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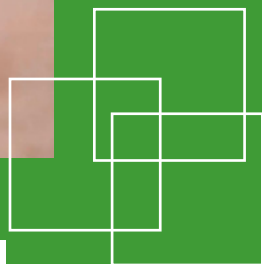
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# SKILLS

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International  
Labour  
Organization



Equatorial  
Guinea

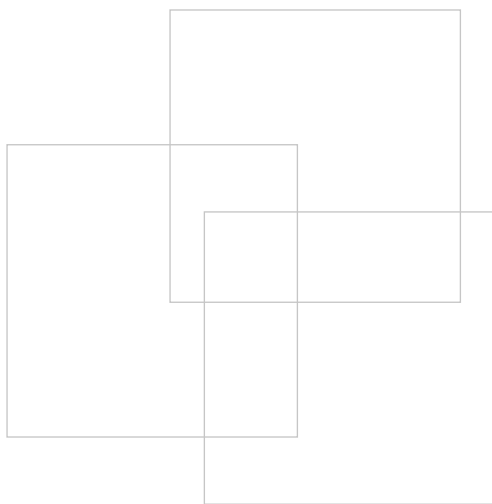


State of

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# SKILLS

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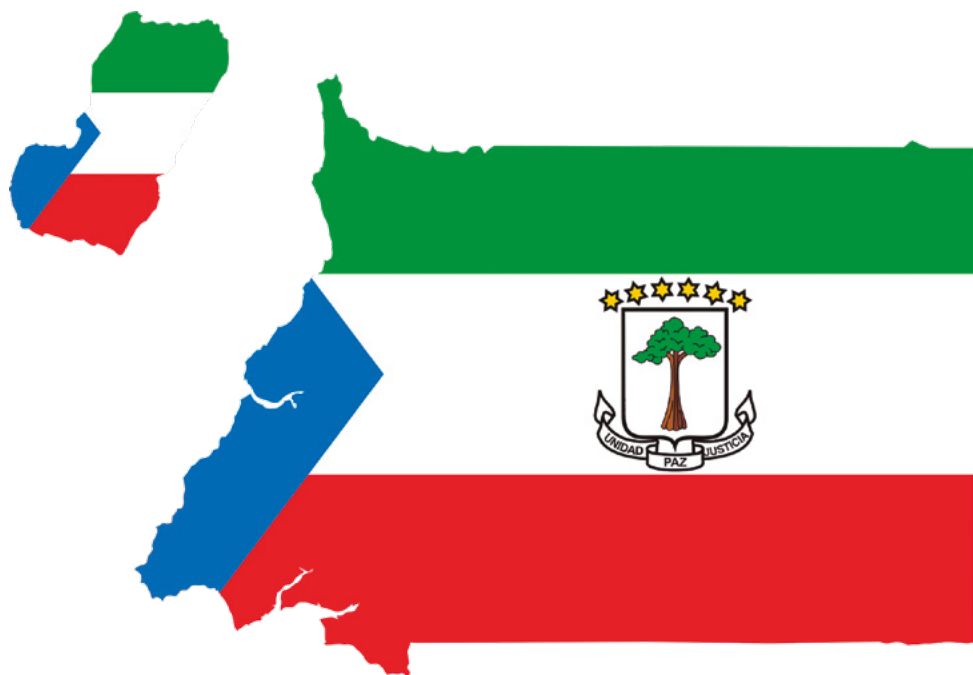
**Equatorial  
Guinea**



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# ***The socio-economic context***

Over the past few decades, thanks to higher oil prices, the government of Equatorial Guinea has massively invested in infrastructure (roads, capital assets and social housing) at the expense of human capital. The country is now facing institutional weaknesses and a lack of qualified human resources to support sustainable development. To address these issues, the government has drawn up a national strategy and adopted stronger human capital and improved quality of life for each citizen as a priority focus in its 2008-2020 National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES). Major development programmes involving the key ministerial departments have been drawn up following the same logic. They cover the following areas: (i) education for all; (ii) employment for all; (iii) food security; (iv) health for all; and (v) an environmentally friendly model.

