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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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**Consideration of reports: reports submitted by States parties
in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant**

List of issues in relation to the initial report of Burundi

Addendum

Replies of Burundi to the list of issues*

[Date received: 12 August 2015]

I. General information

1. In the light of article 19 of the Constitution of Burundi, please clarify whether the Covenant is directly applicable in the State party. Please indicate whether the rights enshrined in the Covenant have been invoked and/or applied by national courts, either as grounds for a case or as interpretative guidance for legal norms.

1. The Republic of Burundi recognizes the instruments that guarantee economic, social and cultural rights and has incorporated them in its Constitution. Article 19 of Act No. 1/010 of 18 March 2005 promulgating the Constitution of Burundi states that: "The rights and duties proclaimed and guaranteed by, inter alia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international covenants on human rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child shall form an integral part of the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi."

2. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights therefore enjoys constitutional rank. However, there is little recognition of economic, social and cultural rights as human rights both in legal practice in Burundi and in the formulation and implementation of policy. This situation hinders the exercise of those rights by individuals and their advocates, including lawyers, who are rarely able to lodge complaints concerning those rights.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



3. For that reason, the Government of Burundi is working to combine legal expertise and political and social empowerment by focusing on building up knowledge and capacity, in order to ensure that the legal remedies in this respect are effective.

4. Legal staff are offered regular human rights training by the Ministry responsible for human rights to encourage them to apply the international human rights instruments in their day-to-day work and be part of the full promotion and implementation of those rights.

5. In 2006, the University of Burundi created the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, which provides training to enable judges and lawyers to invoke international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

2. Please provide detailed information on the legislative and administrative measures taken by the State party to guarantee the absolute independence and impartiality of the judicial system.

6. The following measures have been taken:

- Starting in 2014, recruitment to the Ministry of Justice has been by competitive examination in order to emphasize merit and performance;
- The Ministry of Justice has established the Professional Training Centre, which is responsible for strengthening the capacities of newly appointed judges, so that they will be prepared to resist the temptation of corruption or any other act likely to place them in a position of dependence;
- At a conference on the justice system, it was decided that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court would henceforth be elected by magistrates.

II. Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1-5)

3. Please provide information on the impact of the work carried out by the special anti-corruption brigade and on cases brought before the anti-corruption court, as well as information on the results of these investigations.

7. The anti-corruption brigade was established by Act No. 1/27 of 3 August 2006. Several activities to raise the public's awareness of the evils of corruption have been carried out by this brigade, with the following results:

- The large-scale reporting of cases of corruption by the public: 50 cases a month on average;
- The Government's realization of the magnitude of corruption, which has led to the establishment of a legal and institutional framework to combat corruption, including, for example, the amendment to the Code on Government Contracts and the revision of the Criminal Code to incorporate several provisions aimed at punishing both those benefiting from corruption and those who corrupt, as well as the adoption of the National Good Governance Strategy;
- The existence of a procurement unit in each ministerial institution;
- The establishment of anti-corruption units in all public agencies, as well as anti-corruption school clubs. Makamba and Kayanza high schools are piloting the project, which may be extended to other secondary schools;
- The increase of tax revenues.

Table 1
Cases received by the anti-corruption brigade from 2007 to 2013 and amounts recovered

<i>Case years</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of case files transmitted to the Office of the Prosecutor of the Anti-corruption Court	22	105	74	94	252	229	136	912
Amount recovered (million Burundi francs)	121	151	204	224	369	316	1 304	2 416

Source: Office of the Second Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

8. It may be noted that from June 2007 to the present (2015), 1,600 cases of corruption have been reported to the anti-corruption brigade and transmitted to the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Anti-corruption Court, for investigation and submission to the Court.

9. The Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Anti-corruption Court was established by Act No. 1/12 of 18 April 2006.

Table 2
Cases of corruption handled by the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Anti-corruption Court and amounts recovered

<i>Case years</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>To 31 May 2013</i>	<i>Total</i>
Case files registered	132	281	201	201	461	371	233	1 880
Cases transmitted to the Anti-corruption Court	60	122	126	133	319	172	107	1 039
Case files transmitted to the offices of other prosecutors	8	45	60	30	40	38	12	233
Discontinued cases	9	42	37	23	92	164	68	435
Amount recovered (million Burundi francs)	139	160	218	263	235	68	153	1 235

Source: Office of the Second Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

10. The Anti-corruption Court was established by Act No. 1/36 of 13 December 2006.

Table 3
Cases handled by the Anti-corruption Court and corresponding amounts recovered

<i>Case years</i>	<i>2007-2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>To 31 May 2013</i>	<i>Total</i>
Case files registered	409	138	276	210	70	1 103
Cases tried and closed	381	104	213	263	93	1 054
Amounts recovered (million Burundi francs)	326	117	124	55	73	695

Source: Office of the Second Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

11. With regard to sanctions for corruption or financial misappropriation, some administrators of public corporations and public servants have been punished by

dismissal, imprisonment, temporarily suspension and fines on the basis of evidence of those offences.

