milestones concerning the rights & welfare of CWDs in their domains.
238. The four associations for persons with disabilities: (i) The Eritrean National War Disabled Veterans' Association (ENWDVA) (ii) The Eritrean Association of the Blind (ERNAB) (iii) The Eritrean National Association of the Deaf (ERNAD) and (iv) The National Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NAIDD). These associations play important roles in the promotion of the rights of CWDs. The four OPWDs also advocate for the best interest of CWDs and function independently implementing their respective strategies and programs in line to national goals and interest.
239. The MoLSW has been engaged in continuous advocacy and awareness raising activities aimed at promoting access to equal opportunities for PWDs and preventive measures against disability. These efforts are mainly geared towards avoiding stigmatization by communities and conducting campaigns on the rights of CWDs. They are implemented through MoLSWs extensive structure and the community based rehabilitation and development programme (CBRD).
240. During the reporting period, the CBRD programme was expanded to 67 sub zonal administrations and further down to districts known as kebab/village administrations. Besides enhancing community awareness, the CBRD committee members play critical roles in the advocacy for opportunities to equal access for CWDs and their families. As a result, CWDs from both sexes are able to i) improve their access to educational institutions

(schools for Children with Disabilities and other formal and non-formal education and training for disabled youth; ii) access to health care facilities.

241. Sensitization and advocacy campaigns have resulted, not only in the improvement of the lives of CWDs, but also in significant changes in the perception of people about children with disabilities (CWDs). More specifically, many CWDs have now been able to get early medical services, access to rehabilitation centres, education and training, and to participate in children's affairs.
242. The International Disability Day is one of the main events that are celebrated every year at the national level. It increases the participation and inclusion of children and persons with disabilities and promotes public awareness. Under the coordination of the MoLSW, yearly this public event involves the participation of over 1500 children/persons with disabilities who perform various awareness raising activities. The dissemination of the events through mass-media increases public awareness on the protection and rights of persons with disabilities against discrimination.
243. Initiatives taken by the MOE towards addressing the problems of CWDs include; i) preparing an Inclusive Education Policy which provides for the availability of facilities and resources for CWDs in schools; ii) promoting education for CWDs, such as the vision and hearing impaired and children affected by Autism and Down's syndrome; and iii) mainstreaming CWDs in secondary schools and colleges.
244. Prioritization of integrated early childhood interventions has enabled early detection of health problem or disabilities and has impacted the reduction of their effects and their severity. Early intervention is integrated in school health programmes through the joint effort of the Ministries of Health and Education. Moreover, children get eye, ear, and dental screening in their classes through the health focal teachers present in all schools and through mobile clinics.
245. As can be seen from table 42, currently, there are three special elementary schools, comprising one government and two non-governmental elementary schools for children with vision and hearing impairments respectively. The MoE provides support to the non-government schools, in terms of curricula, capacity building and other technical matters. Currently, construction is underway to expand the school for the deaf in Keren. Students who complete their studies in these three schools are integrated or mainstreamed at the next levels, where they obtain special support and consultation. Thus, in the academic year 2018/19 there were 6,835 visually impaired, 2,553 hearing impaired, 1,508 having

intellectual developmental disability and 840 physically handicapped students attended schools in regular classes, with special assistance as deemed necessary.

Table 42: Special Needs Education: Enrolment by year and sex

| Academic Year | Schools | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|
| | Abraha Bahta School for the blind | | The Two Schools for the deaf | |
| | Total | Female | Total | Female |
| 2014/15 | 51 | 20 | 145 | 69 |
| 2015/16 | 35 | 17 | 146 | 71 |
| 2016/17 | 35 | 15 | 145 | 40 |
| 2017/18 | 33 | 15 | 144 | 66 |
| 2018/19 | 33 | 15 | 144 | 66 |

MoE, Eritrea: Basic Education Statistics 2014/15-2018/19

246. In response to the Committee’s recommendation to ‘endeavour to improve and increase inclusive schools along with teachers’, sample classes have been constructed and are functioning. Currently, there are a number of special classes attached to primary schools in some selected regions of the country. There is a plan to expand these classes to all the regions. Numerous in-service training programs have been conducted to enhance the capacity of teachers in special needs education. Moreover, educational projects are underway in some parts of the country for children with Intellectual Developmental Disability.