## A fragile growth model.

The country has experienced an economic recession since 2013, following the drop in oil prices and yields. This decline in economic conditions follows a period of sustained growth which allowed the transition from least developed country (LDC) to middle income country (MIC) in June 2017. Nevertheless, the strong dependence on the oil and gas sector, which contributes 60% of the GDP, makes the economic position highly unstable. Between 2010 and 2017, the share of the primary sector declined steadily from 47.6% of GDP in 2010 to 33.8% in 2017. In addition, after the boom in the construction sector, the secondary sector is also experiencing a slowdown, offset by the steady growth of the tertiary sector (trade and service activities), the second largest contributor to GDP.

## Diversifying the economy is a strategic priority for sustainable and inclusive development that creates decent jobs.

The oil and gas sector, while still the largest contributor to GDP and the largest generator of foreign currency, has a relatively limited capacity to create jobs and employs less than 1% of the national labour force. In contrast, the agricultural sector, which employs over 50% of the working population, does not have an investment policy commensurate with its development and job creation potential.



## The socio-economic paradox of Equatorial Guinea.

The improvement in macroeconomic indicators has not resulted in significantly better social indicators or in fewer people below the poverty line, which is still estimated at 43% of the population (INEGE, 2017). In 2015, the country's Human Development Index (HDI) stood at 0.592 (UNDP, 2015), ranking 135<sup>th</sup> out of 188 countries. The life expectancy at birth of 57.6 years of age and the level of education remain well below the standards for middle income countries.

## Equatorial Guinea's population is expanding exponentially since the beginning of the 2000.

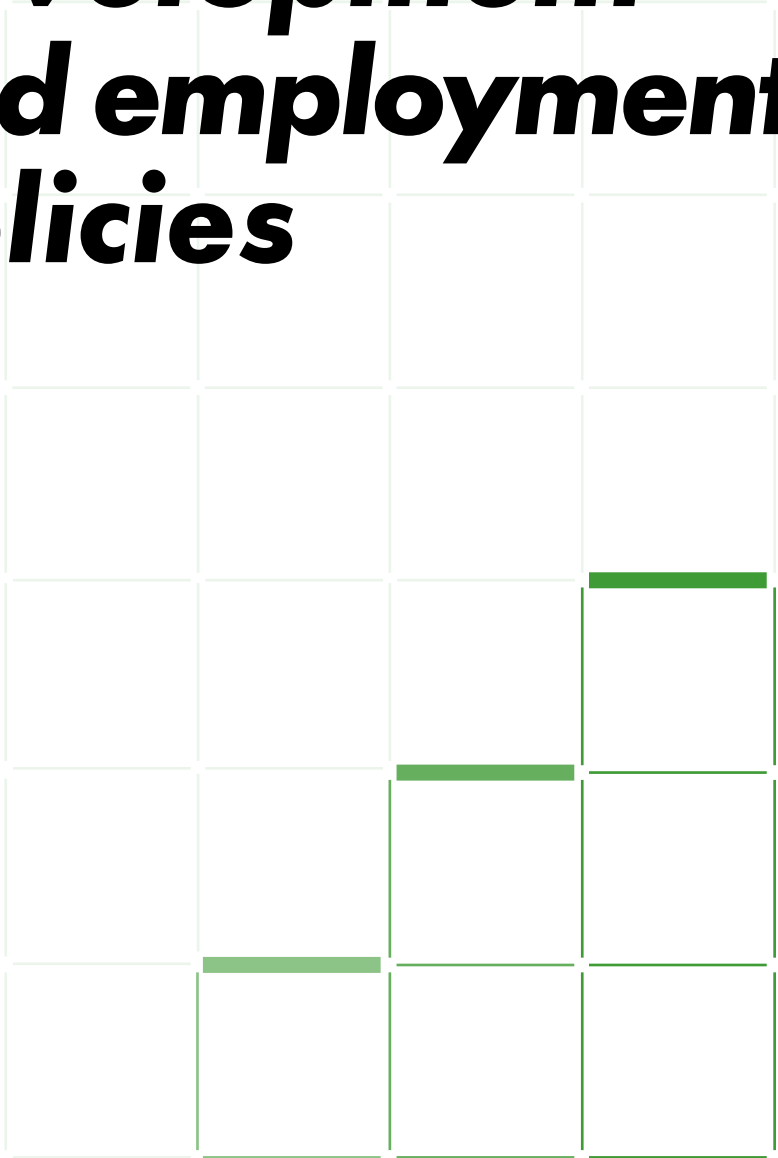
According to the 4<sup>th</sup> census (RGPH, 2015), the population is growing exponentially, from 300,000 in 1983 to 1,222,537 in 2018. This rapid increase (2.4% p.a. over the period) is due to the relatively high fertility rate of 4.7 children per woman and the decrease in the infant and maternal mortality rates. In recent years, the population has also undergone a major geographical shift linked to very rapid urbanization, from 38.8% of the population in 2011 to more than 70% in 2015. Nevertheless, the population density remains very low at close to 45 per km<sup>2</sup>.

