

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF ERITREA

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING
DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995) AND
THE OUTCOMES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2000)**

COUNTRY REPORT

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SECTION ONE

Overview Analysis Of Achievements And Challenges

Introduction:

Eritrea, a small emergent nation is strategically situated in the eastern part of Africa, which has joined the international community in 1993. In 1991 Eritrea was liberated after an arduous armed struggle against Ethiopian colonialism which lasted thirty years. The socio economic formation of the Eritrean society, encompasses more than 60% agro-pastoralists, the rest workers, merchants, students and professionals. In Eritrea there are nine ethnic groups, each having its own language. The literacy rate is still low at 50%. Women's role in the society which had been valued less due to traditional patriarchal attitudes is in the process of change.

Eritrean women played a significant role in the independence struggle of the country being 30% women, of the liberation army. The perspective of social justice and gender equality, of the government of the state of Eritrea (GSE), emboldened by women's contribution in the making of their country created a conducive atmosphere for gender equality, stipulated in its policies and programs.

The **Eritrean Constitution**, ratified in 1997, guarantees equal rights for women and men. In addition to the supreme principle enshrined in the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on account of race, ethnic origin, language, colour, gender, religion, disability, age, political view, social or economic status, and various articles in the Constitution grant equal rights to women, as men, with regard to such key issues as land ownership, family and marriage, equality before the law, inheritance and passing on citizenship to their children.

International Commitments

Table 1: Gender Equality - Policy Milestones in Eritrea

Year	National gender policies related to International instruments
1977	The National Democratic Program of Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in its article of 4B on Women's rights clearly stipulated
1979	The Constitution of the NUEW in its objectives states that it will work for the empowerment of women's equality and in particular fight to stop harmful traditional practices
1991	GSE Proclamation No.1 on Civil Law
1994	Proclamation No. 58 on Land Tenure
1995	Eritrea after formally becoming independent and joining the UN in 1994, immediately ratified CEDAW in 1995, as it concurs with its basic principles of social justice and equality
1997	The Constitution of Eritrea commits to social equality and article 21 states that every citizen has the right of equal access to publicly funded social services, such as health and education
2004	The Eritrean Gender Policy and National Gender Action Plan have been consistent in harmonizing it with the CEDAW and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
2007	Proclamation to Abolish Female Circumcision, 158/2007 of GSE, in its preamble states that FGM is a violation of women's basic human rights

The State of Eritrea has a remarkable track record of ratifying international conventions and human rights treaties. Among those are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) acceded on August 3, 1994; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) acceded on September 5, 1995; the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights acceded on January 20, 1999; and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights signed on January 4, 1999; and the Beijing Declaration and Global Platform for Action.

Soon after acceding to it, the CEDAW was subsequently translated into local languages and widely disseminated, particularly among women. The implementation of CEDAW is going in tandem with the implementation of the Global Platform for Action. Moreover, national efforts to reduce maternal mortality, child mortality, gender disparity in education, decrease adult female illiteracy and increase women's participation in elected bodies are all in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

In 1999, at country level, a report on the implementation of the Platform for Action and future strategies on the promotion of gender perspectives (Beijing+five), consecutively a second and third report has been prepared to take stock of the same issues as they stand in 2004 and 2008.

ILO Conventions

Eritrea ratified the following ILO Conventions in the year 2000. These conventions are known as ILO Core/fundamental Conventions, which are important in protecting fundamental human rights and in promoting equal opportunities between men and women.

1. Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and protection of the Right to Organize (Adopted 1948).
2. Convention No. 98 concerning Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (1949).
3. Convention No. 29 concerning Forced Labor (1930).
4. Convention No.105 concerning Abolition of Forced Labor (1957).
5. Convention No. 138 Concerning Minimum Age (1973).
6. Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination with Respect to Employment Occupation (1958).
7. Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration (1951) for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value.

The various legal instruments in Eritrea are coherent with the provisions of the variety of ILO conventions applicable to employment.

After a few years of respite of the destructive conflict of thirty years, war was again flared up when Ethiopia formally declared war on Eritrea in 1998. A peace agreement was signed between the two countries in December of the year 2000. The recent conflict has displaced over a million people, mainly farmers, which have prevented them from sustaining themselves. Land mines rendered a significant proportion of fertile farmland untenable. Major socio-economic infrastructure was destroyed. From 2000 to 2003 droughts exacerbated the already food insufficiency by further reducing agricultural output. The high incidence of both *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households due to the war has further exacerbated this situation. Despite the “no war, no peace situation created by the non-compliance of Ethiopia to the international verdict, and the silence of the international community, which is the major stumbling block, has

been defied by the resilient and committed Eritrean people to achieve peace and development and ensure gender equality, which culminated major achievements to be gained.

Major Achievements in the promotion of Gender Equality and empowerment of women

1. Education and Training of Women

The Eritrean National Education Policy of the year 2003 is premised on the principle of equality between men and women that has been forged through the collective struggle of the Eritrean people and the remarkable participation of the Eritrean women therein. The overall policy guidance “ promote equal opportunity in terms of access, equity, relevance, and continuity of education to all school-aged children by ensuring that geographical, gender issues and life style are considered and integrated into the national development process.

In the same policy document, the government commits itself to implement the six ‘**Education for All**’ objectives and the two relevant **Millennium Development Goals**.

In its gender and education strategy of 2004, it clearly states that gender inequality in education is not just an educational challenge, since its basic causes are rooted in wider social, economic and cultural factors which cannot be comprehensively addressed by the education sector alone. It recognizes that inequality is rooted in changing and changeable social structures, and particularly in structures of domination. Addressing **gender disparity in education**, the government’s education policy states: “the government shall work towards the elimination of gender disparity at all levels of the education system”. It further commits the government to “ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic and secondary education of good quality”.

The National Literacy Program of the Ministry of Education (MoE) also illustrates explicitly that one of its main objectives is ‘to narrow the gender disparity in literacy by increasing women’s participation in literacy programs’.