247. According to the report of the National Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NAIDD), during the reporting period, the schools for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities increased from 8 in 2014 to 19 in 2019, and the student population increased from 255 to 646. The following table shows the number of IDD students.

Table 43: Number of IDD students by year and sex

| Regions | No. of schools | | No. of IDD students | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|------|---------------------|------|-------|--------|------|-------|
| | | | 2014 | | | 2019 | | |
| | 2014 | 2019 | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Mækel | 7 | 11 | 123 | 93 | 216 | 146 | 264 | 410 |
| Anseba | 1 | 2 | 21 | 18 | 39 | 21 | 53 | 74 |
| S/Red Sea | | 1 | | | | 20 | 31 | 51 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Gash Baraka | | 1 | | | | 9 | 11 | 20 |
| N/Red Sea | | 3 | | | | 26 | 30 | 56 |
| Debub | | 1 | | | | 14 | 21 | 35 |
| Total | 8 | 19 | 144 | 111 | 255 | 236 | 410 | 646 |

248. There are 210 visually impaired 7-17 year old children enrolled both in inclusive and special education schools.

249. To enhance the mobility of children with disabilities, the MoLSW continues to run two orthopaedic workshops located in the Maekel and Anseba regions. During the reporting period, one time funding from partners helped to procure various appliances contributing to augmentation of mobility of thousands of CWDs, including victims of landmines and survivors. Majority of the beneficiaries are from poor families which have been identified through the community-based social rehabilitation committees and MoLSW social workers.

250. The Donkeys for School project continues to provide donkeys and accessories to CWDs with greater focus on those residing in hard to reach and difficult terrains in order to ease their mobility/transport problems. The notable impacts of the ‘Donkey for School’ initiative has increased school enrolment, reduced dropouts, improved attendance and improved academic performance. During the reporting period of 2014-2019, the number of beneficiaries of the Donkey for School project rose from 1000 to over 1,400 and girls constituted 40%.

251. On the other hand, MoH developed a strategy that enables health professionals to identify developmental disabilities in early childhood. The strategy is incorporated in the Integrated Management of New Born and Childhood Illness (IMNCI). The MoH conducted training for health workers in primary health care facilities, who on returning to their respective duty stations, would incorporate the skills to identify any developmental disabilities and take appropriate remedial action. The MoH has also opened wings in some of health facilities where congenital and acquired disabilities such as Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), clubfoot, cleft palate and motor defects of children, etc. are corrected. Moreover, it has sustained the ‘polio free status’, by vaccinating all children 0-50 month old with the polio vaccine.

252. The Committee’s recommendation to support children with disabilities who come from poor households is well taken and is being put into practice through Government funds and cash assistance is disbursed annually for around 4,500 critical PWDs families. They are also beneficiaries in the social protection interventions implemented by the MoLSW.

253. At the same time, the four organizations for PWDs (OPWDs) reached a total of 3854 poor households of CWDs with support, including income generating interventions, appropriate mobility and vision and hearing appliances to improve the livelihoods of the CWDs. But, still the enormity of the problems encountering CWD is recognized.

CHILD LABOUR

254. The Committee's remarks of the adoption of measures by the State Party to address child labour with the enactment of the Labour Proclamation No. 118/2001 and regulations issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare on jobs a child cannot be engaged in is highly appreciated. However, the Committee's misled information of 183,000 children involved in child labour (citing the ILO report of 2000) is regrettably a gross error. Suffice to say that the date is first of all a very distant past, and a baseless accusation which served certain interests at that time. The Committee's concern over an alleged "lack of comprehensive measures to protect children from economic exploitation and the worst forms of child labour" is apparently unacceptable.

255. Child labour is strictly prohibited in Eritrea. A labour inspection report prepared in 2019 showed that in all of the inspected establishments, there was not a single specific infringement or contravention of the child related labour standards. Mindful of the negative or hazardous consequences of child labour, it is totally prohibited in large scale agricultural forestry, fishing, manufacturing and construction activities. Article 69 of the Labour Proclamation of Eritrea No.118/2001 provides a comprehensive list of work domains prohibited for young employees. Additionally, Article 68 of the same Labour Proclamation prohibits employing persons under the age of 14 years, and a young employee may not be assigned to work between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM. Similarly, Article 9 (2) states, no contract of employment shall be enforceable against a person below the age of eighteen, if it is determined to be prejudicial to the interest of that person.