## **The massive influx of international migrants is the direct result of the economic boom in Equatorial Guinea linked to the growth of the oil and gas and construction sectors.**

Foreign labour accounted for less than 1% of the working population until 2010 and now accounts for nearly 17.5% (UNDESA, 2017). These migratory inflows are highly diverse in geographical origins (West Africa, Central Africa, Europe) and socio-professional categories (either highly skilled or, at the other extreme, unskilled or low skilled labour). With a high proportion of active male workers (4 out of 5 international migrants are men), this immigration is altering the national demographic structure profoundly (raising the labour force participation rate and sex ratio).



# *Development and employment policies*



Through its National Plan for Economic and Social Development (PNDES “Horizon 2020”), the government has decided to expand the production system and invest in previously under-utilized sectors. This diversification strategy is based on sectoral programmes to reduce the share of oil and gas and to increase that of four key sectors, namely: (i) the agricultural sector; (ii) fisheries; (iii) the mining sector; (iv) the service sector, in particular tourism (ecotourism and business tourism) and financial services.

The development of basic and productive infrastructures has been the second highest government priority in recent years. The funding of these infrastructures has been possible in particular owing to fiscal revenues from oil extraction, which helped build and modernize productive infrastructures (water, electricity, transport).

This effort has helped improve the living conditions of the population with the construction of social housing (17,920), the provision of widespread access to basic public services: 67% of the population has access to drinking water and electricity and 63% has access to a sanitation system. However, there are still significant geographical inequalities because rural communities, particularly on the mainland, have not benefited from these developments and remain relatively isolated. This isolation undermines their productive development and their ability to generate local jobs to enable rural populations to remain on the land.

In the education and training sector, in addition to the African Development Bank (AfDB), the other technical and financial partners (TFPs) covering the sector are: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Health Organization (WHO), HESS/FHI 360, Spanish Cooperation, APICE ESPAÑOLA Group, French Cooperation, Portuguese Cooperation, Brazilian Cooperation, Nigerian Cooperation, Cameroonian Cooperation, Cuban Cooperation (BRIGADA CUBANA), Chinese Cooperation, Egyptian Cooperation, Association of Catholic Education Centres in Equatorial Guinea (ACCEGE), Spanish Agency for International Cooperation Editorial Santillana Y Otras, Institute of Technical and Vocational Training (ICAF). These TFPs cover the sub-sectors of primary and secondary schooling, technical and vocational training and higher education. Most training-related bilateral cooperation projects focus on reskilling or short courses for public officials.

Support from France is mainly directed toward promoting the French language and culture through teacher training in French with a master's programme in French universities supported by a grant. The United Nations Children's Organization (UNICEF) is the main technical partner within the United Nations System (UN System) with a portfolio of major projects in the education sector, particularly at pre-school and primary levels. The lack of coordination amongst the partners hinders efficient planning.

The national employment and vocational training policy adopted in 2012 is fully consistent with the aims of the PNDES to diversify production by 2020. The goal of the central programme of this policy, titled a job for everyone ("un empleo para todos"), is to ensure that the working population of the country benefits from the positive impact of economic diversification. More specifically, the aim is to make the domestic workforce more productive and competitive in order to improve its employability and limit the use of foreign expertise. A closer fit between labour supply and demand will require the establishment of a more appropriate training system based on the present and future needs of the national private sector.

*“Education shall be primordial to the state. Every person shall have the right to primary education people shall have the right to primary education which is obligatory and free.”*







## – Constitution of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

Article 24

# *The skills system in Equatorial Guinea*



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# TVET reform policy

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The education policy of Equatorial Guinea is built around two strong guiding principles, namely universal access to the primary and secondary systems and the alignment of general education with technical and vocational training in order to facilitate the transition from one to the other.