4. Please provide detailed information on how development assistance received by the State party has been used to realize the rights established under the Covenant. In addition, please provide information on the measures taken to ensure that, in carrying out their activities, foreign businesses and investors respect economic, social and cultural rights.

12. Regarding the use of development assistance, reference should be made to the National Policy Paper on Official Development Assistance (2011-2015). A participatory and inclusive approach involving all stakeholders (the Government, technical and financial partners, civil society and the public sector) was followed in order to ensure their support for this policy.

13. The overall objective of the National Assistance Policy in Burundi is to significantly increase the effectiveness of official development assistance in order to contribute to the structural changes required for Burundi to develop economically and socially and thereby to gradually lessen its dependence on aid.

14. The objective will be achieved with the strict implementation of the five principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: ownership, harmonization, alignment, managing for results and mutual accountability. This requires a determined mutual commitment by the Government and its technical and financial partners.

15. Specific objectives have been defined to arrive at solutions to the major problems and address the challenges of managing aid in Burundi. These objectives are to:

- (1) Encourage national capacity-building for improved economic management: support long-term planning efforts, macroeconomic management, the planning of aid management investments and the management of public finances, based on a result-driven culture;
- (2) Improve accountability, which is done by strengthening parliamentary and citizen oversight, as well as by making use of statistics to improve performance;
- (3) Reduce aid fragmentation, by increasing harmonization, encouraging the delegation and division of labour among partners, and limiting the number of structural support units;
- (4) Improve the system of aid information, by ensuring that the aid management platform is regularly updated by the technical and financial partners, the project/programme managers and the line ministries, in order to achieve optimal use of the platform.

16. It may be noted that the National Committee for Aid Coordination has been set up to coordinate the implementation of the National Policy on Official Development Assistance, and the aid offered by this Committee has been allocated to the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategic Frameworks I and II.

17. In order to ensure that foreign companies and investors respect economic, social and cultural rights, Burundi has established the Investment Promotion Agency, whose aims are to:

- Inform investors regarding all matters relating to promotion and exports;
- Support and assist investors in general and exporters in particular, especially in obtaining documents and/or completing the formalities required by law;
- Design the reforms needed to improve the business climate;

- Challenge the authorities on cases of the non-application or misapplication of any regulations relating to any laws or regulations on the promotion of investment and exports.

Article 2, paragraph 2

Non-discrimination

5. Please indicate the measures taken by the State party to adopt a general anti-discrimination act which outlines all prohibited grounds for discrimination, in accordance with article 2, paragraph 2, of the Covenant. Please provide information on the measures taken to combat discrimination in all areas relating to the rights enshrined in the Covenant, particularly against the various ethnic groups, including the indigenous Batwa people. In addition, please clarify whether steps have been taken to increase public awareness of the situation of the Batwa and to combat the stigmatization they face.

18. The principles of non-discrimination and equality are embedded in the legal framework put in place at both domestic and international level, including, inter alia, article 22 of the Constitution, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

19. In order to combat discrimination against the indigenous Batwa people, the Government of Burundi began by instituting an affirmative action policy in their favour, including such actions as the discretionary filling of vacant elective offices and better access to basic social services.

20. This is directly in line with the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which in article 7.4 provides for the “deliberate promotion of disadvantaged groups, particularly the Batwa, to correct the existing imbalances in all sectors. This exercise shall be conducted, while maintaining professionalism [...]”

21. Burundi has also adopted a national human rights policy that devotes a chapter to the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities, such as the Batwa people, while efforts to raise public awareness of the policy have provided a suitable opportunity to educate the public about the situation of the Batwa and combat the stigmatization they face. Not to be overlooked is the establishment in 2011 of the Independent National Human Rights Commission, which contributes to the promotion of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as guaranteed by the Constitution, by organizing activities that target vulnerable groups, including the Batwa.

6. Please provide information on the steps taken to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities, in particular in the areas of employment, education and access to health-care services. Please provide detailed information on the number of children with disabilities in the State party and the steps taken to protect them from social exclusion and neglect.

