



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

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

**Eighty-ninth session**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties  
under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of Benin to the list of issues and questions in relation  
to its fifth periodic report\***

[Date received: 3 June 2024]

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



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## I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Benin extends its warmest greetings to the Committee and reaffirms its commitment to actively participating in all stages of the review of the periodic reports, which offers Benin the opportunity to assess the progress made and the challenges that remain with regard to women's rights, in the light of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
2. In keeping with the State's commitment to making every possible effort to respect, protect and promote women's rights and report on such efforts, these replies to the list of issues and questions update the information contained in the fifth periodic report, currently under review.
3. The replies were drafted following an inclusive, participatory process, during which governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the implementation of the Convention presented and shared the measures and steps that have been taken to reduce, if not eliminate, discrimination against women across the country.

## II. Replies to the questions raised in the list of issues

### A. Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic, recovery efforts and the global crisis

#### Reply to question 1

4. The efforts made and strategies put in place in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were aligned with the recommendations of the World Health Organization.
5. The State has undertaken several initiatives in that regard, including:
  - The development and implementation of a public communication and mobilization strategy for the pandemic response, which was translated into six of the local languages, and the establishment of cordons sanitaires in the communes of Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi, Allada, Ouidah, Tori, Zè, Sèmè-Kpodji, Porto-Novo, Akpro-Misséréte and Adjarra:
  - The recommendation that all persons aged 18 and older, including teachers and administrators of public and private schools before classes resumed, students, military and paramilitary personnel, and motorcycle taxi drivers be vaccinated.
  - The prohibition of all non-vaccinated public and private sector employees from participating in public gatherings (meetings, workshops, forums, seminars, etc.) throughout the country.
  - The placement of handwashing kits in government buildings, businesses, markets and other gathering places.
  - The development and public dissemination of a practical guide for cordons sanitaires.
  - The organization of some 105 training sessions on surveillance, contact tracing, infection prevention and control, case management and risk communications.
  - The installation of thermal cameras at 15 border control sites.

- The provision of financial assistance to hotels that had been requisitioned to quarantine travellers arriving in the country.
  - The establishment of a traveller health pass.
  - The provision of care to patients who were hospitalized or in isolation and to health workers at treatment centres.
  - The commissioning of thirteen laboratories equipped with 12 COVID-19 testing machines, extraction kits, diagnostic reagent kits, 40 biosafety cabinets and cold chain equipment.
  - The establishment and outfitting of 89 screening centres.
  - The distribution of protective equipment to more than 6,000 employees of laboratories and treatment centres.
  - The construction of two prefabricated hospitals in Abomey-Calavi and Natitingou.
  - The commissioning of three treatment centres equipped for emergency and intensive care, with around 100 beds.
  - The training and recruitment of workers for the three treatment centres, 13 laboratories, the emergency medical service and 80 rapid response teams.
  - The training of three psychologists and all health-care personnel at the port and airport of Cotonou.
  - The purchase of nine fully equipped ambulances.
  - The purchase of locally made cloth masks.
  - The distribution of 23,000 school kits to girls and adolescents in the country's 77 communes.
  - The conduct of a study to determine whether the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls was reflected in pandemic-related public policies, through a national review and analysis of government policies, measures and programmes in Benin / establishment of a baseline in Benin.
  - An appeal for the needs of women to be reflected in COVID-19 response policies.
  - Establishment of a digital platform for victims of gender-based violence.
  - The training of than 100 women to make masks from cloth.
  - The training of women to make liquid soap.
6. The following measures aimed at gender equality and the empowerment of women have been taken:
- Act No. 2021-11 establishing special measures to repress gender-related offences and to protect women in the Republic of Benin, amending and supplementing Act No. 2011-26 of 9 January 2011 on the prevention and punishment of violence against women and girls, was adopted on 20 December 2021. The Act gave the Economic Crimes and Terrorism Repression Court jurisdiction over cases involving all gender-related offences.
  - Training programmes on crisis resilience have been developed for women who live in at-risk communes.

- The statutes of the National Institute for Women (INF) have been reviewed and strengthened. The Institute now has the authority to initiate legal proceedings and to sue for crime victim compensation on behalf of women and girls.

7. The Chief of Staff of the Beninese Armed Forces has received training on the adoption of special measures to combat violence, abuse and harassment within the Beninese military. Those measures have been reinforced with sessions to raise awareness among commanders and troops of violence within the military. Information has thus been provided to some 1,600 members of the Beninese Armed Forces. The sessions have been open to both recruits and senior officers.