The National Development Plan for Education for All (“Educación para Todos”) is implemented through the Educational Development Programme of Equatorial Guinea (PRODEGE) to reorganize primary education and improve basic education among the population by building schools in rural areas, improving teacher skills, increasing the students/teacher ratio and reducing gender inequalities. To monitor the results of this programme, PRODEGE publishes annual statistical indicators in the “Anuario Estadístico de la Educación”, which demonstrate the progress in providing access to education.

# Governance

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The governance of the entire general education system and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is monitored under the very broad remit of the Ministry of Education and Universities (MEEU). The Ministry runs the whole system of formal vocational training autonomously, from curriculum definition to certification, including managing and/or supervising the institutions. In the area of non-formal skills training, MEEU works with the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training for the building and service sectors and with the relevant sectoral ministries for specific courses (agriculture, fisheries, mining and oil and gas sector).

The private sector participates extensively in technical and vocational training, particularly in high-growth sectors where the need for skills is not met by TVET provided in the public sector. The government and some national and/or international companies have set up several training schemes, particularly in the agriculture, fisheries, mining and oil and gas sectors, to quickly and effectively develop the skills of their staff or of the young people they wish to recruit later. These schemes include in-house training through an internal supervision system of the learner who becomes familiar with an occupation through hands-on practice, training abroad where a staff member working for one of the multinationals in Equatorial Guinea is transferred to an African subsidiary, and peer-to-peer training via a form of mentoring provided by experienced professionals from abroad. These skills development schemes are recognized within the company but not at the national level.



# Financing

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The low level of public funding for technical and vocational education is the result of several related factors. Firstly, the low proportion of public funds allocated to education (5% of GDP), which is well below that of other African countries, secondly, the concentration of expenditure on general and higher education which receives most of the education budget, and thirdly, the fact that skills training has been largely handed over to the private sector which runs over 75% of TVET centres. Since TVET is essentially privately funded, the focus is on the most profitable training channels (low levels of investment and high level of income), the most economically active areas and populations with a certain level of income. While this ensures profitability for private providers, it is not necessarily the optimal social outcome.



# ***Skills anticipation***

The General Department for the Promotion of Employment and Vocational Training (DGPEFP)<sup>1</sup> is the main public structure tasked with identifying and anticipating skills requirements. Its main responsibilities are (i) to develop a permanent and holistic information system on quantitative and qualitative skills requirements; (ii) to set up a national training and guidance programme to improve workforce entry into the labour market; (iii) to provide coordination between the Ministry of Employment, other ministries and the social partners (employer and trade union organizations); (iv) to organize and guide the mobility of national and international workers towards geographical areas and/or activity sectors where skills are required.

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<sup>1</sup>The DGPEFP reports to the Ministry of Labour, Employment Promotion and Social Security.

The National Employment Observatory (ONE) reporting to the DGPEFP is responsible for the operationalization of these objectives by (i) providing statistical data on the geographical and sectoral distributions of national and international workers; (ii) analysing cyclical trends in labour market indicators; (iii) forecasting skills requirements in the various activity sectors and branches; (iv) implementing retraining and/or upskilling programmes to support the diversification of the national production system.

ONE's resources remain insufficient in view of its many responsibilities in a country where a labour market information system has yet to be developed. At this time, skills anticipation systems are not yet operational and the various public and private stakeholders are not sufficiently cognizant of the need to share the information available in order to form a view on future skills required in the different activity sectors. To address this situation, TFPs recently launched several assessment studies to identify skills required in the agricultural and fish farming sectors (an FAO-supported programme) which attract many projects.

# *Skills development*

The recent opening of a large number of TVET centres partially fills the shortage in vocational training infrastructure. Between 2016 and 2018, the number of TVET centres increased from 25 to 45, with strong growth in private centres, which make up 85% of new institutions. This quantitative increase results from the government's commitment to develop vocational training to help diversify the economy. Under this policy, private centres have received subsidies and are taking advantage of this boost to expand in the country's two main cities (Malabo and Bata).



The increased TVET supply has resulted in a significant growth in enrolments from 4,100 students in 2016 to 7,104 in 2018 (PRODEGE, 2019). This took place mainly in private centres, which account for 87.5% of TVET enrolment, up from 83% in 2015. In addition, enrolments show a high level of female participation, which now represents the vast majority of the student population, with 4,184 girls compared with 2,920 boys. This trend is partly explained by the focus placed by private training centres on certain service sectors thought to assist the entry of women into the job market (secretarial, administrative, banking and insurance, health, etc.). In contrast, traditionally male occupations in the manufacturing sector have much lower levels of enrolments (building, steel construction, welding, carpentry, etc.).