22. Among the measures taken to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities, some legislative and institutional measures have led to moderate improvements for such persons. They include:

- The guarantee in the 2005 Constitution of non-discrimination and the advocacy of equality for all, including persons with disabilities;

- The Government's adoption in 2012 of the National Human Rights Policy, which includes many initiatives for the promotion and protection of persons with disabilities;
- The ratification by Burundi of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2014;
- Making access to primary education free of charge, although for children with disabilities, full enjoyment of this right still requires special arrangements;
- Free access to health care for children aged under 5. This measure has made it possible for many children to gain access to appropriate forms of therapy;
- Free access to health care for pregnant women and free childbirth. This measure has certainly helped limit the cases of disability related to poor care for pregnant women and deliveries in non-hospital environments;
- Support for the initiatives of organizations and centres dealing with persons with disabilities provided by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender;
- Allowing children with disabilities (deaf and blind children) to take the national school-leaving exam.

23. Statistics concerning children with disabilities have not yet taken shape. Nonetheless, with the creation of the Child and Family Department of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender, that challenge will soon be taken up.

24. Similarly, decentralized structures, such as the Family and Community Development Centres, assisted by the Child Protection Committees, will contribute to the identification of children with disabilities to protect them from social exclusion and neglect.

7. Please indicate whether the State party has taken any specific measures, including launching awareness campaigns, to prevent and combat discrimination and particularly to eliminate harmful practices against persons affected by albinism.

25. Persons affected by albinism are not considered a separate group thanks to the efforts of the Burundian Government, which has taken steps to combat exclusion against them, including:

- The recognition of Albinos sans frontières, an association that helps raise awareness of the situation of albinos and teaches its members how to assert their rights and defend their cause;
- The granting of subsidies (on a yearly basis) to this association to enable it to meet its main needs;
- Food and non-food aid;
- Metal roofing where walls have been built;
- Awareness-raising sessions for the community and administrative personnel with a view to preventing discrimination against albinos;
- The prosecution of the alleged perpetrators of crimes against albinos: in the courts of the provinces bordering the United Republic of Tanzania, including Ruyigi and Cankuzo, there are cases related to the prosecution of perpetrators of the killings of persons affected by albinism;
- The participation of the Ministry responsible for human rights in the International Albinism Awareness Day (13 June), which is an opportunity to

enlist the media in awareness-raising efforts to combat discrimination against persons affected by albinism;

- The adoption by the Government of Burundi of a national human rights policy and corresponding action plan, which place special emphasis on promoting and protecting the rights of persons affected by albinism.

Article 3

Equal rights of men and women

8. Please provide detailed information on the measures adopted by the State party to eliminate stereotypes and practices which help to perpetuate discrimination against women. Please provide information on the specific measures taken to guarantee equality between men and women in the exercise of Covenant rights, particularly with regard to inheritance and access to land.

26. The measures that have been taken are as follows:

- Legislative measures:
 - The adoption by the Government of the 2012-2025 National Gender Policy with the aim of contributing to the achievement of gender equity and equality in Burundi;
 - The introduction of the draft bill on combating gender-based violence, which has now been tabled before Parliament;
 - The attribution of a legal status for women in the Personal and Family Code;
 - Severe penalties for gender-based violence under the revised Criminal Code of 2009.
- Institutional measures:
 - Female representation of at least 30 per cent in decision-making bodies instituted by the Constitution;
 - Development of national strategies for mainstreaming the gender perspective in the army and the police;
 - All ministerial institutions to take a gender perspective into account in their sectoral policies.
- Economic measures:
 - The existence of a very dynamic organization of businesswomen (Association des femmes d'affaires burundaises), Women's Initiatives for Self-Empowerment and the Caisse Coopérative d'Épargne et de Crédit Mutuel (Cooperative Savings Bank and Credit Union), etc.
- Educational measures:
 - Boys and girls have the same right to attend school, at the primary, secondary and university levels;
 - Underage mothers who are in school are now allowed to continue their studies, which was previously not the case.
- Health measures:
 - Public service radio broadcasts on reproductive health and family planning.

9. Please provide up-to-date information on the results of action taken to combat discrimination against women, including the updated 2012-2025 National Gender Policy, and also on the establishment and operation of the institutional framework for carrying out this policy, which comprises the National Gender Council, the Steering Committee, the Technical Action Committee and provincial and municipal committees.

27. The updated National Gender Policy was designed to promote equity and equality between women and men in all areas of economic and social life and at all levels. As a result of the policy:

- The social and cultural status of women in the family and in society has improved;
- Equitable participation by women and men in decision-making bodies and in peacebuilding and security activities;
- Strengthening of basic social services for women, men and adolescents;
- The creation and operation of the institutional framework planned for the implementation of the National Gender Policy are under way.

III. Issues relating to specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6-15)

Article 6

Right to work

10. Please provide information on the impact of measures adopted by the State party in the area of employment, particularly the National Employment Policy adopted in November 2014, and indicate how they are helping to reduce unemployment, particularly among young people and women. Please also provide an update with disaggregated statistics on the progress made in this area.