## **B. Definition of discrimination against women**

### **Reply to question 2**

8. No single national law contains a definition of discrimination against women as set out in the Convention, but the concept is reflected in several different laws, namely:

- Act No. 90-32 of 11 December 1990 establishing the Constitution of the Republic of Benin, as amended by Act No. 2019-40 of 7 November 2019
- Act No. 2021-13 of 20 December 2021 amending the Persons and Family Code, Act No. 2017-15 amending the Rural Land Code
- Act No. 2020-23 establishing the Criminal Code, which sets out punishments for gender-related offences
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Act

9. With regard to respect for the equal rights of women and men at the local level, are a number of multi-actor institutions have been set up for the protection of women, including social welfare centres, district police stations, municipal committees on the rights of the child and NGOs.

10. Awareness-raising and outreach workshops are also regularly held in the communes to increase people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities. For example, over the course of 2022, as part of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project, workshops were held in Kétou, Bohicon and Parakou for religious and traditional leaders from the 12 departments of Benin to help them take ownership of the measures adopted by the State to fight discrimination against women and promote women's empowerment.

11. To bolster efforts to fight discrimination against women as defined in article 1 of the Convention, Benin has adopted the following legal provisions:

- In the Constitution:
  - Article 2: "Every individual is entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status".
  - Article 3: "...Every individual is equal before the law. Every individual is entitled to equal protection of the law".
  - Article 8: "Human beings are sacred and inviolable. The State has an absolute obligation to respect and protect them. It shall ensure their full development. To that end, it shall provide its citizens with equal access to

health, education, culture, information, vocational training and employment”.

- Article 26 (new): “The State shall ensure that all persons are equal under the law, without any distinction on the basis of origin, race, sex, religion, political opinion or social status. Men and women are equal before the law. Special legal provisions may be established, however, to improve the representation of women in political life. The State shall protect the family, particularly mothers and children”.

- In the Persons and Family Code:

- Article 1: “All human beings, without distinction of any kind, including on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, language, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or any other status, are subjects with rights, from their birth until their death”.

- In the Children’s Code:

- Article 7: Principle of non-discrimination – “Every child has the right to enjoy all the rights and freedoms granted and enshrined in this Code, including the right to receive equal treatment in respect of services, goods or allowances, without any discrimination on the basis of race, origin, ethnic group, national or social origin, sex, language, religion, political or other affiliation, wealth, birth, disability, family status or other status...”.

12. The following measures have been taken to harmonize customary law with positive law:

- In 2022, INF embarked on a nationwide tour, visiting all the country’s departments to raise awareness of its mission, duties and powers, as well as its methods of operation and referral across the country.
- INF continues to hold awareness-raising sessions with traditional and religious leaders to enable them to take ownership of the laws adopted in Benin to promote and protect women in central and northern Benin and in other departments.

13. Those leaders have made a commitment to continuing the awareness-raising efforts and to acting as lookouts for INF and whistle-blowers for its focal points in the communes, and to supporting victims who contact them to have the perpetrators prosecuted.

## **C. Women’s access to justice**

### **Reply to question 3 (a)**

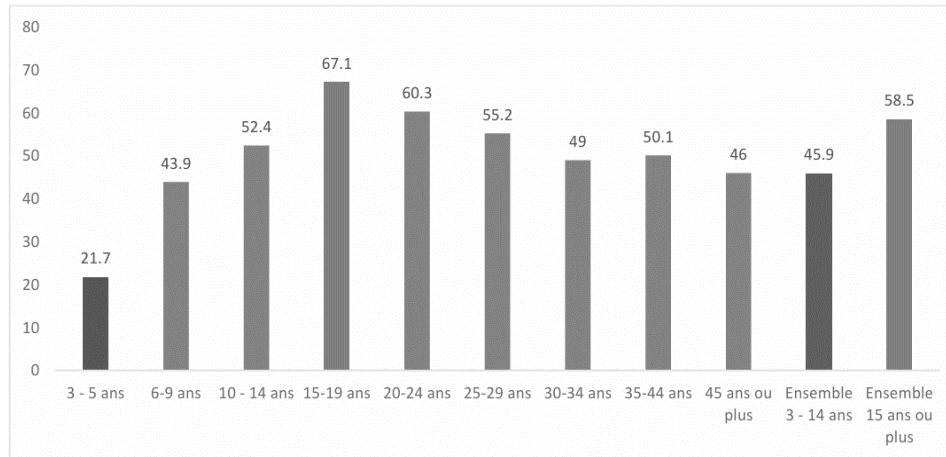
14. Information is continuously being disseminated in French and in the local languages using a number of means of communication, including television; national, local and community radio; and social networks.