(© ILO)

The supply of TVET is highly concentrated in the two main cities (Malabo and Bata), which alone have 41 out of 45 centres and nearly 96% of enrolments. This is because private centres operate to make a profit on their investment and are therefore mainly located in urban centres with strong economic activity and a large affluent clientele, to the detriment of more isolated and/or less economically developed areas.

In TVET centres, training is provided at three different levels with higher education prevailing clearly over the intermediate level and basic non-formal training. Higher education for the training of qualified technicians increased substantially between 2016 and 2018 (from 1,194 to 4,373 enrolments) while intermediate level training remained static and enrolments in non-formal training fell sharply (from 627 to 374). This decline reflects the lack of interest in non-formal vocational training compared to training leading to a credential.

# Skills recognition and quality assurance

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Under the Education Act (Section II, Articles 67-70), the Ministry of Education and Universities (MEEU) is responsible for managing the skills recognition system and monitoring quality assurance in TVET centres. The Ministry must therefore make arrangements for the accreditation of public and private TVET centres and the recognition of credentials, certificates and qualifications obtained locally or abroad.

The system for the recognition of formal vocational training is well organized because it is tied to the general education system and benefits from relatively substantial financial, material and human resources. In practice, a national certification commission under the auspices of the MEEU is responsible for the recognition of all qualifications issued by public and private centres accredited in formal training delivery. This national commission, whose schedule of activities is aligned with the general education system, organizes an annual assessment of learners.

In contrast, non-formal vocational training is dependent on poorly negotiated and ineffective inter-ministerial collaboration, which leads to a lack of clarity in the assessment and recognition systems for the practical skills acquired by learners during their training. Undoubtedly, this weakness in the recognition system seriously undermines the interest in and credibility of these non-formal courses, both for potential learners and for private sector recruiters who prefer to train in-house or send workers abroad.



The law provides for a recognition system of skills acquired abroad through a validation process of foreign credentials run by the National Commission for the Accreditation of Studies (MASIG). To recognize an overseas qualification or credential, the commission relies on certified documents from the country of origin. The assessments cover both higher and secondary education, as well as general, technical and vocational education. This well-established system encourages Equatorial Guinean students to transfer abroad and it is widely used by foreign migrants to validate credentials obtained in their country of origin to meet the Ministry of Labour's requirements (a prerequisite for the registration of an international migrant's employment contract).

Quality control of TVET training provided by public and/or private centres is also supervised by MEEU, which is responsible for approving new centres and monitoring previously approved institutions. The creation of new TVET centres is therefore subject to the sectoral planning criteria of the Ministry, which gives the authorization to open when presented with a well-designed educational project, with appropriate physical infrastructure (school facilities), qualified staff and a sensible students/teacher ratio for the supervision of learners.

Once approved, public and, even more so, private training centres enjoy a high degree of management and operational autonomy. MEEU's supervision and control are indeed weak and TVET centres have a great deal of choice in terms of courses offered, educational content delivered to students and conditions of admission. In particular, the annual cost of tuition is not regulated, which directly impacts the level of inclusion in TVET training, which is questionable.

# ***Social inclusion***

Despite the opening of many training centres and a significant increase in TVET enrolment, the training on offer is struggling to meet all social inclusion criteria. Three indicators more specifically reflect the need to better take into account all those who wish to receive training: (i) geographic distribution of training centres and courses offered; (ii) initial education level required and qualifications issued; (iii) and tuition costs.

The training needs of rural populations are poorly met, due to two reasons: the uneven geographical distribution of training centres and the focus on courses for tertiary-sector occupations to the detriment of the primary sector. Most new training centres are located in Bata and Malabo whereas other continental regions have only one centre or no centre at all. As a result, people from rural areas have no access to TVET locally. Moreover, the courses on offer (service occupations) do not suit the local economic landscape, which comprises mainly agricultural, livestock or fishing activities.