28. The National Employment Policy, adopted in November 2014, was implemented by the Government of Burundi through the establishment of the Burundi Employment and Labour Office, with the aim of promoting and creating decent work for all in accordance with the principles of social dialogue, fairness and social justice.

29. The Office's duties are to:

- Channel all job offers and requests in the public and private sectors and make them available to the public;
- Help to develop strategies for the mobilization of partners and resources for job promotion and creation;
- Collect, centralize, analyse and circulate data on the labour market;
- Undertake all essential studies on employment and vocational training;
- Promote self-employment and entrepreneurship through constant exchanges while focusing on vulnerable groups;
- Help initiate vocational training, further training, reconversion and integration activities;
- Assist with the promotion of labour mobility in the East African Community;
- Enhance small jobs through specific modules.

30. The impact of the employment measures adopted by the Government of Burundi has yet to be felt, given the recent establishment of the Burundi Employment and Labour Office. Consequently, disaggregated statistics are not yet available.

Article 7

Right to just and favourable working conditions

11. Please provide updated information on the progress made in establishing a national minimum wage based on an indexing system in order to guarantee workers and their families a decent standard of living.

31. In this regard, the Government of Burundi has introduced the national programme of public administration reforms, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 25 April 2012. Wage policy is one of the components of this programme.

12. Please provide detailed information on the measures adopted by the State party to improve working conditions in the informal sector.

32. See paragraph 29 on the duties of the Burundi Employment and Labour Office.

13. Please give information on the results of measures taken for the effective implementation of legal provisions to prohibit forced labour, particularly of Batwa and children.

33. The following measures have been taken:

- Development and adoption of the National Child Protection Policy;
- Development and adoption of the National Strategy for the Protection of Children in Street Situations;
- Drafting and adoption of minimum standards on children in institutions or deprived of a family environment;
- Establishment or strengthening of thematic working groups on the protection of children, including orphans and other vulnerable children, children in street situations, children involved in the worst forms of child labour, etc.
- Establishment of child protection committees;
- Establishment of the Burundi National Children's Forum. The Forum, in which the Batwa community is represented, is composed of 34 children (one girl and one boy between 10 and 16 years of age at the time of the elections from each of the country's provinces). The 34 children are also members of the provincial coordinating committees responsible for child protection efforts;
- Development and pending adoption of a draft Child Protection Code;
- Ongoing review of the Labour Code and the implementing legislation relating to child labour to bring them into line with international instruments ratified by Burundi.

14. Please describe and provide information on the functioning of the Labour Inspectorate and other mechanisms in place to monitor working conditions, including in the area of occupational health and safety. Please provide information, including statistics, on the complaints lodged with the Labour Inspectorate and the labour courts, and on the follow-up to these complaints. Please specify whether the State party has labour courts in all regions of the country and explain how labour disputes are dealt with in the regions that have no labour court.

34. There are two labour courts in the country, one in Bujumbura Mairie and the other in Gitega. In the other provinces, which do not have such courts, labour disputes are dealt with by the *tribunaux de grande instance* (courts of major jurisdiction).

Article 8

Trade union rights

15. Please inform the Committee of the measures taken by the State party to allow trade unions to exercise fully their right to carry out their activities freely and without interference from public authorities, in accordance with the provisions of article 8 of the Covenant. Please provide information on the measures adopted by the State party to investigate violations of trade union rights, including allegations of death threats against union leaders.

35. In accordance with the law, civil servants enjoy the right to organize and strike, which is to be exercised in strict compliance with the relevant legislation. There are trade unions in Burundi that include civil servants among their members.

16. Please give details on how the right to strike is exercised in practice and indicate whether collective bargaining mechanisms are in place.

36. This right is legally recognized by the Labour Code and the Civil Service Statutes. Title 10, chapter II, amongst others of the Labour Code deals with labour disputes. In respect of the civil service, for example, Act No. 1/015 of 29 November 2002 lays down rules concerning the exercise of the right to organize and to strike.

Article 9

Right to social security

17. Please provide updated information on the impact of measures taken to progressively achieve universal social security coverage, including for persons working in the informal sector and the self-employed. Please also provide up-to-date statistics on the percentage of the population covered by the national social security system.

37. The Social Protection Support Fund was established chiefly to administer a national solidarity fund. It is responsible for:

- Financing the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy;
- Financing the activities of the permanent executive secretariat of the National Social Protection Commission;
- Financing the activities of the steering bodies;
- Financing sectoral social welfare programmes.

38. Currently, there are several dynamic institutions that deal with social security, in the first place for established civil servants and magistrates. One such institution is the National Pensions and Risks Office. Coverage for contract civil servants, the defence forces and law enforcement personnel is provided by the National Social Security Institute. In addition, all established and contract civil servants are provided with health coverage by the Mutuelle de la Fonction Publique (Civil Service Mutual Insurance Company).