15. At the three legal aid centres established by the Association des femmes juristes du Bénin (Association of Women Legal Experts of Benin) in Abomey-Calavi, Lokossa and Porto-Novo, women legal experts have held outreach sessions to inform the people of their rights and responsibilities. The Association also provides legal aid to women victims of violence, helping some with the drafting of their complaints and steering them toward the competent entities.

16. In 2018 and 2019, with support from the Embassy of France, it conducted public awareness-raising campaigns on laws on the prevention and punishment of violence against women.
17. Similarly, since September 2021, INF has been putting out broadcasts, interviews and statements in French and in the local languages through media outlets (television, popular radio, social networks).
18. The aim is to reach all the communes and districts.
19. A number of contracts have been signed with rural radio stations and community media outlets to continue carrying out activities to raise the awareness of and provide information to people in urban and rural areas about the entities and laws in place for the protection and advancement of women.
20. The objective is to change mindsets regarding harmful sociocultural practices that constitute gender-based violence (such as certain widowhood practices, early or forced marriages and female genital mutilation).

**Reply to question 3 (b)**

21. Act No. 2021-11 of 20 December 2021 establishing special measures to repress gender-related offences and to protect women in the Republic of Benin gave the Economic Crimes and Terrorism Repression Court jurisdiction over all gender-related offences.
22. Victims of gender-based violence have the right to refer their cases to INF, which is under the supervision of the Presidency and has the legal arsenal to provide quality legal assistance to women who have experienced gender-based violence.
23. INF has designated focal points who record complaints and help victims obtain quality assistance.
24. In addition to INF, a number of other civil society entities and organizations , including the Association des femmes avocates du Bénin (Association of Women Lawyers of Benin), Association des femmes juristes du Bénin (Association of Women Legal Experts of Benin), Femmes nutrition et développement (Women, Nutrition and Development) and Women in Law and Development in Africa, provide legal and judicial assistance to victims.
25. According to a study on gender-based violence in the Republic of Benin conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance from February 2019 to February 2022, the prevalence of gender-based violence among children aged 3 to 14 was estimated at 45.9 per cent, compared with 58.5 per cent among people aged 15 and older. Among persons aged 15 and older, just under 6 out of 10 respondents (58.5 per cent) said that they had been a victim of at least one of the five types of acts of gender-based violence analysed. Broken down by age group, the prevalence of gender-based violence was highest among adolescents aged 15 to 19 (67.1 per cent) and lowest among children aged 3 to 5 (21.7 per cent). Those findings are illustrated in the figure below.



Source: Data from the study on gender-based violence, Benin, 2022.

### Reply to question 3 (c)

26. INF provides legal and judicial assistance to victims to help them obtain justice and legal protection. It also provides socioeconomic support to economically vulnerable victims (covering transportation, lodging and meal expenses) to enable them to travel, at no cost, to attend hearings in courts located outside their places of residence. The free legal and judicial support includes an allowance that covers the fees of an attorney through the end of the proceedings and any follow-up proceedings, psychological support and an allowance that covers court-ordered expert fees.

### Reply to question 3 (d)

27. The adoption of the following laws has helped to harmonize laws relating to women's rights:

- Act No. 2021-12 of 20 December 2021, amending and supplementing Act No. 2003-04 of 3 March 2003 on sexual and reproductive health
- Act No. 2021-13 of 20 December 2021, amending and supplementing Act No. 2002-07 of 24 August 2004 establishing the Persons and Family Code
- Act No. 2019-43 establishing the Electoral Code, pursuant to which the quota for women's representation in the National Assembly was raised

## D. National machinery for the advancement of women

### Reply to question 4 (a)

28. The National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality was established by Decree No. 2013-51 of 11 February 2013 on the establishment, powers, organization and operation of the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity. The Council is under the auspices of the President of the Republic and serves as the policy guidance and decision-making authority for the promotion of gender equality. It is responsible for mobilizing, from technical and financial partners, the financial resources required for implementation of the National Gender Promotion Policy. The Council has two organs:

- The Steering Committee, an interministerial organ chaired by the Minister of Development that monitors and evaluates the decisions made by the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality



- The Technical Committee, chaired by the Minister of Social Affairs, which executes and implements the National Gender Promotion Policy

29. The Council meets once per year in reference to the status report on gender in Benin submitted by the Steering Committee, in order to: (i) examine the progress made in the implementation of the National Gender Promotion Policy; and (ii) issue the policy guidance and directives required for the promotion of equality and equity in Benin.