The key challenges in education that hinder girls education :

- The traditional values, social attitudes and the impact of patriarchal attitude attached to the preference that exists of sending boys for school rather than girls, domestic chores and the fear of education affecting a girl’s marriage suitability reflect the slippage of female status.

- Few women in the teaching profession, particularly at the higher levels and in decision-making positions.
- The inequality that existed due to natural and cultural barriers,
- Limited access of information and other necessary facilities
- The indirect cost that discourage families to send girls to school,.

The concerted effort has brought significant progress in education from which it started, yet the statistics of female students in elementary, middle, and secondary schools still lag behind from their male counterparts in terms of enrollment and repetition, which indicates a continuous concerted effort is still needed to reach gender parity at all levels.

Table 2. Trends of key education indicators – the gender dimension

Indicator	2005	2010
Gross Admission Rate boys and girls	63.5%	92.0%
• Gross Admission Rate boys	65.8%	99.0%
• Gross Admission Rate girls	60.9%	84.9%
Net Admission Rate boys and girls	28.0%	35.0%
• Net Admission Rate boys	28.3%	37.9%
• Net Admission Rate girls	27.7%	32.10%
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Elementary school	70.3%	92.3%
• Boys	75.3%	97.3%
• Girls	64.8%	86.7%
Net Enrolment Ratio in Elementary school	52.6%	70.4%
• Boys	54.6%	73.1%
• Girls	50.4%	67.5%
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Middle school	49.5%	61.6%
• Boys	59.9%	66.7%
• Girls	38.8%	56.2%
Net Enrolment Ratio in Middle school	22.3%	32.0%
• Boys	24.7%	33.1%
• Girls	19.8%	30.8%
Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary school	23.1%	34.5%
• Boys	29.9%	39.5%
• Girls	16.3%	29.5%
Net Enrolment Ratio in secondary school	13.3%	25.2%
• Boys	15.4%	28.0%
• Girls	11.2%	22.4%

Sources: Progress Report of Education MDGs MoE 2012

2. WOMEN AND HEALTH

Health in Eritrea

The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE), to rectify the ingrained social ills has based its policies on a long-standing commitment of social justice and equality as stated in its Macro Policy Document of 1994. The health status of Eritrea was at its lowest ebb at the time of independence. Eritrea's enormous vision of building a society that ensures the highest attainable health standard has been a major challenge to the GSE.

Empowering women and men to protect and care for themselves, particularly in relation to maternal and infant mortality, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases is set as a priority. Specific policies such as Primary Health Policy, Health Promotion Policy, Rural Sanitation Policy, Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, HIV/AIDS Policy, and Human Resources Development Policy emanate from the National Health Policy (NHP), which was updated in 2009 have dealt the gender issue at different levels.

Health Delivery Services In Eritrea

The Ministry Of Health (MoH) has devised a strategy of preventive, promoting, curative, and rehabilitative health care services to accomplish its mission.

At national level the MOH administers and oversees the work of the National Referral hospitals, specialized diagnostic and care/service giving institutions, training institutions, and regulatory bodies, the third tier at regional/zoba level the provision of health services is vested to Zoba Medical Team. The second tier Health Station services, is the primary formal health facility, which provides basic promoting, preventive and curative services, including community hospital, health centers and community level services.

In the Eritrean case, while the health care spending did seem less, due its strategy of prevention, more than 90% coverage of immunization, major decline of communicable diseases, malaria and HIV/AIDS has been achieved. The result is also due to community health services that mobilizes and empowers communities with the necessary skills. ensure the availability of basic health services.

Gender and Reproductive Health

The ICPD of 2004 views reproductive Health (RH) and reproductive rights (RRs) in the broader context of providing basic health services and fulfilling the overall socio-economic development needs of the populations.

The Reproductive Health (RH) unit within the Primary Health Care Division (PHCD) has been working towards reducing maternal mortality.

The coverage and quality of their services continually improving to deliver RH information, services and commodities up to the local level. Currently free health care is offered to pregnant women and children under the age of 5, as well as better referral services, provision of emergency obstetric care, neonatal and assisted delivery services, and measures such as early treatment of malaria and provision of vitamin A supplements.

The maternal mortality rate has been reduced from 998/100,000 live births in 1995 to 240 per 100,000 births and 35% of births are attended by skilled health personnel in 2010.

The reduction shows that great efforts have been exerted, and Eritrea is one of the few countries to achieve the millenium development goals in the African continent. Antenatal service coverage (at least one visit) in 2012 was 65.7% and increased by 45% compared to 1998. Emergency obstetric care functional health facilities increased from 40% in 2004 to 82.3% in 2012. Treating eclampsia with magnesium sulphate was introduced nationally in 2008, home based postpartum care initiated, maternal and prenatal death audit introduced, and neonatal tetanus was eliminated in 2004 and has been certified by the World Health Organization..

Tackling the issue of underage marriage and teen pregnancy, which contributes to maternal mortality and morbidity such as fistula, the SRH advocacy work with partners such as the NUEW was pursued..

- **Trends in key health indicators – the gender dimension**

Goal	Indicator	Value		
		Male	Female	Total
Improved Maternal Health	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	N.A	N.A.	486
	Percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel	34.4	33.8	34.1
	Percentage of preg. women who received antenatal care	49.2	70.8	+
	Met need* for Emergency Obstetric care (%)	43.0	53%	+
Reduce Child Mortality	Under-five mortality rate	75	61	63
	Infant mortality rate	50	37	42
	Percentage of One year old children immunized against measles	91.6	91.3	91.4
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Percentage of current users of contraception who are using condoms (any contraceptive method, currently married women and men age 15-49)	29.2	10.3	18.4
	Condom use at last high-risk sex	91.9	N.A	N.A
	Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS	33.8	24.7	27.9
	Contraceptive prevalence rate (currently married women and men age 15-49)	16.3	8.4	10.6

- Sources: MDG Report 2012 MoH

- * 'Met Need' refers to the proportion of women who actually reach formal health facilities for care when they have complications

3. WOMEN and LAND

Eritrea is on the verge of social transformation from a traditional peasantry society, and paternalistic culture. The major mainstays of the population up-to know is agriculture and pasturing, and this makes ownership of land the lifeline of the society. As a consequence in the past women had not been entitled to own or inherit land, or own other property, which are the most pertinent factors in determining status and influence.