39. For workers in the informal sector of the economy and independent workers, the National Social Protection Commission promotes public awareness in order to encourage them to join one of the mutual health insurance schemes. They include

motorcyclists, fishermen and bicycle taxi drivers, who join associations and run their own mutual health insurance schemes, such as the Medical Assistance Card, Solus Mutualité and Sonavie.

Article 10

Protection of the family, mothers and children

18. Please inform the Committee of the measures taken to guarantee the rights of women and mothers to job security, paid leave and maternity benefits.

40. In terms of employment, steps have also been taken to ensure compliance with International Labour Organization conventions with the aim of guaranteeing equality between men and women. The National Administrative Reform Programme, adopted by the Government on 25 April 2012, was implemented in response, amongst others, to the country's determination to respect the provisions of the Convention, particularly in connection with the specific problems of women holding public office, their advancement, their legitimate ambitions and their career progress.¹

19. Please provide statistics, broken down by age, sex, ethnicity and area (urban or rural), on the prevalence and nature of child labour. Please provide information on the impact and effects of the implementation of the 2010-2015 National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour and on other steps taken to stamp out child labour, particularly the worst forms. Please provide information on the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and sentences involving child labour.

41. The Government of Burundi has ratified two resolutions, Nos. 138 and 182, that institute work restrictions related to the age of the child. A Ministerial Order, No. 630/1 of 5 January 1981, governs the implementation of resolution No. 182 on the minimum age for admission to employment, which is 16.

42. Disaggregated statistical data are not available.

20. Please inform the Committee of the specific measures taken to prevent child marriage and forced marriage, particularly among girls.

43. Such marriages do not exist in Burundi, as the law states that the legal age of marriage is 18 for girls and 21 for boys. The few remaining cases concern emancipation through marriage for boys, and girls who have become pregnant, for the protection of the unborn children.

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

21. Please provide updated information on poverty levels in the State party, disaggregated by year and region, ethnic group, age group and sex. Please provide information on the outcome of the implementation of the 2007-2010 poverty reduction strategy paper and developments in the second phase of the strategy.

44. Encouraging results have been achieved in most of the areas of action of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper I, including security, governance and human capital. Economic growth, however, has not been sufficient to contribute significantly to the reduction of monetary and non-monetary poverty.

¹ The development of the Programme did not take gender issues into account, and as a result it had to be supplemented by the document "Guide de l'intégration du genre au PNRA" (Guide to mainstreaming gender in the National Administrative Reform Programme).

45. Regarding governance, an important achievement to highlight is the normalization of political life, with transparent and peaceful elections held in 2005 and 2010, as well as the restoration of security throughout the country. The war on corruption has continued.

46. With regard to justice, significant progress has been achieved with the construction of courts and the recruitment and training of magistrates.

47. In connection with access to basic social services, significant progress has been made in the education and health sectors as a result of two key reforms: free primary education and free health care for pregnant women and children under 5 years of age. Considerable resources have been mobilized for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, although infection rates are rising slightly in rural areas.

48. Notable progress has been made towards gender equality, particularly through primary education and the improvement of legislation for the protection of women against gender-based violence.

49. In phase II of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework, encouraging progress is also noticeable, especially in social sectors.

22. Please provide updated information on the prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age, in particular in disadvantaged and marginalized groups, notably the Batwa. Please also indicate the impact of measures taken to combat malnutrition and food insecurity, such as the 2008-2015 National Agricultural Strategy and the 2012-2017 National Agricultural Investment Plan.

50. Studies by United Nations agencies working in the field of nutrition have produced the following figures:

- The rate of chronic malnutrition among children less than 5 years of age has fallen from 58 per cent (Demographic and Health Survey, 2010) to the current figure of 49 per cent, according to the comprehensive nutrition, food security and vulnerability analysis produced by the World Food Programme, based on a 40 per cent threshold;
- The underweight proportion has fallen from 28.8 per cent to 26.8 per cent, based on a 30 per cent threshold;
- The average food consumption per person is 1,600 kilocalories a day, for a threshold of 2,100 kilocalories;
- The Global Hunger Index, which was 38.8 in 2013, fell to 35.6 in 2014;
- The prevalence of anaemia among women of childbearing age is 19 per cent;
- Only 19 per cent of children aged 6 to 23 months have a varied diet.

51. The main causes include inappropriate hygiene and sanitation practices, most households' limited access to proper food, inappropriate eating practices, limited access to safe drinking water, difficult access to health services, the high cost of living, the low level of education of women and the prevalence of childhood illnesses such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections such as pneumonia.