30. The operating expenses of the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality are included in the national budget and allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance.

#### **Reply to question 4 (b)**

31. Benin has a national gender promotion policy, which serves as a reference framework for strategies and measures aimed at reducing, if not eliminating, gaps between men and women by 2025.

32. The policy was developed in response to documented gender gaps in such areas as participation in decision-making processes, access to education, access to employment and income, access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, and access to land.

33. The policy was adopted and has been implemented in keeping with the priorities set out in international agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016–2030, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as with national priorities, such as the Benin National Long-Term Outlook 2025, the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007–2009, the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2011–2015, the National Development Plan 2018–2025 and the National Growth Programme for Sustainable Development 2018–2021.

34. The policy has three components:

- Strengthening efforts to mainstream gender in community development plans
- Gender mainstreaming
- Capacity-building for civil society organizations and all other actors, which has a subcomponent on improving the existing system of information on gender gaps

35. With regard to women's empowerment and poverty reduction, access to credit has improved, with the geographical penetration rate of financial services increasing from 7 per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 645 per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>; the gender income gap in the agricultural sector has shrunk, with the wage parity index rising from 0.79 to 0.91; the legal arsenal has improved; and gender mainstreaming in community development plans has improved. In addition, the rate of health infrastructure coverage has been expanded (from 89 per cent in 2009 to 96 per cent in 2019), while gender gaps in school enrolment have been narrowed ( at the primary level, the average gross enrolment rate for girls in relation to boys stood at 0.941, compared with 0.921 in 2009); at the lower secondary level, it stood at 0.872 in 2017, compared with 0.759 in 2013; and at the upper secondary level, it was it stood at 0.576 in 2017, compared with 0.462 in 2013.

36. The proportion of births attended by skilled personnel has also improved (an average of 89.13 per cent over the policy implementation period, compared with 79.1 per cent in 2009).

37. Institutional framework mechanisms for gender mainstreaming have been established. The capacities of civil society organizations and all other actors have been strengthened to allow civil society to engage effectively in gender promotion efforts through programmes financed by financial and technical partners.

38. A governance assessment has shown that institutional framework mechanisms were established pursuant to Decree No. 2013-51 of 11 February 2013 on the establishment, powers, structure and operations of the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality. Following that decree, the National Council for the Promotion of Gender Equity and Equality was established in 2014, and departmental committees for the promotion of gender equity and equality were established in the departments of Borgou-Alibori, Zou-Collines and Mono-Couffo in 2015.

39. Data produced as part of gender promotion efforts are recorded in the reporting system established for monitoring the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Sector actors use that system to produce and submit their periodic reports to the Directorate for the Advancement of Women and Gender, which uses them to prepare the gender report that is used as an input for the drafting of the aide-mémoire for the gender and social protection sector.

40. Statistical data are drawn from the standard statistics prepared by sector ministries, the surveys frequently conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Demography and other studies and reports.

41. At the local and regional levels, gender has been mainstreamed in all community development plans currently being implemented, though to varying extents.

42. With respect to sustaining the gains made, access to credit has been improved through various reforms undertaken in the sector. The roll-out of digital finance has helped to, inter alia, consolidate the efforts made so far with the implementation of mobile microfinance. Policies have been implemented to ensure that children stay in school, especially at the primary level, including by setting up school canteens and combating early, forced and unwanted pregnancies and marriages. Such measures have helped to improve enrolment rates among girls, bringing them to optimal levels, thus reducing gender gaps at the primary level to the fullest extent possible.

**Reply to question 4 (c)**

43. Data produced as part of gender promotion efforts are recorded in the reporting system established for monitoring the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Actors at the various focal point offices produce periodic reports on gender equality and submit them to the Directorate for the Advancement of Women and Gender, which uses them to prepare the gender report that is used as an input for the drafting of the aide-mémoire for the gender and social protection sector.