Eritrea, has opted to eradicate old traditions which negate the equality of women and men in the society. One of the measures of the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) **Proclamation No. 58/1994 on Land Tenure** aims to abolish the traditional land tenure system and gives equal entitlement and ownership right for women to land. As land has been allotted on household level spouse male and female own land, moreover 30% of female headed families had been entitled to own land.

Challenges:

When operationalizing the land legislation, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE), did incorporate some discriminatory articles against women on the excuse to temporarily cater for the back log of households which relegated the female headed population.

This was to be remedied later when a series of meetings were held between the MLWE and NUEW. The lessons learned from this contentious regulation was even if laws are promulgated, ensuring engendered enforcement mechanism is crucial.

The subservient norms needs time to wipe it, some women were in different, as they didn't wanted to antagonize the male members of their family or husbands . Few traditional old women were also adamantly against women having access to land, as the old time belief had been land belongs to their heirs, i.e.their sons, since married women are not expected to stay in the village of their origin. The major campaign and advocacy work taken include:

- Popularize the Proclamation of Land so that as many women as possible know the content of it and be empowered to fight for their right to access land.
- Neutralize the elderly women who couldn't be convinced and win back those women who were vacillating, afraid of the consequences that they might encounter from the male members of the family.
- Identify from the male population who believe in social change and equality and bring them in board to support to stop the discriminatory regulation.
- Lobby for establishing an engendered mechanism of enforcement and ensure compliance according to the proclamation .

4. Violence Against Women

Immediately after independence in 1991 the GSE, keen to implement its commitment of social ideals, the criminal and civil law was amended and discrimination based upon race, sex was abrogated. (GSE. Proclamation No.1/1991).

The most predominant forms of violence against Eritrea women are certain traditional practices such as **female genital mutilation** (FGM) and underage marriage. Eritrea's commitment to eradicate the traditonal negative culture is bearing fruit.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a deeply rooted and widely practiced tradition in Eritrea. Many women and men in Eritrea still believe that FGM can reduce sexual desire in girls and hence promotes their virginity and fidelity. Many adherents of Christianity and Islam also believe FGM to be a religious obligation contrary to the claims that it is not a religious prescription by all prominent religious figures in the country.

Eritrea has handled FGM in a multi-disciplinary, biological, social and cultural approach. Since FGM is a socially constructed attitude and practice, that contravene the basic human right principles, basically a gender inequality issue that hampers the bodily integrity of a girl child which have severe health consequences.

The strategy advocated to demystify the culture of assuming women as helpless and vulnerable victims in need of rescuing, while it works to nurture women as social agents who are committed to determine the course of their life.

Major actors such as the Ministry of Health, NUEW and others collaborated and developed strategies that encompass, operational research on FGM/C practice, which brought to light the specific difference that exists in the FGM practice in different communities, and the myth the surrounds it.

Establishing a network of different stakeholders nationwide, including representative of Local Administration, the MOH and NUEW representatives at zoba/regional and sub zoba and village level, enhancing the capacity of the network using a wide range of human rights and gender training materials and developing messages so that community members, particularly women and girls, become fully aware of the links between FGM/C and human rights, and equipping with the knowledge to negotiate and claim their own rights was very effective.

The major successes of the social mobilization strategy depended on popular education, such as using community dialogue, leadership consultation, popular drama, which helped to develop critical awareness and social action to bring about changes in the communities. This has been the major tool, to break the silence of the majority of the communities and led to the public declaration of Zero Tolerance to FGM by certain role model villages. After almost 30 years of campaigning against FGM a consensus was reached to take a drastic measure that can accelerate the abolition of FGM. As a consequence the Government of the state of Eritrea in 2007 enacted a national legislation that bans FGM. (FGM Proclamation, 2007).

In 2010 the prevalence of female circumcision among the young women age 15-19 was 68.8% while 93.1% of those women aged 45-49 were circumcised which shows that overtime there is a decline in FGM prevalence rate among the young girl population which was a cause to celebrate, and built the confidence that soon FGM will be history.

Challenges

The statutory laws ratified still faces challenges due to customary and religious laws, backward cultural attitudes and economic hindrances in the society.

Different reports indicate even after women are aware of their basic legal right, some are reluctant to pursue their case in the court. Some of the reasons are:

- *Social Pressure:* Women are not encouraged to go to court as it is not an accepted norm, unfeminine and threatens family respect, the expectation being one has to endure whatever happens and continue the caring role.
- *Financial constraints:* The majority of women agriculturalists are not used to have cash at hand to pursue their case. Besides distance is a barrier and the cost of transportation is beyond the capacity of many women.
- *Cross border practice:* be it the vicinity village, sub-zoba, zoba or across the neighbouring country do threaten a slippage back to old practice, as the traditional practitioners most of the time does not accept it whole heartedly

Major Challenges that counter across the board:

- Border conflict and delay in the implementation of demarcation i.e. the no peace no war situation
- Deeply entrenched traditional values and practices such as FGM pose considerable dangers to the health and well being of women in Eritrea
- Lack of institutional capacity
- Inadequate representation of women in decision-making posts at all levels
- Lack of disaggregated data in certain public sectors

SECTION TWO and THREE

Women, the Economy and Poverty

The majority of the population, roughly 60%, in Eritrea are engaged in subsistence farming. Being the main source of income for most of the population, and dependent on rainfalls rudimentary technology, thus constrain the development of its productivity.