256. Child labour monitoring is done by the Labour Inspection Service (in accordance Article 143-1 of Labour Proclamation) in collaboration with local administrations and if need be with the police which are authorized to identify and bring offenders to justice.

257. In the above context, social protection for vulnerable children in particular is given utmost attention to ensure continuing education and avoid any recourse to child labor. The preliminary labour force survey (2015-16), the educational statistics and surveys show that over 70% of children in Eritrea are students and not involved in any form of labour or work. Taking into consideration the concepts and definitions on light work, majority of these young children are safely engaged in housework (caring for siblings, fetching water and fire

wood); agriculture helping in (family farms and livestock herding) and petty trade. This is done giving priority to their education.

258. Additional efforts were made to address the plight of children out of school. The CEE program has been introduced as an alternative mode of delivery to address the challenges that exist in remote and rural areas. In 2017-2018 it enrolled 8,575 out-of-school children aged 9-14 (46.4% girls). 85% (39.8% girls) continued to the middle school level. In spite of the challenges, including lack of capacity and resources, and, to a limited extent the cultural obstacles affecting girl's education in some of the lowland areas, there are no barriers to education at any levels of education all the way from pre-school up to the tertiary level.
259. UNICEF and UNDP have been engaged in modest funding the child protection and child right programs, in coordination with line ministries, and they have contributed to the provision of assistance in terms of availing school supplies and providing IGA interventions for poor households hosting vulnerable children. This has been carried out with the intention of reducing school drop outs from poor households and to get continuous access to schooling and increasing school attendance.
260. The Government has continuous engagement, cooperation and even high visibility in ILO sessions, works to address issues raised and engages with other members extensively. In July 2018, for instance, an ILO technical mission visited Eritrea and engaged with various Government officials and leaders of civic organizations, to know the actual labour rights situation in Eritrea on the ground and to assess the need for technical support.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

261. Under Paragraph No. 20 of its concluding recommendations, the ACERWC stated that no reference was made to any provision prohibiting the sentencing of children to death. We would like to refer the Committee to Paragraph No. 310 of the State Party's "Initial Report", where in Article 118 it is clearly stated that a sentence of death may not be pronounced on a person who committed an offence while he/she was under the age of eighteen years. In view of this, the recommendation given by the Committee is unnecessary.
262. The Eritrean criminal laws give special emphasis to young offenders, with the main aim of rehabilitating them and enabling them to be useful members of the community. In handling young offenders, the Transitional Penal as well as Criminal Procedure Codes

incorporate special provisions. Accordingly, informal procedures are followed in handling cases of young offenders; young offenders are neither subjected to ordinary penalties nor kept in custody with adult offenders. The alternative penalties applicable to juvenile offenders may include admission to curative institutions, supervised education, school or home arrest and admission to corrective institutions. Putting young offenders in custody is taken as the last resort.

263. During prison period, health services, educational, vocational training commensurate to their interest and level and access to libraries, radio, and television are provided. The young offenders are rehabilitated provided with developmental opportunities. Scheduled parental and friend visits are allowed to come with gifts, magazines and books. The GoSE also organizes after care services to children in conflict with the law who complete probation and correctional periods. The Correctional and Rehabilitation Centres are provided with relatively qualified staff in the areas of psychology, sociology, social work, law, education and health. As much as possible, workshops are convened to improve and to upgrade the capacity of the Juvenile Justice actors.
264. A workshop conducted across the six administrative regions for key stakeholders indicated that a consistent pattern of family risk factors is associated with the development of delinquent behaviours in young people. Some of the family risk factors include a lack of proper parental supervision, on-going parental conflict, neglect and abuse - emotional, psychological or physical. Poverty, urbanization, rural-urban migration and peer influence are also some of the causative factors.
265. To promote child-friendly spaces for children in contradiction with the law, to strengthen juvenile justice and Children in Conflict with the law (CCWL) and as a response to children's rights to protection, psychosocial well-being, and non-formal education the MoLSW in partnership with UNICEF implemented some initiatives related to preventive and rehabilitation programs. Capacity building training to 450, judges, police officers, social workers, members of women child rights committee and others who are involved in the processes of child justice have been organized. This training has contributed to enhance the knowhow of treatment of children in contact with the law in detention centres and accelerated the follow-up of cases in courts and justice system. Besides to promote child-friendly spaces in the correctional rehabilitation centre and detention sites for children in contact with the law places were provided with various recreational materials, books, TV, recreational kits, painting, IEC materials, sport activities, and renovation of houses including partitioning spaces to minimize contact with adult offenders.