52. In the light of these results, the Government of Burundi, with the support of its technical and financial partners in general and United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in particular, has made the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition one of its strategic priorities by seeking

to improve the performance of all the sectors whose actions have a direct or indirect bearing on the nutritional state of the population. These are such sectors as agriculture, health, education and the environment.

53. In 2011, for example, the Government organized the first National Forum on Food Security and Nutrition. One of the main recommendations was that Burundi should join the Framework for Scaling Up Nutrition and the REACH Initiative (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger), which Burundi has joined. Becoming involved in those two initiatives led to a high-level political commitment, but also to fruitful partnerships and the establishment of a multisectoral coordination framework for high-level action.

54. In view of the need for a multisectoral approach to the fight against malnutrition and food insecurity, a strategic multisectoral food security and nutrition plan was developed to serve as a working document for all stakeholders. The plan has four major objectives:

- Multisectoral leadership and coordination;
- Prevention and treatment of malnutrition;
- Promotion and reinforcement of food security;
- Development and reinforcement of nutrition-sensitive strategies.

55. The Government of Burundi, through the Steering Committee of the Multisectoral Food Security and Nutrition Platform, has emphasized two key actions — namely, promoting and developing kitchen gardens for individual households and schools to contribute to a varied diet, and promoting hand-washing with soap and water to prevent illnesses transmitted by unclean hands that are a threat to nutritional health.

56. Promotion of these key actions is currently under way throughout the country, and the training of key actors has begun and will continue at community level in an attempt to ensure lasting results.

23. Please provide information on the measures taken by the State party to ensure that disadvantaged and marginalized persons and groups, in particular women, the Batwa and internally displaced persons, have equal access to land and food.

57. The following measures have been taken by the Government of Burundi:

- The establishment of integrated rural villages by the Government through the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender, to care for vulnerable groups, such as older persons, the Batwa and persons with disabilities;
- Along similar lines, the same Ministry, in conjunction with the Ministry of Land Planning, the Environment and Urban Development, has also set up peace villages in order to reintegrate returnees, demobilized persons and internally displaced persons and allow them equal access to land and food;
- Through the Ministry, the Government of Burundi provides those people with food and non-food aid, as well as medical assistance. Assistance is also provided to families where multiple births, such as twins, triplets or quadruplets, have occurred.

24. Please provide information on the availability and adequacy of housing in the State party. Please also provide information, including statistics, on the

measures taken to improve access to infrastructure and basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity.

58. In 2008, the Government adopted the National Housing and Urbanization Policy, with the aim of allowing each Burundian access to adequate housing and basic services of suitable quality.

59. At the national level, according to the 2012 national water and sanitation inventory, the coverage rates for safe drinking water were 60 per cent in rural areas and 83 per cent in urban areas in 2013, while disparities could be observed between different provinces and communes.

60. With a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the Government has made commitments in the areas of water and sanitation as part of the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction II, which include:

- Increasing the percentage of the population with access to safe drinking water from 50 per cent in 2007 to 70 per cent in 2015 by refurbishing destroyed water infrastructure and building new drinking water supply systems;
- Increasing the percentage of the population with access to adequate basic sanitation from 35 per cent in 2010 to 50 per cent in 2015;
- Adopting decentralized management of the basic drinking water, hygiene and sanitation sector in the context of the devolution of powers from the State to the communes.

Article 12

Right to health

25. Please provide information on the results of measures taken to improve access to health care such as the 2011-2015 Health-Care Development Plan, in particular in rural areas and for disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as the Batwa. Please provide information on measures taken to make medical staff and medical equipment more widely available in all regions and provinces of the State party.

61. The measures taken include decentralization and the management of human resources through the establishment of 17 health provinces subdivided into 45 health districts. Assessment of progress made during the implementation of the 2006-2010 National Health Development Plan showed that carrying out the reform has contributed to improved relations between health centres, in part as a result of more effective supervision, monitoring of monthly indicators and staff training.

62. Another measure taken by the Government was instituting free health care for vulnerable populations, namely children less than 5 years of age and pregnant women. The Government, through the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender, also covers health care for returnees, displaced persons and other vulnerable population groups (such as Batwa and persons with disabilities).

63. Since 2012, the Government has run an insurance programme that provides a medical assistance card for other segments of the population. Order No. 01/VP2/2012 of 25 January 2012 of the Second Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi was signed to give effect to the card.

26. Please indicate whether the State party has adopted a specific policy to promote and protect the health of persons affected by albinism.

64. The Government of Burundi has not yet adopted a specific policy to promote and protect the health of persons affected by albinism. However, the action plan for the National Human Rights Policy adopted in 2012 includes initiatives aimed at improving the health of persons affected by albinism.