In agriculture women have a significant contribution and simultaneously are responsible for the homemaking, activities such as the care of children and the elderly members of the household, cooking and cleaning, fetching water and firewood and managing the household welfare in general.

Women's participation in the business sector is dominant in the informal sector due to low levels of education and limited financial capacity. Female participation in the services sector tends to be concentrated in occupations like nursing, teaching and also non-technical jobs such as catering services. Women are still vastly under-represented in many occupations, especially in the science and technology fields

There are a number of factors in the Eritrean society that explain the low economic conditions of women. Some of these are related to the long lasting war and drought, traditional patriarchal system and norms and values, which are firmly anchored in social-cultural contexts. It is also important to note that more than 40% of the Eritrean household populations are female headed families and more than 50% are still illiterate. These factors determine gender roles and responsibilities in society making women's position and participation more precarious.

Rural Women and Access to Land

<i>Land distributed to male and female heads of households 2009-2012</i>					
<i>S. No</i>	<i>Land category</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female %</i>
1.	Housing land (tiesa)	5,320	10,540	15,860	33.5
2.	Commercial agriculture	75	376	451	16.6
3.	Commercial enterprises	305	1,068	1,373	28.6
	Total	5,700	11,984	17,684	32.2

Women heads of households have 32.2% access to land distributed for various purposes during the four years period. Besides women are co-owners with their spouse. Comparatively speaking

the lowest rate in terms of accessing land by women was for commercial agriculture purposes. This is a new domain for women and the entrepreneur capacity of women to invest in commercial agriculture is still low.

Saving and Micro Credit Scheme

There are several credit and saving schemes run by the Ministry of Labor Human Welfare, regional governments, Ministry of Agriculture, and a specialized financial institutions called the Saving Micro Credit Program (SMCP) aiming at promoting small and medium businesses that are principally geared to enhancing self-employment and granting access to critically needed funds. Women and women headed household makeup roughly 40% of the beneficiaries of the SMCP. This is in addition to the NUEW run credit schemes specifically aimed at women's economic empowerment and improving the women's livelihoods. It is worth noting that most of the program clients are in rural and semi-urban areas and that the number of participants is consistently increasing every year. **During 2008-2010 different Credit Scheme Operators provided micro credit for females which varies from 45% to 49%.**

Education and Training of Women

The Ministry of Education has been seized with the task of improving the quality of education, as well as expanding the access of the various sections of the population to education. A new programme to enhance access to education in remote and difficult places to reach is contributing to easing up access to education by females, the disabled and generally children living in terrain geographic areas.

This effort was demonstrated by the opening up of new elementary, middle and secondary level schools across the country. Bringing schools closer to home of the students in the various grades is contributing to the decrease in the dropout rates of students. Moreover, mobile schools in the nomadic areas have enabled nomadic male and female children to enrol in schools.

The data provided in the following tables shows the progress made from 2009/10 to 2011/12 in pre-school, elementary, middle and secondary level of schools.

Elementary level: Gross and Net enrolment ratio by year and sex 2009/10 –2011/12

	GER			NER		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2009/10	69.50	62.30	66.10	51.40	47.60	49.60
2010/11	97.30	86.70	92.30	73.10	67.50	70.40
2011/12	104.20	93.00	99.00	79.70	73.40	76.80

The net enrolment rate of females in the elementary level showed a steady rise during the four year period from 2009/10 to 2011/12 academic year. Female net enrolment ratio grew by 21.4% during the three year period in review. The increment is encouraging though there is still a 6.3% disparity of net enrolment ratio in favour of males.

Middle level: Gross and Net enrolment ratio by year and sex 2009/2011/12

	GER			NER		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2009/10	52.40	44.40	48.50	30.00	28.00	29.20
2010/11	66.72	56.23	61.62	33.10	30.80	32.00
2011/12	72.30	62.10	67.30	39.70	36.80	38.30

The overall net enrolment rate grew by 4.6% from 2009/10 to 2011/12. The net enrolment ratio also increased by 1.2% during the same period. Whereas the net enrolment ratio of males grew by 0.6% the net enrolment ratio of females grew by 1.8%. Due to the above, the net enrolment ration gap between males and females narrowed down from 4.1% in 2009/10 to 2.9% in 2011/12.

Secondary level: Net enrolment ratio by year and sex 2009/2011/12

	GER			NER		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2009/10	27.00	19.60	23.40	17.70	13.60	15.70
2010/11	39.51	29.51	34.52	27.95	22.42	25.19
2011/12	36.30	27.00	31.70	24.40	19.80	22.10

The Net enrolment ratio of females in the secondary level of education grew from 13.4% in 2008/09 to 22.4% in 2010/11, but declined to 19.8% in 2011/12. The disparity between males and females remains almost constant at about 5.5%. Note that the number of male and female net enrolment decreased in 2011/12 compared to the preceding academic year.

The overall net enrolment figures and net enrolment ratio during the three years period went up and down. This applied both for males and females. The net enrolment ratio difference between males and females in the secondary school narrowed down from 6.5% to 4.6% during the three year period under consideration.

Participation Rate in Technical and Vocational Education by sex and year

Advanced/Intermediate

Year	F	Total	Female %
2009/10	591	1304	45.3
2010/11	713	1992	36.6
2011/12	1128	2520	44.8

The participation of females in the vocational and technical schools has shown improvements reaching 44.8% in 2011/2012.

Although there is female and male participation in all fields of studies in the National Vocational Training Centre, there are certain trades such as accounting, material management, soil and water conservation and plant science where females are dominant. On the other hand, males dominate in other fields, including building construction, drafting, electricity, carpentry, plumbing, and heavy duty machinery operations. The overall enrolment of females in the National Vocational Training Centre during 2009/2012 academic year was 43%.