**Reply to question 4 (d)**

44. Civil society plays a vital role in the implementation of the National Gender Promotion Policy in Benin, by:

- Raising awareness and informing the public about issues related to gender equality and women's rights.
- Monitoring and conducting follow-up on implementation of the National Gender Promotion Policy, ensuring that the associated commitments are upheld.
- Lobbying and advocating for policies and laws aimed at promoting gender equality, interacting with policymakers, government institutions and other stakeholders to promote women's rights.

- Building capacity among local actors and communities for effective implementation of the policy.
  - Participating in governance as members of monitoring committees and consultative bodies responsible for the National Gender Promotion Policy.
45. Civil society organizations are key partners for achieving the objectives of the National Gender Promotion Policy, thus contributing to women's empowerment and the reduction of gender inequalities in Benin.

## **E. National human rights institutions**

### **Reply to question 5 (a)**

46. The Beninese Human Rights Commission has a subcommittee for the advancement of women. It regularly holds sessions to inform the public about its powers, referral methods and mechanisms for reporting human rights violations.
47. With a view to bringing its services closer to the public, the Commission operates six regional offices that offer various services to claimants.
48. The Beninese Human Rights Commission, through a partnership agreement with the Beninese Bar Association and the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, offers legal assistance to claimants who request it or whose financial situation demands it. Thanks to that agreement, the Commission now has a formal institutional framework for regular dialogue with the Beninese Bar Association. Together, they can introduce legal proceedings in Beninese courts and tribunals for cases of human rights violations and abuses referred to the Commission.

### **Reply to question 5 (b)**

49. As at 15 December 2023, the Beninese Human Rights Commission had received and processed 297 complaints filed by women.

### **Reply to question 5 (c)**

50. The mission of INF is to promote women's rights in the political, economic, social, legal and cultural spheres, in both the public and private sectors, and combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women.
51. INF is the framework for consultation with civil society organizations working for the protection and advancement of women.
52. INF has four strategic objectives:
- Organize efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against women
  - Run a counselling service and ensure that a hotline is available for reporting and receiving complaints from victims and other individuals with knowledge of acts of violence or discrimination
  - Provide victims with the best possible support, including by helping them in dealings with any organization or administration accused or suspected of having discriminated against them
  - Bring legal action and sue for crime victim compensation before ordinary courts and also before all specialized courts
53. INF received budgetary resources estimated at 759,597,000 in 2022, 896,032,000 in 2023 and 1,043,935,000 in 2024.

54. INF has qualified staff (of which the majority are women) at its headquarters. The same is true at its offices in the departments and among focal points in government agencies and communes to ensure nationwide coverage.

55. The Institute's internal structure comprises four units:

- The victim assistance unit
- The legal affairs unit
- The communications and outreach unit
- The administrative and financial affairs unit

56. As at 31 December 2023, INF had reviewed 1,017 cases, 690 of which were before the courts, 173 had been adjudicated and 154 had been closed.

57. From January to March 2024, INF was in the process of reviewing some 350 cases.

## **F. Temporary special measures**

### **Reply to question 6 (a)**

58. There are no temporary special measures under Beninese law. There are, however, laws that grant women special rights.

### **Reply to question 6 (b)**

59. In Benin, a number of measures have been adopted through laws, regulations or circulars. Greater representation of women in parliament is promoted through the new article 26 of the revised Constitution: "The State ensures that all persons are equal under the law, without any distinction on the basis of origin, race, sex, religion, political opinion or social status. Men and women are equal before the law. Special legal provisions may be adopted, however, to increase the representation of women in political life...". The article prompted a revision of the Electoral Code in 2019, under which 24 parliamentary seats are reserved for women, representing one woman per electoral district (articles 144 and 145).

60. Article 17-2 of Act No. 2021-12 of 20 December 2021, amending and supplementing Act No. 2003-04 of 3 March 2003 on sexual and reproductive health, states: "upon a pregnant woman's request, a voluntary termination of pregnancy may be authorized where the pregnancy is likely to aggravate or cause material, educational, professional or moral distress incompatible with the interests of the woman and/or the unborn child".

61. There are also new measures concerning filiation. The new article 6 of Act No. 2021-13 of 20 December 2021, amending and supplementing Act No. 2002-07 of 24 August 2004 establishing the Persons and Family Code, states: "Where filiation is established with respect to both parents under the conditions established in this code, the parents shall choose the child's surname, which may be the father's, the mother's or both parents' surnames in the order chosen by them, with no more than one surname from each parent". The choice shall be notified to the obstetrician or the medical centre where the child is born and duly brought to the attention of the civil registry officer.