VIII. PROTECTION AGAINST HARMFUL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

Betrothal of girls and boys

Sub-Article (4) of Article 46 of the EPLF Civil Code, which was inserted to replace Article 581 of the 1960 Ethiopian Civil Code by an Amendment Proclamation No. 2/1991 requires marriage to be concluded on the consent of the future spouses, sets the marriageable age at 18 years and prohibits betrothal between persons below the age of fifteen where marriage is celebrated according to custom. The Committee, under Paragraph No. 21, made a recommendation for the amendment of Article 46 of the E.P.L.F Civil Code which was inserted to replace Article 581 so that it is aligned with the Charter to prohibit child betrothal. That provision does not legalize child betrothal as such, but emphasizes on and prohibits any betrothal between persons below the age of fifteen practised under customary marriage.

Female Genital Mutilation

266. Having different sectorial policies and programs, like the Comprehensive National Child Policy; the National 2015-2019 Gender Action Plan and Health Policies and strategies that address FGM and Underage Marriage have culminated to have the FGM legislation. Female genital mutilation (FGM) degrades the dignity of the female child. Article 3 of the Proclamation to Abolish Female Circumcision No 158/2007 abolishes all forms of female genital mutilation. Perpetrators of such offences are subject to up to three years imprisonment and a fine of up to Nakfa 5,000. The imprisonment may be raised from five to ten years, where death results as a direct consequence of the female circumcision. The punishment could be aggravated where the offence is committed by a member of the medical profession. Failure to report such offences is also subject to punishment.

267. Eritrea has a strong legal framework to tackle FGM and underage marriage. Article 581 of the Transitional Civil code of Eritrea, as amended by article 46 of proclamation 1/1991 states that no contract of marriage shall be valid if either of the parties is under eighteen years of age. Eritrea has also strictly applied the Female Circumcision Abolition Proclamation No. 158/2007. Within the reporting period, a total of 250 cases of violation of the proclamation abolishing FGM were presented to the courts in which 163 cases were indicted or judgment given and 67 cases are pending. In addition, different sectorial policies and programs, like the Comprehensive National Child Policy; the National 2015-2019 Gender Action Plan and Health Policies and strategies addresses FGM and Underage Marriage.

268. These efforts are complemented by community sensitization campaigns that reached between 125,000 and 150,000 persons annually. The campaigns were conducted with participation of CSOs and religious and community leaders, to sensitize the population on

the dangers of FGM and child marriage and on laws prohibiting other forms of traditional harmful practices. They also addressed existing gender norms, with the aim of supporting gender equality and girls' and women's rights.

269. The GoSE has moved beyond awareness raising and is moving to the elimination of FGM. In the 2016 and 2018 FGM mapping study, respondents in 140 villages were asked whether they had ever heard of any harmful effects of FGM/C and if so, the source from where they heard the information. Overall, the general awareness of the harmful effects of FGM/C was nearly universal; 97.4% of the respondents have heard about the harmful effects of FGM/C, though the awareness level varies within the different regions of the country. The very high level of awareness is a result of the heightened awareness raising campaigns.
270. The awareness raising campaign has resulted in significant proportion of the community to object FGM as it considered harmful practice. The same survey indicated that overwhelming majority of the respondents (95.6%) reported FGM/C should be discontinued which was much higher than the figure reported by the 2010 EPHS (82.2%). Understandably, the proportion of respondents who wanted FGM to be discontinued was significantly lower among the respondents' oldest respondents 55 years and above (91.9%); those who have never attended formal education (92%); indicating the younger generation are really the change agents.
271. The practice of FGM/C among girls has declined during the last 15 years. The prevalence for girls under 15 years of age in the study area as a whole has been estimated at 3.8%. Prevalence has shown a significant decline from 9.5% among girls aged 10-14 years to 3.3% in the age category of 5-9 years and to only 1.1% among girls under five years of age. The proportion of girls that have undergone FGM/C were significantly lower than the prevalence obtained for the communities in 2014 FGM mapping study which were 18.0% and 6.9% of girls under 15 and five years of age.
272. In 2018 a national steering committee, a national, zonal, sub zonal and administrative area/village technical committees were formed through the collective effort of the MOH, MoLSW, NUEW, UNICEF and UNFPA to provide policy and technical guidance to tackle harmful practices and violations of child rights. The institutions led the establishment of community- based Women & Child Rights' Committee in the six zobas (zonal administrations), 67 sub-zobas and 701 Kebabi (villages). It has been coordinating activities and have created functional synergy in addressing the common issues that relate to women's and children's rights, harmful practices, such as FGM, underage marriage and other forms of violence against women and children.