Special Needs Education Enrolment by Sex & Year

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>School</i>					
	<i>School for the Blind</i>			<i>School for the Deaf</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female%</i>
2009/10	54	12	22.2	175	63	36
2010/11	48	11	22.9	136	69	50.7
2011/12	52	15	28.8	124	61	49.2

Whereas the female enrolment in the school for the blind remains very low the female enrolment ratio in the school for the deaf has reached almost the stage of parity with that of the males. The participation of females in the school for the blind is stuck at close to one fourth ratio.

Adult Literacy: Enrolment & Completion by Sex & Year

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Participants Enrolled</i>			<i>Participants Completed</i>			<i>Female% Completed</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	
2008/09	42749	4081	46830	33087	2750	35837	92.3%
2009/10	36639	3550	40189	28736	2661	31397	91.5
2010/11	40828	5297	46125	31292	3793	35085	89.2
2011/12	47449	4255	51704	37043	2737	39780	93.1

The overall enrolment in the adult literacy programme has generally fallen during the reporting period due to the increment of literate population.. It is encouraging that the female enrolment and completion ratios have persistently been above 90% with males comprising about 10%. In this programme female by far excel male participation, thereby compensating the disadvantage in the formal/regular education.

The literacy rate is much higher for younger women than older women. In 2010 about 77% of women age 15-19 years were literate compared with about 90% of men with the same age to be literate. For women age 45-49 years the literacy rate was about 30% while for men of the same age it was about 64% [NSO, 2010]. Younger women and men are more likely to be literate and to reach higher levels of education than older women while the percent of men that are literate is

higher than women. Adult education programs have focused on the elimination of illiteracy and it is found that an increasing number of women are participants in the program.

Adult Education programs (Continuing Education & Rehabilitation Centers)

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Enrolled</i>			<i>Completed</i>		
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female % of total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female % of total</i>
2009/10	1111	2626	42.3	979	2190	44.7
2010/11	2425	5989	40.5	1934	3977	48.6
2011/12	1742	5803	30.0	1425	4448	32.0

The number of females and males enrolled in the continuing education programme for adults has generally increased. The absolute number of those completing the programme has also steadily increased during the past three years. Unlike in the adult literacy programme, the female enrolment and completion ratio fluctuated and remained below that of the male.

Enrolment at Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT) by Sex

<i>Year</i>	<i>Education</i>			<i>Engineering</i>			<i>Science</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>F%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%F</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>% F</i>
2009/10	528	233	44.1	2262	349	15.4	1094	370	33.8
2010/11	1569	421	26.8	2544	459	18.0	1677	700	41.7
2011/12	980	247	25.2	2681	492	18.4	1694	697	41.1

The number of males and females enrolling at the Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT) has been increasing. The percent of females enrolled in the engineering faculty has been generally on a pattern of steady rise, while of the faculty of education is generally in a declining trend. The enrolment rate of females in the sciences goes up and down.

Enrolment at the College of Marine Sciences and Technology

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	550	73	13.3
2010/11	641	90	14.0
2011/12	580	102	17.6

The female participation in the College of Marine Sciences and Technology grew in absolute and relative terms during the past four years (between 2009/10 and 2012/13).

Enrolment at College of Agriculture by sex

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	1142	366	32.0
2010/11	1377	434	31.5
2011/12	1574	584	37.1

The enrolment rate of females at the College of Agriculture has gradually attained 38.4% from as low as 32% four years ago.

Enrolment at College of Business and Economics by sex

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	1439	412	28.6
2010/11	1226	369	30.1
2011/12	1389	459	33.0

Likewise, the enrolment of females in the college of Business and Economics is gradually but steadily rising

Enrolment at Collage of Arts and Social science (Adi Keih) by sex

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	658	150	22.8
2010/11	774	203	26.2
2011/12	740	184	24.9

Female enrolment in the College of Arts and Social Sciences rose from 22.8% in 2009/10 to 40.5% in 2011/12.

Enrolment at Orotta School of Medicine

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	259	57	22.0
2010/11	302	73	24.2
2011/12	320	83	25.9

The enrolment of females at the Orotta School of Medicine showed a small but steady growth during the past four years (2009/10 to 2011/12).

Enrolment at college of Health Sciences

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2009/10	1158	317	27.4
2010/11	1259	401	31.9
2011/12	1394	497	35.7

Enrolment ratio of females at the college of Health Sciences rose from 27.4% to 35.7% in the course of the past three years. The rapid positive trend of female participation in the diverse health sciences which includes degrees in pharmacy, medical laboratory, nursing, anaesthesia, radiology, etc is quite encouraging.

Women and Health

The government has been making relentless efforts at improving the quality and access to health services by the citizens throughout the country. Besides the expansion of the health service giving facilities, the work force engaged in the health sector has been growing annually. This is done by the production of the various professionals domestically and by hiring expatriate professionals from abroad. The delivery of both preventive and curative health services has broadened in coverage and improved in quality. The health of the general public has witnessed

unprecedented advancement due to the improvement in the standard of living conditions and quality of social services being provided.

The various health quantitative indicators depict that the country has made extraordinary progress in the elimination or prevention of mortality and morbidity resulting from communicable diseases such as malaria, polio, measles, etc. The outbreak of any epidemic disease has become a history of the past.

Besides the general provision of health services to the public at large, the Ministry of Health has given special attention to the health and welfare of mother and children. As shown in the following table, various mother and child health programmes have been put in place and delivering impressive results.

Quantitative Indicators

Anti Natal Care Eritrea (ANCE) Coverage 2010-2012

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
2010	85,718	57.2
2011	90,904	59.0
2012	83,199	52.6
2013	91,178	58.0

The ANCE coverage during the past four years stood at close to 60%. Considering the geographic barriers and levels of economic development of the diverse regions and ethnic groups in the country, this ANCE coverage is an achievement.