62. Where the decision discussed in the preceding paragraph has not been made, the child shall take the name of the parent with respect to whom filiation was first established the name of the father, where filiation is established simultaneously in respect of either of the parents.

63. In the event of a disagreement between the parents reported to the civil registry officer by one of them within eight days after the birth and where filiation has been established simultaneously, the child shall take both surnames; the father's shall be written first, followed by the mother's, with no hyphen between the two.

64. The surname selected or attributed pursuant to this provision for a child of two individuals shall be given to all the other children they have together.

65. In cases where a child is born abroad to at least one Beninese parent, parents who did not avail themselves of the option to choose the child's surname under the terms described above may make the appropriate declaration during the establishment or rectification of the birth certificate".

66. In addition, as part of the decentralization reforms, a gender quota has been set for the post of executive secretary within municipal governments: 34 per cent of the posts must be held by women.

67. Benin has issued an order prohibiting gender-based discrimination in access to credit by financial and lending institutions within the banking sector and local finance entities.

## G. Stereotypes

### Reply to question 7 (a)

68. Several awareness-raising sessions have been organized by the State, local government agencies and civil society organizations. Social welfare centres have organized 2,106 awareness-raising sessions, which have had an impact on 98,289 people, including 41,835 men. More than 490,110 people, including 309,660 women, have attended awareness-raising sessions on the promotion of family values.

69. In collaboration with the State, the Benin office of the NGO Cercle international pour la promotion de la création (International Circle for the Promotion of Creation, CIPCRE-Bénin) organizes an annual interfaith mobilization campaign, which addresses issues related to gender equity. Since 2022, inclusive education has been discussed under the theme "Regardless of his or her status, my child must go to school".

70. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts, through its local offices (agencies and technical directorates), organizes and supports initiatives aimed at eradicating practices that underpin patriarchal attitudes and reinforce the subordination of women in society.

71. INF regularly organizes social dialogues with political, religious and civil society actors, traditional authorities and local elected officials on the elimination of traditional, customary, religious and stereotypical attitudes that perpetuate violence and other forms of discrimination against women and girls, with a view to:

- Reflecting on how certain traditions, customs and religious practices influence community mindsets and on the role they play in perpetuating violence against women.
- Identifying and promoting cultural values that advance the status of women and prohibit any discrimination against them.
- Leveraging the influence that religious, community and traditional leaders have over communities to eliminate customs and practices related to inheritance and marital property that adversely affect the status of women.

**Reply to question 7 (b)**

72. The Government of Benin has taken significant measures to mainstream women's rights in professional training curricula. Recent initiatives include:

- The INF strategic development and performance plan, which was approved in August 2023 and is aimed at advancing the rights of women and girls and combating gender-based violence.
- Promotion and protection of women's rights: Benin was featured at an international meeting in Paris in 2021 for the progress it has made in strengthening protection of women's rights. Laws consolidating women's rights have been enacted recently, and strategies aimed at keeping girls in school have been put in place.
- Combating online violence. The Government has strengthened the legal and institutional framework for preventing gender-based violence, including online violence facilitated by information and communications technology.
- Economic empowerment of Beninese women: Legislative reforms have been carried out and competent bodies and suitable mechanisms have been established to protect and economically empower women.

73. In addition, the Ministry of Secondary and Technical Education and Vocational Training, with support from Amnesty International Benin, has launched a capacity-building programme for teachers. In 2021, 74 teachers received training on human rights in general and on children's rights more specifically. In 2022, 54 teachers and 48 principals received training on children's rights.

74. Thanks to support from CIPCRE-Bénin,

- 197 teachers, including 68 women, were trained during the 2019/20 school year
- 764 teachers were trained during the 2021/22 school year

75. They were trained on the contents of the code of good practices for protecting students from sexual abuse.

76. From 2021 to 2023, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, in collaboration with the National Agency for Tourism Assets developed a catalogue of capacity-building and vocational training programmes for the tourism, hospitality and food services sector, including training on women's rights, for 700 working professionals.

77. Such efforts demonstrate the commitment of Benin to mainstreaming women's rights in all aspects of society, including vocational training programmes.