273. In order to maintain the current achievement and accelerate the elimination progress, the GoSE, the institutional mechanism which has been developed did pursue to produce a holistic Eritrean National Strategic Plan to ensure Children and Women Rights, abandon Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Underage Marriage (UAM) and other harmful traditional practices, 2020 – 2024. The document undertakes a causal analysis, highlights lessons learned from interventions implemented so far, defines key strategies to address the gender inequalities, social and economic drivers of FGM and UAM in Eritrea. The development of this strategic plan with the motto of ‘towards Elimination’ is an indication of the GoSE determination to address and eliminate FGM and UAM.

274. During the last two years, the committees at different levels have undertaken remarkable activities in organizing themselves and creating awareness and behaviour change among the population to ensure Children’s and Women’s Rights to abolish Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Underage Marriage (UAM) and other harmful traditional practices. For example, two sub-zones, namely Asmat and Haboro which have a total of 70 villages have declared FGM/C free sub-zobas and currently there are many villages on the way to doing the same.

Underage marriage

275. Sub-Article (2) of Article 46 of the Eritrean Civil Code, which was inserted to replace Article 581 of the 1960 Ethiopian Civil Code by the Amendment Proclamation No. 2/1991 sets the marriageable age at 18 years for both sexes. It is worth mentioning that some communities at sub zone level are enforcing a bylaw to ensure all marriages are made after the age of 18. These communities sanction and approve marriage after the following process: (i) The family applies for marriage approval to the village administrator (ii) the administrator verifies the age through the register kept at the administrative office and provides support letter to the nearest health facility for HIV/AIDS testing (iii) the health facility undertakes the HIV/AIDS test and sends the result to the sheik or priest (iv) the sheik or priest sanctions the marriage (v) the sheik or priest does not approve marriage without the process where the age is verified. These community based bylaws is found to be effective and will be scaled up with other communities.

276. The African Union Commission, Department of Social Welfare also made a visit to Eritrea in 2018 and held discussions with the National Steering Committee to ensure the rights of women, children’s rights and to combat harmful traditional practices with an objective to monitor the status of implementation of UAM and held monitoring field visits with some communities and were able to be eye witness on the positive progress going on to combat harmful traditional practices especially FGM/C and UAM.

277. Provision of financial, medical and psychological support to victims of FGM, Child Marriage and other deprivations is given due attention by the GoSE and work is in progress

to this end, the GoSE has developed targeted interventions on women through programs and policies that progressively safeguard their decisive participation and contributions in the all-rounded development of the nation. Victims of violence are given special attention. Medical and psychological assistance is given free of cost, while victims of violence obtain top priority in getting access to financial resources.

278. From the health perspective, free post-exposure prophylaxis treatment for HIV, STI and pregnancy is guaranteed for women victims of rape within 72 hours as anti-retroviral treatment and is available at the primary care level complete with counselling. A guideline that allows adolescent youth to get contraception without parental consent is adopted and in use. The Adolescent and Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health services (AYFSRH) strategy was adopted in 2014 and implementation was started in 2017.