National delivery service coverage 2010- 2012

<i>Year</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
Activity	%	%	%
Total delivery	28.5	31.5	31
Live births	99.3	97.2	97.2
Fresh still births	0.6	1.6	1.6
Macerated still births	0.07	1.2	1.3
Total fresh and macerated	0.67	2.8	2.9
LBW	7.7	7.2	7.4
Total C/S	4.8	3.5	3.4
Maternal death at health facilities	0.19	0.16	0.16
Neonatal deaths at health facilities	0.4	0.4	0.6

The table above gives the status of the deliveries in the health facilities. The percentage of deliveries taking place in health facilities at a national level has been constantly rising.

Concerning live and still births, the table shows that the rate of combined fresh and macerated still births has been growing during the four year period (from as low as 0.67% in 2010 to as high as 3.3% in 2012). Fresh still births account for the majority of the still births in the health facilities.

Maternal mortality rate in health facilities has had a declining trend during the four period (decline from 0.19% in 2010 to 0.15% in 2012). Neonatal mortalities at health facilities has also decreased, except for the year 2012 which showed an almost doubling of the cases compared to the years before and after.

According to the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS 2010) the use of any means of contraceptive among all women age 15-49 was 5.5%, with 4.7% using modern methods. The use of any contraceptive method amongst married women was 8.0%. Nearly one third (31.6%) of sexually active unmarried women use some form of contraceptive methods.

Prevalence Distribution of cancer among women by type of cancer

<i>Subject</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malignant Neoplasm of breast	232	235	219	686
Malignant Neoplasm of cervix uteri	94	108	111	313
Malignant Neoplasm of other uterus parts	45	32	16	93
Benign neoplasm of breast	174	164	161	499
Leiomyoma of uterus	522	699	631	1852

Malignant neoplasm of breast was the dominant type of cancer in women throughout the period 2010-2012. Second in rank was malignant neoplasm of cervix, followed by malignant neoplasm of other uterus parts and leiomyoma of uterus respectively. The total annual prevalence of cancer among women during the stated period has been declining, with the lowest recorded cases of 352 in 2012. The Ministry of Health is actively engaged to curtail this deadly disease and is in the process of establishing a Cancer Treatment Center in the country.

Prevalence rate of HIV & STI in ANC Sentinel Site Surveillance Survey

<i>Years</i>	<i>HIV/AIDS</i>	<i>STIs</i>
2009	1.31	0.62
2010	0	0
2011	0.89	0.24
2012	0	0

Source: - ANC Sentinel Site Surveillance Survey, 2007, 2009, 2011

Note that the prevalence rate is evaluated every two years

The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Eritrea has fallen from 1.31% in 2009 to 0.89% in 2011. Since the HIV/AIDS prevalence is evaluated every two years, it surely has further declined by 2013, though the evaluation process has not been completed. The overall progress made in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Eritrea is gratifying.

As for the sexually transmitted infections (STI), the annual cases stand between 4000 and 5000. It has not shown any trend either way. But, still the prevailing number is manageable and efforts are being exerted to erase it, if not to reduce it to the bare minimum level.

HIV positivity rate in Pregnant women attending ANC

<i>Years</i>	<i>Pregnant women tested for HIV</i>	<i>Number HIV positive</i>	<i>Per cent HIV/AIDS positive</i>
2009	48,437	320	0.66
2010	52,205	318	0.61
2011	66,986	295	0.44
2012	61,874	297	0.48

Source: - National AIDS Control Program Reports

HIV positivity rate in pregnant women remained below 1% over the last 5 years. Those who were found to be positive are receiving ART regardless of CD4 count free of charge in order to eliminate Maternal HIV transmission. This is quite encouraging and attests to the steady campaign being waged by the government against the epidemic. Out of more than 60,000 pregnant women tested for HIV annually, only around 300 cases are found HIV positive.

HIV positivity rate in VCT Attendees

<i>Years</i>	<i>Total visits to VCT</i>	<i>HIV/Aids positive</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
2009	86,285	1941	2.25%
2010	73,685	1488	2.02%
2011	77,008	1353	1,77%
2012	76,292	1060	1.39%

Source: National AIDS Control Program Reports

Here again we notice that the visits to the VCT has generally increased during the reporting period. The prevalence rate of HIV positivity rates among those who tested fell from 2.02% in 2009 to 1.39% (under 1%) in 2012, the trend is consistently on the decline.

Women in Power and Decision Making

The Beijing Platform for Action set the goal of 30% for women in national decision making positions, as a milestone toward the ultimate objective of 50%.

In Sub-Sahara Africa, nations emerging from conflict have succeeded in increasing the percentage of women in their new parliaments. Countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda and Eritrea can be mentioned. (Palmieri, p.4).

In 1993 when Eritrea was independent the perception of men towards gender equality had greatly improved, and more women had been empowered. The Eritrean government created a gender sensitive environment, which was stipulated in its policies and programs. The Eritrean Constitution is a clear manifestation of the changing attitude towards women; mention can be made of: Article 7(2) – On Democratic Principles - prohibits any form of discrimination against women and reads: Any act that violates the human rights of women or limits or otherwise thwarts their role and participation is prohibited.

Proclamation No.86/1996 on the establishment of Local Government stipulates that 30% of the seats in the Regional Assembly would be reserved for women and that they would also contest on the remaining 70%.

Women currently make up 22% of the National Assembly members, and between 27% and 34% in the six Regional assemblies. Currently there are three women Ministers (18% of the Cabinet of Ministers) holding the position of Justice Minister, Health and Tourism. Nationwide, 399 women, comprising 22.5% of the total, serve as community court judges. Women make up 27.2% of all government employees. While constituting over 41% of all administrative and clerical, and more than 29% of junior professional positions, their ratio in the professional category is only 11.6%. A continuous effort is needed to reach the parity declaration of the AU.