**H. Harmful practices****Reply to question 8 (a)**

78. Data for the period 2019–2022 from the latest version of the integrated system of data on the family, women and children indicate that 49,907 reports of gender-based violence (across all categories) were received between 18 February 2019 and 18 February 2022 from the country's 12 departments. Most acts of violence targeted women or girls and took many forms, including psychological or emotional abuse (19,938 cases), physical violence (6,267 cases), economic violence (5,749 cases), patrimonial or cultural violence (1,505 cases), sexual violence (1,049 cases), harassment (613 cases), kidnapping (439 cases), levirate (340 cases) and incest (61 cases). However, those cases were not documented or substantiated.

**Reply to question 8 (b)**

79. State and non-State entities have organized awareness-raising and outreach campaigns in various municipalities across the country for religious, traditional and community leaders, judicial police officers and women leaders, aimed at combating all forms of harmful practices, including forced marriage, early marriage and levirate.

**I. Gender-based violence against women****Reply to question 9 (a)**

80. The prevalence of gender-based violence over the past 12 months was estimated using primary data collected in February 2022 from 36 enumeration areas distributed across all 12 departments of the country. The findings show that just under 6 out of 10 persons aged 15 or older (58.5 per cent) said they had been a victim of at least one of the five types of gender-based violence analysed. Gender-based violence was most prevalent (67.1 per cent) among adolescents aged 15 to 19, and was least prevalent (37.5 per cent) among children aged 3 to 9. Among children aged 10 to 14, just over half (52.4 per cent) said they had been a victim of gender-based violence. Disaggregated by sex, 59.9 per cent of women aged 15 and older said they had been victims of violence, compared with 55.9 per cent of men in the same age group. In all, 44.6 per cent of girls under the age of 15 said they had been victims of gender-based violence, compared with 47 per cent of boys in the same age group.

**Reply to question 9 (b)**

81. Several entities that fight gender-based violence, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Security (through offices such as the Directorate for the Protection of Minors, the Family and the Punishment of Trafficking in Persons), the Ministry of Justice, the Economic Crimes and Terrorism Repression Court, INF, technical and financial partners, civil society organizations and, most importantly, the integrated centres for the care of victims of gender-based violence are all part of the institutional framework for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence in the Republic of Benin. They work together to care for victims and identify and prosecute perpetrators.

**Reply to question 9 (c)**

82. Data on the number of prosecutions, convictions and penalties are fragmented, and efforts to compile them are under way.

**Reply to question 10 (a)**

83. From 2019 to 2023, several cases of gender-based violence were filed with the courts. For example, the Ouidah second-class Court of First Instance recorded:

- Number of cases: 59
- Cases pending : 11
- Cases adjudicated: 23
- Convictions: 17
- Acquittals: 8

**Reply to question 10 (b)**

84. From 2019 to 2023, several cases of gender-based violence against women with disabilities were filed with the courts. For example, the Ouidah second-class Court of First Instance recorded:

- Number of cases of gender-based violence against older women: 2

85. Regarding the crime of “rape or incitement of minors to debauchery”, the same court reported:

- Number of cases: 34
- Cases over which it lacked jurisdiction: 16 (referred to the Economic Crimes and Terrorism Repression Court)
- Cases closed: 6
- Ongoing cases: 12

**Reply to question 11 (a)**

86. The Government’s flagship social protection programme is the Insurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital project, a package of four mutually reinforcing social protection services: health insurance coverage, training, microcredit and pension insurance. The project is primarily targeted at low-income workers in the agriculture, trade, transport, handicraft, art and culture sectors and at low-income individuals who are unemployed. Health insurance is the core component. Following the pilot phase undertaken in seven communes, under which 105,000 people received coverage, the expansion phase is being gradually rolled out. As at 2021, coverage had been extended to 21 communes, with 285,000 people in extreme poverty being insured. Health insurance is being expanded to all communes, such that by 2022 some 3,817,330 people were expected to receive coverage, including 1,317,330 people in extreme poverty, whose insurance would be fully covered by the State.

87. With regard to legal measures, the 2023 Finance Act was developed in accordance with the procedural, technical and administrative rules established in Organic Act No. 2013-14 of 27 September 2013, which determines the legal framework for the country’s finance laws. The Act consolidates the benefits of the State’s programme-based budgeting, which has been fully implemented since 1 January 2022. Budgetary appropriations are primarily allocated to (i) the strengthening of measures aimed at promoting high-potential sectors (agriculture, tourism, the digital economy and the knowledge economy, including technical education and vocational training); (ii) the execution of major projects aimed at bridging the country’s infrastructure deficit; and (iii) the promotion of certain industrial sectors. In addition, the budget policy for the period 2023–2025 also reflects, inter alia, a civilian approach to national security; consolidation of the social component of public action (scaling of existing social measures in all areas, densification and extension of social safety nets, improved access to health care); continued implementation of territorial administration reform; and the strengthening of the rule of law and peace (legislative elections).