The development of higher and intermediate education at the expense of basic skills training contributes to the marginalization of young people with low levels of education. Those who drop out of the general education system have a limited choice of training options due to the low availability of non-formal training in the centres. Due to their inability to meet the admission requirements for intermediate and higher education courses, they are locked out of TVET training.

The tuition fees charged by private TVET centres, i.e. by 41 of the 45 operational centres throughout the country, are high. The World Bank's Diagnostic (2017) shows that the fees charged by private training centres range from 320,000 to 1,100,000 CFA francs p.a. against 8 to 15,000 CFA francs for public centres. Compared to the purchasing power of the population, access to vocational training remains restricted to the upper middle class and is unavailable to the working classes though they have the greatest needs in terms of skills development and better employability. This double standard in gaining access to training does not help to reduce inequalities but rather contributes to increasing them.

# ***Lifelong learning***

Apprenticeships and continuing training occur mainly in large companies in growth sectors with reasonably high skills requirements. Operators in the oil and gas, mining and construction sectors use this kind of training most extensively. There are three types: on-the-job training, training abroad and peer-to-peer training.



The ministry of Labour, Employment Promotion and Social Security endeavours to improve its continuing training processes by drawing on foreign expertise. Labour legislation now requires that a company recruiting a foreign worker ensures that know-how and skills are transferred to a national worker via a form of mentoring. Whilst this regulation is innovative in theory, its effectiveness is difficult to evaluate in practice due to the weak supervision capacity of the National Labour Division and the lack of regular reporting by businesses that routinely use foreign expertise.



PRODEGE has launched a successful decentralized tutored training programme (rural areas) in primary education. Through a light and mobile training structure, this programme reaches out to outlying rural communities to develop the skills of local teachers and educational staff.

The African Development Bank's (AfDB) Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Value Chain Development Support Project (PASPA), designed jointly with the ILO, will be implemented over a five-year period, starting in January 2020. The aim is to increase fish production, enhance and professionalize the fishing industry through sustainable development of industrial fishing, small-scale fishing and aquaculture, and improve drinking water and sanitation infrastructures. This will ultimately increase the national skilled labour force in the fishing sector and improve the employability of young people; it will also provide a better supply of fish to the local market, reduce imports and improve exports to countries in the sub-region.

The project is in line with the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan for Fisheries and is part of the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES 2012-2020) and the 2020 Vision, which form the reference standards for the country's economic and social policies.

FAO has initiated a training scheme for women in the fish farming sector where the need to develop and recognize the skills of workers is important and very poorly addressed by the traditional TVET system. The first step is to identify the different trades specific to the sector (60 occupations identified, within the salting process, smoking process, fishing equipment assembly and maintenance, etc.), then to design mobile units to provide local training to the women. FAO also plans to develop (on its own funds) the “Campo Campecinos” project by setting up an “Escuela del Campo” training scheme to consolidate the skills of women working in the agro-pastoral sector (use of environmentally friendly pesticides, tools handling, creation of agricultural cooperatives, etc.).

# ***Key challenges***

In Equatorial Guinea, the key challenges for the TVET system are mainly social, institutional, organizational and material:

## **1** Lack of trust in the quality of TVET training.

In the education sector, and more particularly in technical and vocational education and training, there is unfortunately a skills shortage in different sectors, both in quality and quantity. In 2017, it is estimated that almost 55.5% of teachers with a bachelor's degree (against 57% in 2016) are teaching in institutes and universities, which raises the issue of teaching quality. This challenge applies across the board and to all layers of society. The widespread mistrust is explained by wide inconsistencies in the quality of training in the centres, their high degree of independence and the poor supervision provided by the MEEU. In particular, the assessment system for the TVET on offer is characterized by: (i) insufficient financial resources to continuously monitor the overall training supply; (ii) a shortage of qualified human resources to conduct inspections; (iii) a limited evaluation system focused on enrolments, the students/teacher ratio and the teachers' training level.

## **2** Need to strengthen technical skills and institutional capacity.

Public officials responsible for the implementation of decrees, guidelines and programmes related to vocational training and employment development often lack technical capacity. The system suffers from a lack of policies to support structural change in the face of a rapidly evolving production system. Indeed, the absence of a concerted and integrated strategy supported by all stakeholders and the lack of data production and sectoral analyses hamper planning and speedy adjustments to TVET provision.