Gender breakdown of higher government posts

<i>Government Post</i>	<i>Year 2009</i>			<i>Year 2012</i>		
	Total	Females	Females % of total	Total	Females	Females % of total
National assembly	150	33	22	150	33	22.0
Ministers	17	4	23.53	17	4	23.53
Regional Governors	6	1	16.67	6	1	16.7
Director Generals	88	6	5.67	54	4	6.9
Directors	280	58	20.7	245	26	10.6
Unit heads	1,397	950	31.9	424	150	35.4
Ambassadors	30	0	0	29	0	0
Consul General	14	0	0	10	0	0
First Secretary	33	3	10	28	2	6.7
High Court Judges	35	4	11.4	18	4	22.2
Regional Court Judges	114	12	10.5	71	9	12.6
Community Court Judges	0	0	0	947	300	37.7
Total	2,164	1,071		1999	533	26.7

Representation at the International Level

<i>Post</i>	<i>Year 2009</i>			<i>Year 2012</i>		
	Total	Females	% Females	Total	Females	% Females
Minister	1	0	0	0	1	0
Director General	7	2	28.6	7	2	22.2
Director	12	3	25.0	17	4	23.5
Head of unit	25	4	16.0	16	4	25.0
Ambassador	30	0	0	29	0	0
Consul General	14	0	0	10	0	0
1st Secretary	30	3	10.0	28	2	7.1
2nd Secretary	24	0	0	20	1	5.0
3rd secretary	4	2	50.0	8	1	12.5
Attaches	2	0	0	1	0	0
Total	14	135	9.4	14	125	10.1

Women are also fairly represented in the NGO community such as National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) & the NUEYS - the national organizations that represent respectively the workers and youth/students in the country. Out of 39 members of the Central Committee in the NUEYS, for instance, women comprise 30.7%, with one serving in an executive position. Women comprise 27% of the NCEW Central Committee and are also represented in the executive committee. Both organizations have established a gender unit in their structure. .

Cultural and Socio-Economic Hindrances

Eritrea is one of the African countries that have gained positive achievement of women representation. Yet many women are still reluctant to contest it in national parliament or zoba (regional) assembly. Lister was right when identifying the terrain of political citizenship in the public sphere while underlining how it cannot be divorced from what happens in the private who shapes its contours and which can be the proper object of citizenship struggles. Some of the challenges are:

- The patriarchal attitude that is internalized by women, that politics is the domain of men.
- Lack of Confidence: Even those women, who won the seat, take time to overcome the inferiority complex that existed as the perception remains to be that the male parliamentarians are better acquainted with politics. This fear and tension that confront women working in the male dominated arena of politics makes them reluctant to play active role.
- Reluctance to vote for fellow women: for some it is out of concern that it will hamper the women's life of caring and for others it is the belief that the public sphere is best performed by men.
- The perception, that the public sphere, that is politics is an intriguing job of males and don't want to add much fatigue to their life by being a parliamentarian. Here is a vivid example of what happened to a colleague of mine, who was contesting in the election of the zoba (regional) assembly. She was told by a friend to quit, as it is hard to work in the male dominated arena.
- Family values: In traditional Eritrea it is absurd for a woman to contest for public office while her husband is doing another job. Entering politics for some women is calling an end to the marriage relationship that existed.

Human Rights, Violence Against Women and Women and Armed Conflict

The Constitution of Eritrea ascertains that all persons are equal before the law, and prohibits any form of discrimination based on diversity of sex, religion or any other creed. Women are accorded identical capacity and opportunities, in all legal matters including civil matters to that of men in exercising their rights.

The Proclamation in Volume I, No. 1 on the Transitional Codes repealed all discriminatory clauses and connotations in the Penal and Civil Codes inherited from previous colonial regimes. Legal measures were taken to include the protection of discrimination against women in the Transitional Code of Eritrea in 1991.

There are no legal distinctions that treat women differently than men in all stages of procedures in courts and tribunals. Women have the same rights to conclude contracts and to administer property, and they can freely choose to appear in courts in person or by an attorney representing them on their behalf.

In practical terms however, it is acknowledged that most of the Eritrean population is not well versed in the modern legal matters. A lot remains to be done in enlightening the population at large, and women in particular, on their constitutional and legal rights and to get rid of the implicit traditional attitudes.

The judicial system is equally open for men and women to work in any capacity. Women are represented in various positions in the Ministry of Justice; for example, the Minister of Justice is a woman, as well as judges in the High Court, registrars, legal advisors and attorneys. 10% of the high court judges, 12% of the zonal court judges are women, and at least one of the three judges at village level is a woman. The representation of women in various posts throughout the judicial system ensures that women are represented in this very critical aspect of life.

Violence against Women (VAW)

However, there is a need to focus on women's safety and access to justice at all levels. In many countries women face low accessibility of a number of services mainly as the result of their poverty levels, lack of awareness and socio-cultural practices and pressures. Women in some African countries are victims of the culture of impunity amongst law enforcement officers, breakdown of justice and slow pace of the justice systems in terms of investigation and court proceedings. In some situations there are critical problems related to the lack of skills, knowledge and competencies needed to address the unique violations that women face. Many women affected are also not supported to overcome the cultural and institutional challenges in their quest of justice.

In the case of Eritrea VAW and abuse are not very serious and of a large concern. But this does not mean to be complacent because to maintain the current state of affairs of low VAW consolidated work is necessary to eliminate even the low level occurrences of abuse and discrimination against women. It is also important to note that pockets of VAW exist in particular rape and physical abuse of women. The number of reported rape cases though modest

is in the increased during the period 2009 to 2012, this is not an area that allows relaxation as cases might not be filed for fear of social alienation from the accepted norm.

Yet it is encouraging that many women are breaking the edifice that has hold them back and bent their mind from using their rights, due to the traditional beliefs and are standing to ensure their social and economic rights.

The adult education program of legal literacy which was developed in 1998 did play a major role in awareness raising and changing the attitude. Due to the diversity of women and different life style, the methodology of legal literacy has been participatory and empowering, which has been a lubricant to question years held customary and religious views.