Armed Conflicts

279. The GoSE refers to the Committee's recommendation (para. 22). It hereby wishes to inform the Committee that the State party has ratified the optional protocol of the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and has been strictly observing the Convention and its attendant protocol. There are no Eritrean children involved in the army. Participation in the National Service, by law and practice, only applies to those above the age of 18 years. Therefore, there is no under-age recruitment in the Eritrean Defence Force and are effective legal and practical measures put in place to prevent underage recruitment as clearly stated in Proclamation No. 51/1994. According to Proclamation No. 82/1995, full time students and those who are certified medically unfit are also exempted from National Service, and this equally applies to all aspects of military training and recruitment

Refugee Children

280. The GoSE refers to the Committee's recommendation (para. 22). It hereby wishes to inform the Committee that the State party has ratified the optional protocol of the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and has been strictly observing the Convention and its attendant protocol. There are no Eritrean children involved in the army. Participation in the National Service, by law and practice, only applies to those above the age of 18 years. Therefore, there is no under-age recruitment in the Eritrean Defence Force and are effective legal and practical measures put in place to prevent underage recruitment as clearly stated in Proclamation No. 51/1994. According to Proclamation No. 82/1995, full time students and those who are certified medically unfit are also exempted from National Service, and this equally applies to all aspects of military training and recruitment.

Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

The GoSE has a legal framework within the TPCE that **prohibits** sexual exploitation. Please, refer to the initial report on paragraph 35 on sexual exploitation and abuse. On the very rare and exceptional occasions, when rape and sexual harassment occur, especially if it is perpetrated by adults or by service giving actors it is dealt with very seriously. In the case of students issue Teachers and Students' Associations (PTSAs) have important roles in ethical issues and conduct campaigns on teachers & students' discipline specifically on rape and sexual harassment.

281. During the reporting period, to combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, the MoLSW, NUEW and NUEYS are important mechanisms and have established at sub zonal and administrative village committees on campaigns, conduits to make sure appropriate law of action is taken against perpetrators, and to monitor and report any wrong doing within communities and schools. The same committees shoulder responsibilities to make sure that appropriate legal action is taken against perpetrators.

Sale, Trafficking and Abduction

282. From the outset the Committee needs to be reminded again that the politicization of migration coupled with the hideous crimes of human trafficking has been utilized as an extension of the existential external threats imposed on Eritrea for over two decades. The political ill intent has been to vilify, and destabilize Eritrea including changing the Government. In this context protracted effort has been made to lure the young generation from national defence, national service and development through special policies and arrangements by some western countries including preferential treatment on Eritreans. There is firm evidence that this was escalated to target women and children as a way of destabilizing the social fabrics of the society and to create generation gap.

283. While requesting for an international inquiry on this hideous crime, Eritrea relied on its established and functional legal, institutional and organizational basis to fight the hideous crimes. Trafficking in women, infants, and young persons is criminalized under the provisions of Articles 605-607 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE). The TPCE further criminalizes trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation (Art. 605 of TPCE). In the situation 'where the victim is under fifteen years of age or where the victim is the wife or a descendant of the offender, his adopted child, or the child of his spouse, his brother or his sister, or his ward, or where the victim has been entrusted, on any grounds whatsoever, to his custody or care...' the punishment is aggravated in accordance to Art. 606 of the Transitional Penal Code.

284. In this regard, abduction of a child is punishable up to five years rigorous imprisonment (Art.560 of the TPCE). Furthermore, where the abduction is committed with intent to take unfair advantage of the victim or to allow another to take advantage of him, or to use him

for debauchery or prostitution the punishment in accordance to Art. 561 of the TPCE are aggravated and could range between three and twenty years.

285. As the trafficking of Children in the Sinai Desert and in neighbouring countries is concerned, first and foremost, it is essential to understand that GoSE has committed itself to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking and smuggling in its territories and along the borders and many perpetrators have been caught and punished in accordance to the law. Relying upon the Criminal Procedure Code of Eritrea, the Eritrean Force of Police and Security (EFPS) has worked to preserve peace, stability and stable social fabrics and assists prosecutors in the investigation and prosecution of any criminal cases. Whoever is involved in the arrangements or provisions of any kind for the trafficking of women, infants and young persons, is punishable under Article 607 of the Transitional Code of Eritrea. Law enforcement depends on an effective judicial system, which is a key element in the efficient prosecution of offenders and strict application of penal sanctions. Eritrea is fully committed to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking and smuggling.