27. Please provide information on the measures taken to guarantee the accessibility and availability of sexual and reproductive health-care services and on measures taken to raise public awareness and understanding of sexual and reproductive health.

65. The Government of Burundi attaches particular importance to sexual and reproductive health. This is reflected in the work of such government institutions as the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS and the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender, which promote sexual and reproductive health locally through Family and Community Development Centres at provincial, communal and even *colline* or neighbourhood level.

66. The Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS makes every effort to raise awareness, among young people in particular, of sexual and reproductive health. The Ministry, together with its partners (local and international NGOs), provides guidance to the public in relation to this issue. It raises awareness of the importance of family planning and makes every effort to ensure that the population has access to this service through hospitals and health centres.

67. The other ministries address this issue in cross-cutting fashion to ensure that the entire population is made aware of the issues involved. These efforts are facilitated by such international organizations as the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women, CARE, UNICEF and the World Health Organization, which fund many projects and programmes in this respect.

68. It may be noted that sexual and reproductive health services, especially with regard to family planning, are free of charge.

28. Please inform the Committee about the results of the implementation of the national strategic plan to combat HIV/AIDS and on the measures taken to improve coverage in rural areas. Please also provide information on the action taken to increase public awareness and encourage the public to adopt appropriate behaviour given the risk of infection with HIV/AIDS. Please provide information on the results of specific measures taken by the State party to combat malaria and tuberculosis.

69. When the HIV/AIDS epidemic appeared in Burundi, the Government launched the National Programme to Combat HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, before the year 2000. It followed up with three 5-year plans on combating AIDS, one covering the period 1999-2003, another 2007-2011, and the third 2012-2016, with the National Strategic Plan, which was based on three principles: (i) a single multisectoral coordination body, (ii) a single national plan on implementing the response to HIV/AIDS, and (iii) a single national monitoring and evaluation plan. In addition, the policies focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and universal access to prevention, care, support and treatment. The implementation of these strategic plans has produced the following results:

- Regarding prevention, voluntary HIV testing has made it possible to detect a large number of people living with HIV. Other preventive activities have led to significant advances. They include (i) prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, (ii) prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child, (iii) distribution of condoms, (iv) post-exposure treatment, (v) transfusion and injection safety procedures in four regional locations, (vi) prevention of the risk

of HIV/AIDS transmission by traditional health practitioners, (vii) promotion of male circumcision, (viii) prevention in the workplace, (ix) positive prevention for persons living with HIV;

- The review of the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS revealed the shortcomings to be addressed, including (i) reducing the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV, (ii) improving the well-being and quality of life of persons living with HIV/AIDS, (iii) reducing poverty and other factors of HIV/AIDS vulnerability, (iv) strengthening the management and coordination of the decentralized and multisectoral national response to HIV/AIDS;
- The implementation of strategic actions designed to (i) create income-generating activities for the most deprived, (ii) provide care for orphans and other vulnerable children, (iii) ensure legal protection of the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS;
- The consolidation of advances and the strengthening of implementation mechanisms for the Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS, in part through the introduction of effective monitoring and evaluation, including research, the development of a sectoral response to the epidemic, the strengthening of the multisectoral coordination body and the mobilization and rational administration of domestic and outside resources.

70. The results of the specific measures taken by Burundi to combat malaria and tuberculosis have been satisfactory. Together with the development of the first Strategy to Combat Malaria (2008-2012), a programme to combat malaria, established in 2009, has helped the country make real progress in terms of programmes and policies. This includes:

- Free access to malaria medication is available in public health centres;
- Almost all health centres have a microscope;
- Insecticide-treated mosquito nets are provided free of charge in prenatal clinics and vaccination centres;
- A mass distribution campaign has achieved near universal coverage with regard to mosquito nets.

71. In 1992, the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS put in place a programme to combat tuberculosis that led to impressive results in terms of detection and successful treatment, as confirmed by an independent assessment done by the World Health Organization.

Articles 13 and 14

Right to education

29. Please provide updated information on the effect of measures taken to improve the accessibility and availability of education, particularly in rural areas, and, more specifically, on the results of the 2005 presidential order on free schooling. Please also provide information on the impact of steps taken to improve school attendance rates for all children of school age, particularly Batwa children, internally displaced children and children affected by albinism. Please provide information on the measures adopted to combat high dropout rates in primary and secondary schools.

72. Since 2005, Burundi has been positively engaged in the drive towards greater accessibility and promotion of schooling, with a view to ensuring that all children,

boys and girls, including marginalized children and those with special needs, are able to exercise their basic right to education.