Women and the Environment

The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment has carried out an assessment of the state of the country's environment. The preliminary reports show that there are critical environment management issues, as well as some negative implications for the population and for Eritrean women in particular. For example, while a century ago, 30% of Eritrea was covered by forest, today, forest coverage is estimated at less than 1%.

The government of Eritrea, therefore, having realized the impact of lack of the appropriate sources of energy on the environment and economic growth of the nation, is working hard to install and disseminate renewable energy technologies and energy-efficient end use devices. The Ministry of Energy and Mining has been engaged in the introduction and expansion of renewable sources of energy, with emphasis on rural areas.

The National Environment Management plan articulates, very clearly, the reasons why women must play an active role in environmental protection, promotion of environmental hygiene, in ensuring clean water and adequate domestic energy.

“In Eritrea, women play a significant role in environmental issues. In the rural areas in particular, it is the women who assume primary responsibility for clean water, adequate firewood, and clean homes and compounds. Women fetch water of fuel-wood, irrespective of the distance from the source.

When environmental sanitation is inadequate, or indoor air pollution from smoke and so becomes a health hazard, it is women who are the most affected, the ones who suffer most. Eritrean women in rural areas carry the heaviest burden in providing their households with basic environmental services.”

The introduction of an energy saving fuel wood and less hazardous to health, intermediate technology of cooking stove named “Adhanet” meaning the saviour is also another indispensable program which the Ministry of Energy and Mining in collaboration with other organizations (MoA, NUEW, Local Government, NGOs, etc) has implemented.

This successful venture of introducing the improved cooking stove saves up to 50% of fuel (mainly wood) and has better ventilation, which is a major contribution to reducing Eritrea’s alarming rate of deforestation, reducing the amount of time women have to spend collecting fuel wood, and improves rural women’s sanitation working conditions. The improved stove received the year 2003 Ashden (Overseas Food Security Award) - *Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy*. The technology is worthy because it is a new design customized for the requirements of needy people and provides such a large benefit more efficient wood stoves greatly reduce the level of air pollution and always burn clean, dry and untreated wood. Women are the main beneficiary as it improves the sanitation and health of rural women as it reduces eye and respiratory problems due to smoke and allevates the scarcity of time for women and their children who used to travel a long distance in the collection of fuel wood

Women and Access to Clean Water

In Eritrea, before independence, the availability of clean water sources was only limited to the major cities and towns. Hence, the coverage was insignificant as it was not benefiting the majority of the population which resides in rural areas. Since independence the GOE has been working to ensure adequate supply of drinking water to both urban and rural population.. The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MoLWE) in its policy aims at ensuring that all Eritreans have access to adequate and clean water supply. It aims at reducing the burden of distance travelled to fetch water by women and children and at the same time reduce people that die from waterborne diseases. In this respect the government has introduced Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and has launched various projects of Rural Water and Sanitation

that are implemented with the support of development partners such as the ACP-EU Water and Sanitation projects. The ultimate aim of the GOE is to upgrade the quality of sanitation and health of the female and male population through the provision of adequate safe water. The WRD has mainstreamed gender in its National Action Plan and the government has set high targets despite limited financial resources. In the recent years, the coverage has drastically improved due to the concerted efforts made by the government to improve the water security of the country, with focus in the rural areas. At present WRD estimates that drinking water coverage is at about 70% and the country is on track in meeting the MDG target of 80% coverage in supply of drinking water.

The coverage of clean water supply in the Zobas in 2010 compared to that of 2001 shows significant improvement as presented in Table 66. At national level the water supply coverage has increased significantly in 2010 to 75% compared to a low level of 20.3% in 2001. There are also studies that show diarrhea and other water borne diseases are no more significant health problems while they were leading causes of mortality and morbidity in the past.

Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women

In Eritrea, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), is a grassroots organization established in 1979 to mobilize women to participate in the liberation of the country and social transformation, social equality. As part of its fulfillment to the Beijing platform of action, the Government of Eritrea opted to give the mandate for NUEW to act as the women's machinery in the country.

Since its formation, NUEW has played an important role in enabling Eritrean women to equally participate in the political, economic and social spheres of the country.

The NUEW is well placed to assume this responsibility on account of its: (i) vision of ensuring *a nation enjoying social equality and equal rights among male and female citizens.*

(ii) historical role as champion of Eritrean women's liberty and advancement; (iii) considerable experience in fighting for the rights of Eritrean women and in coordinating and implementing programs to improve their conditions; (iv) extensive grass-roots presence throughout Eritrea and substantial outreach capacity, and by virtue of all the above have been committed to enable the

gender equality motto. The NUEW is a network organization that is able to reach the different group of women.

The NUEW acting as the women's machinery, have been actively engaged in collaborating with all the public sectors on engendering policies and programs and conducting training on gender concept and analysis skill. Timely reports are developed in partnership with the concerned entities. Every five years a series of participatory workshops have been organized with the public sector and other partners to take stalk of status of women in all areas specifically mention can be made of 2004, 2009, and currently in all the six regions .

SECTION FOUR

EMERGING PRIORITIES

Since Eritrea's perspective of gender equality is a major pillar of development rather than an instrument, the national gender action plan is in the process of revisiting which caters 2014 - 2019.

The major areas of intervention have been identified in the series of consultations held with all partners, which basically continue to be on education, health, economic empowerment and power and decision making.

The mainstreaming strategy approach will be strengthened and standalone programs and projects will be pursued.

A fulfilled system of collecting and analysing information and having a gender-disaggregated statistics, is determined to be a consistent approach that embraces all government line ministries, private sector, non governmental organizations.

The National Statistics office in consultation with the NUEW will further engendere the indicators used.

Besides in the upcoming framework of the National Gender Action Plan gender indicators will be further developed for each set of planned actions and objectives.

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