286. Eritrea is a party to the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in September 2014, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and upholds its international commitments and is engaged and cooperates in various forms and platforms at regional and international levels in particular in the Horn of Africa initiative as part of the AU-Horn of Africa Counter Trafficking Initiative and Better Migration.

287. In general, Eritrea is a state party to a number of UN human rights instruments. It's signatory to the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Convention on the Right of the Child (along with its 2 Optional Protocols). Eritrea is also a state party to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes with its trafficking protocol. Furthermore, as a State party to all ILO's Core Conventions, Eritrea ratified the Worst Form of Child Labour Convention No.182 in June 2019, and all necessary measures are being taken to bring the Convention into practice.

288. The Committee's recommended that "the State Party in addition to enforcing legal mechanisms also implement measures to address the health and trauma aspect of child victims of trafficking. The Committee also recommends that the State Party undertake measures to address the root causes of trafficking, abduction and sale of children" alleging that a high number of unaccompanied Eritrean refugee children. This assertion is simply unfounded. It is a false and failed orchestration manipulated by the UNHCR. The goals were targeting the family and children through human trafficking. Nevertheless, the sensational

manipulation and exaggeration of data and statistics to serve the ulterior political motives by the UNHCR , Eritrea has been addressing the health, trauma and plight of children whenever caught in crossing the border.

289. To mitigate the impact of illegal migration and human trafficking on vulnerable families and to better cope with economic and social shocks, the MoLSW initiated community-based resilience programme package. The aim is to protect children by addressing critical bottlenecks in the provision of effective service, with special emphasis among communities in high risk for irregular migration. This resilience package has been initiated in particular into two regions of Gash-Barka and Debub. The resilience package incorporates: i) Income generating activities or cash support, ii) Cash incentive for adolescent girls to promote access to education and vocational skill for youth, iii) promoting youth friendly clubs and awareness raising on the consequence of illegal migration. The MoLSW initiated 12 community-based child and adolescent friendly spaces in selected high-risk communities that focused on peer to peer education and panel discussion groups for 600 boys and girls (48% of the total). Through this initiative, over 150,000 school children, adolescents and youth were sensitized on the prevention of violence against children, child rights and illegal migration.
290. The Committee is requested to consider again the fact that Eritrea in February 2013, formally requested the UN Secretary General, and in August 2015 called on the UN Security Council for an independent and transparent investigation of the global human trafficking networks perpetrating “hideous crimes” on Eritreans with the explicit support of some western countries and with the involvement of some neighbouring countries and to bring to justice all culpable parties, but to no avail.
291. The concern of the Committee (para. 68 b) implicating the involvement of Eritrean officials in human trafficking is unfounded, absurd and very offensive. The Committee is reminded to realize the transnational nature of human trafficking and smuggling, which touches upon different territories and legal systems and creates difficulties in apprehending perpetrators and bringing them to justice. The GoSE has intensified its efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including at the regional level through the AU-Horn of Africa Counter Trafficking Initiative and Better Migration. Eritrea continues to play an active role in the Horn of Africa Anti-migration and Human Trafficking effort (Khartoum Process) and other international initiatives.
292. Eritrea has been engaged in different international and regional efforts to tackle illegal migration, human trafficking and smuggling including participation in the Palermo Convention, Valetta Summit (joint declaration and action plan), Khartoum process, Better

Migration Management (BBM). Eritrea also participates in workshops organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

293. 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 smuggling at the legal, technical and policy levels.

294. Eritrea has partnered with the UNODC in preventing transnational organized crimes and related illegal acts and the cooperation. Various workshops and ‘training of trainers’ had been conducted in partnership with UNODC in this endeavour inside and abroad.

Children in street situations

295. The MoLSW developed a comprehensive national policy for the child in 2016. In the situational analysis of this document indicated that the factors contributing to the drifting of children into streets has been due to increased migration to urban areas, family breakdowns, poverty induced by man-made and natural calamities, the influence of peers that encourage delinquency. The number of vulnerable and street children in all six regional administrations identified has been estimated to be 5,000.

296. The Comprehensive Child Policy guides national stakeholders such as the MoE, MoH, NUEW and *NUEYS* to make provisions for appropriate services for these children in their strategic and operational plans.