## **3** Limited participation of the private sector in TVET governance.

This hinders the creation of a framework for consultations with the administration on the design of a common vocational training process (development, implementation, and certification) to deliver quality education in line with labour market requirements. Moreover, training systems do not sufficiently cover modules to prepare students for self-employment.

# 4

## **Geographical concentration of TVET in urban and near-urban areas and the dominance of private centres.**

There is a lack of equity and inclusion in the educational system for the following reasons: (i) the cost of private education is a burden for family budgets and it is not offset by an institutionalized system of scholarships to promote access to training for the lowest socio-economic population categories; (ii) the network of training facilities is geographically restricted, which limits access to training for people in rural areas and/or provinces far from the cities of Bata and Malabo.

# 5

## **Mismatch between training programmes and sectors conducive to economic diversification.**

This may hinder their development for the following reasons: (i) limited private sector involvement in designing training courses as management committees or boards of directors operate in effect on a non-tripartite basis; (ii) no skills anticipation mechanism leading ultimately to a shortage of skills in the workforce at the time they are needed; (iii) a low number of TVET centres specialized in specific underdeveloped sectors, hindering the professionalization of their sectors (recognition of skills acquired through practice); (iv) limited virtuous effect expected in the living conditions of some population categories (work opportunities, improved social inclusion); (v) persistent use of foreign labour to make up for skills shortages.

# 6

## **The fragmentation of the skills recognition system.**

A lack of clarity as concerns specifically non-formal training means that some parts of the population are barred from gaining access to the job market. To address the skills gap, the State has put in place skills development policies managed by the private sector. These training mechanisms (technology transfer, peer-to-peer training) provide immediate answers to business needs. However, the impact is very limited because these measures do not lead to a certification recognized outside the company. This lack of recognition prevents learners from being mobile and making career changes.

# 7

## **Poor training engineering hinders the professionalization of under-developed economic sectors.**



On the one hand, reference standards should be set up as well as professional mobile units tasked with consolidating practical knowledge with theoretical insights and, on the other, the embryonic skills recognition system should be institutionalized. Basic training in agricultural and fish farming occupations is not sufficiently developed and respected, even though it is highly popular with rural women who want to improve their agricultural practices.





# ***The way forward***





The government of Equatorial Guinea has taken on board the importance of reducing its dependence on the extractive sector (oil and gas, mines) by diversifying its productive fabric. This structural transformation provides a variety of opportunities to reform the national TVET system and align it better with the evolving needs of the private sector. Potential solutions that should be encouraged, supported and regulated include:

# **1** Improving the vocational guidance system and the legislative and regulatory framework around TVET and, ensuring that existing provisions are properly implemented.

In particular, the DGPEFP's capacity to operate should be reinforced to provide better supervision of private training centres and maintain consistency and quality in the training provided. Amongst other things, this would help to improve the supply of training and ensure better recognition and certification of the in-house training provided by businesses to workers who have skills sought by the labour market.



**2 Greater access to training owing to the construction of a polytechnic university on the continent and five new public TVET centres in the country's provincial capital cities.**

This is an excellent opportunity to provide locally based education better aligned with the needs of rural populations. The delivery of these new courses requires the full participation of training engineering services, which at present remain focused on urban occupations.

### **3 A better use of foreign expertise will require close supervision of the technology and skills transfer process.**

This includes more regular follow-through of Equatorial Guinean students travelling to Africa and/or to the West to study. The creation of a pool of skills from the Equatorial Guinean diaspora abroad and a mechanism to support the social and professional reintegration of returning migrants would help maximize their contribution to the effective development of local skills.

### **4 Material and financial support for the initiatives of INPYDE to develop an entrepreneurial culture.**

The INPYDE provides entrepreneurship training, offers funding mechanisms for start-ups and encourages innovation. The development of an entrepreneurial culture among the population of Equatorial Guinea is essential to enable economic diversification and identify niche markets, which are currently occupied by outside investors. The demographic structure, with a majority of young individuals, represents an untapped potential of inventiveness and innovation to modernize growth markets, particularly in the agricultural sector.

## **5** Strengthening the free movement of persons from CEMAC countries.

Free movement of persons is limited in its application as shown by low numbers in the migration data. The country's regional integration is inevitable to achieve the policy of economic diversification (limited domestic market) and seek new markets. Regional integration can also increase through cooperation and interaction between national education systems with the establishment of exchange and partnership frameworks between the different Member States.



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