73. The presidential order abolishing school fees was directly responsible for the steep rise in the number of enrolments. The apparent intake rate was 146.2 per cent in 2005. This percentage is falling, as it was 139 per cent in 2010 and 135 per cent in 2014. This means that almost all 7-year-old children have access to grade 1. The gross school enrolment rate is following the same trend. It was 101.3 per cent in 2005, peaked at 137.7 per cent in 2010 and fell back to 135 per cent in 2014. Gender parity, one of the Millennium Development Goals, has already been achieved in primary education in Burundi.

74. A significant step has been taken towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goal of universal completion of primary education. Completion rates rose from 53.9 per cent in 2010 to 71.2 per cent in 2014.

75. The free schooling order is supported by a number of other provisions, such as community mobilization for the construction of school facilities and the provision of school materials to all schoolchildren in public primary schools.

76. The measures to improve the school attendance of all children include the distribution of notebooks to all schoolchildren, a loosening of the rules on wearing uniforms, which are no longer compulsory, and the opening of school canteens in areas threatened by food insecurity. Flexibility in the application of school rules has made it possible to readmit underage mothers who have been victims of various forms of sexual harassment. Steps towards facilitating life at school include the construction of separate latrines for boys and girls and the implementation, with the support of UNICEF, of the child-friendly school model. Deworming operations in the schools during mother-and-child weeks are organized jointly with the Ministry of Public Health.

77. At the start of the 2011/12 school year, Burundi began an inclusive education programme to allow children with disabilities to attend school on an equal basis with “normal” children. Since 2012, blind children have taken the national secondary education admissions exam, which is available in Braille. They are then received in an institution whose facilities have been refitted to suit them.

78. Regarding the reduction of primary and secondary school dropout rates, it is worth noting the complementary effects of the aforementioned measures, such as the abolition of school fees, the provision of notebooks, school canteens, more flexible rules for uniforms and the readmission of underage mothers. The fall in the grade repetition rate at all levels has had a positive impact on the fall in the dropout rate.

79. The organization of catch-up sessions for students who were unable to take an exam for such reasons as illness should also be mentioned. The reform of basic education includes a more objective, success-oriented assessment framework, which is sure to improve pass rates and thereby reduce failure-influenced dropout rates. This reform, together with expanded access to grade 7, has made the system more fluid by reducing grade repetition.

80. In addition to all these measures, it is worth noting the financial effort made by the Government of Burundi in devoting 30 per cent of public expenditures to education, 50 per cent of which goes to primary education.

Article 15

Cultural rights

30. Please provide information on the measures taken to allow the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups in both rural and urban areas, as well as the Batwa, to have access to and enjoy the right to take part in cultural life, and provide information on the impact of those measures.

81. In 2007, the Government of Burundi adopted the Burundi Cultural Policy, a very useful tool which provides a detailed assessment of the cultural policies and situation since independence, and which is implemented by the Ministry responsible for cultural affairs.

82. At present, several private operators are active in various areas of Burundian culture, such as dance, traditional and modern music, the plastic arts, audiovisual media and literature. Burundi is known the world over for its drums, which have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

83. Several cultural folk dancing and traditional song associations have been set up to develop talent free of discrimination. The dances of the Batwa community are appreciated by the people of Burundi.

84. The theatre and film industry is still in an embryonic stage, but efforts are being made to encourage its development.

31. Please provide information on the impact of the measures adopted to protect the cultural diversity and cultural heritage of the Batwa with respect to their ancestral lands and to create a favourable environment for them to preserve, develop, express and share their identity, history, culture, language, traditions and customs.

85. Burundi enjoys a degree of cultural and linguistic homogeneity that is rare in Africa. However, although the Batwa are considered an indigenous population, it cannot be said that they are thereby deprived of any rights relating to the use of their language, as with all ethnic groups, or having a free cultural life of their own.

86. It should be noted that the Batwa have an intonation of their own and occupations that are reserved for them, such as pottery, blacksmithing, basketwork and hunting.

32. Please indicate what steps have been taken to ensure the best possible access to the Internet.

87. The first step taken to ensure the best possible access to the Internet is the development by the Government of Burundi of a fibre optic project involving the installation of a fibre optic network throughout the country's provinces. This project will be implemented in three phases over 10 years and has cost the State of Burundi 17.8 billion Burundi francs (US\$ 11.5 million). Technically, all the provinces of Burundi should ultimately be connected to the international undersea fibre optic cables running along the coasts of Dar es Salaam and Mombasa. Optical fibre has been used in Burundi since October 2013, but in only nine provinces: Bujumbura Mairie, Gitega, Ngozi, Kayanza, Mwaro, Muramvya, Muyinga and Karuzi.

88. Another step has been to encourage economic operators to set up telecommunication companies in Burundi. These have included LEO/Econet, Lumitel, ONAMOB and Smart, which have been providing Internet services to the population.