297. The MoLSW, in cooperation with partners, has been providing preventive and rehabilitative support to street children to enable them become self-supporting and productive. Community based approach has been identified as a tool which has five major components, namely; i) educational support, ii) public sensitization of families, communities, teachers and school children, iii) guidance and counselling services, iv) vocational training and v) income-generating activities. In the years of 2014 and 2019, a total of 4,500 vulnerable and street children were supported, in cooperation with partners, using cash for registration fee, school uniforms, school supplies and books.

Children of imprisoned mothers

298. In response to the Committee’s recommendation on ‘children of Imprisoned Mothers’: it must be noted that in principle children of convicted parents are supposed to remain with their relatives in the unfortunate event of the detention of their mothers. However, some women prisoners who refuse to leave their children with members of their extended family

have been allowed to keep their children around the prison. For such children, an annual budget is set by the GoSE to sustain their livelihood and to ensure their participation in Kindergarten and elementary schools with their peers. Mothers in prison with their children are provided with four daily meals (breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner). The detention centres officers ensure that there is no malnutrition in the centres. There are daily scheduled hours for visits by families and friends, who may provide with psychological and material support.

299. The Correctional & Rehabilitation Centre and the MoLSW monitoring reports ensure that mothers in prison do have the right to education, health, religious services, sport and culture, health related awareness raising seminars and vocational training. To this aim, the system now runs a network of clinics, academic and vocational training programs, sport, culture, and other facilities.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

300. It seems important to remind the Committee that Eritrea is a state party to more than 108 International Conventions and Instruments. Eritrea is also a state party to the Banjul Charter (the African Charter for Human and People's Rights) and the African Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Furthermore it is party to 16 other regional conventions.

301. Eritrea's commitment and stance on international and regional instruments is thus seriously considered and pursued rigorously. As such, ample time is taken to analyse their provisions and ensure that international instruments are reflected in Eritrea's concrete situations. The fundamental approach is to advance the effort in line to the internal dynamics of development and the progress in the legal, institutional and organizational capabilities of the nation. In this regard, the development of national laws and legislations and the capacity to implement them effectively is the main drive. Furthermore, the nature of optional protocols is also critically assessed in concrete terms and not taken for granted. It must also be considered that not all treaty body based complaint mechanisms have entered into force.

IX. CONCLUSION

302. The Committee's assertion that "Certain texts are not in harmony with the Charter and the majority of these texts and measures have remained ineffective due to lack of implementation strategies or because of the inadequate resources allocated for their implementation" does not reflect the essence of the reality and the ongoing effort and achievement in general and in the advancement of the children's right and welfare in

particular. One of the highest and successful effort in Eritrea in relation to the ideals of development and social equality is the legal and institutional basis established that drives equal right and opportunity and in particular the legitimate right and welfare of children through proper upbringing. This is in line with the nation building goals and the reality of upbringing a new generation of Eritreans with guarantees to the respect, protection and fulfilment of their rights towards human dignity, betterment of life and development. In terms of resource allocation, children's right and welfare and the attendant programmes remain among the priorities of priorities, despite the critical challenges faced by the over twenty years of hostilities on the country.

303. The State party regrets to point out that some of the Committee's posited observations on the initial country report are untenable, and fabricated allegations. Therefore, the State party would like to encourage the Committee to take an impartial and balanced position based on objective and verifiable facts. Engagement and Cooperation, including reporting, could be enhanced through objective, concrete and reliable assessment and critics.

304. By way of conclusion, we would like to point out that this report has tried to show the progress made and the challenges encountered in the implementation of the ACRWC during the reporting period. The report has demonstrated the substantial work and the tangible achievements made, especially in the health, education and child protection spheres. The State party has also seriously considered the Committee's observations and recommendations and took appropriate actions, as well as provided explanations.

305. During the period under review, communities' responsible participation and support, Government and national civil society organizations' interventions in the implementation of the ACRWC were substantial. Our development partners such as UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, UNFPA and Global Fund cooperation and support have been helpful for the promotion and protection of the children's rights and welfare as well as in monitoring the realization of the government's commitment. In this regard, the GoSE reiterates its commitment to the welfare and all-rounded- development of the child in general and to the successful implementation of the ACRWC in particular.