**Reply to question 11 (b)**

88. Victims of gender-based violence receive health-care, security, psychological, emotional, legal, housing and social reintegration support, wherever possible.

89. Several support organizations for women victims of gender-based violence have been established, including:



- INF
- Three integrated centres for the care of victims of gender-based violence
- Social welfare centres
- Health centres

90. NGOs working to fight gender-based violence focus on counselling, follow-up and legal advice and support. They also organize awareness-raising campaigns for traditional, customary and religious leaders on respect for women's rights.

**Reply to question 12 (a)**

91. Sector ministries, in collaboration with NGOs, have developed a number of training programmes for actors in the support chain for victims of gender-based violence (social services, court officials, health-care employees, community leaders, civil society organizations and technical and financial partners), who are regularly provided with capacity-building on the topic.

**Reply to question 12 (b)**

92. Several awareness-raising and outreach campaigns focused on human rights are held regularly throughout the country. The most recent campaigns concerned:

- Zero tolerance for child labour in sectors with a high incidence of child labour in Benin, in the department of Plateau.
- Zero tolerance for the worst forms of child labour.
- Zero tolerance for child marriage in Benin.
- Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation.
- Outreach campaign on standardized operating procedures: training aimed at the community, NGOs and activists to raise their awareness of services available to victims, the actors involved and the role that each plays in service provision, and dialogue between parents and children.
- Organization of mass campaigns in communities, schools and universities on the legal and institutional framework for protecting women and girls against violence: mass social mobilization campaigns with messages printed on t-shirts and other communication platforms.
- Broadcasts on various communication channels, both conventional (radio and television) and modern (social networks).
- Organization of annual awareness-raising campaigns on mechanisms for preventing and responding to cases of gender-based violence in schools (students) and out of schools (collectives of artisans, with support from peer educators for students in training).
- Organization of the first national family dialogues on gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health (involving 200 individuals from State institutions, religious and traditional leaders, thought leaders, local elected officials, civil society organizations and technical and financial partners (Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) in 2023).
- Organization of the first Beninese forum on women's rights in 2022 (civil society organizations, the Central Office for the Repression of Cybercrimes).

- Organization of the first “orange night” to fight violence against women and girls in Benin (Beninese network of feminists, INF, Engender Health, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, UNFPA, CARE International, United Nations Development Programme, Association Béninoise pour la Promotion de la Famille (Beninese Association for the Promotion of the Family), Association Béninoise pour le Marketing Social (Beninese Association for Social Marketing) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance).
- Three legal clinics held for actors in the support chain (judges and prosecutors, police officers, midwives, doctors, social workers, etc.).
- Four training workshops on the law and treatment of plaintiffs for judicial police officers.
- Two major campaigns during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaigns in 2022 and 2023.
- A concert entitled “Orange night against gender-based violence”, held in December 2023.
- The “Listen to Women” campaign as part of the 8 March 2024 celebration.
- Session to raise awareness among girl artisans for International Day of the Girl Child in 2023.
- Outreach sessions on the 20 December 2021 law on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence and protection of women in Benin with traditional and religious leaders, mayors, municipal executive secretaries, borough heads, village chiefs and district heads of the departments in central Benin in February 2024.

## **J. Extraterritorial State obligations**

### **Reply to question 13**

93. In 2019, the Government of Benin adopted a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), aimed inter alia at increasing the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms and in peacebuilding. The plan sets out four action areas:

- Prevention of conflict and sexual violence
- Protection of women and young girls in all situations
- Participation of women in all peace processes
- Promotion and/or support for women-led community peace initiatives

94. Benin ensures compliance with its relevant international commitments in the relevant contexts and settings. In that connection, it has strengthened its cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries, some of which are grappling with sociopolitical or security crises. In that context of violence and multiple vulnerabilities that severely affect women and girls, Benin has also facilitated the delivery of international humanitarian aid through its territory to the affected populations.

95. At the technical level, women have important leadership and technical responsibilities, which enables the mainstreaming of gender in policy development and implementation. All of this contributes towards the end goals of eliminating discrimination against women and preventing conflicts under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

## **K. Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

### **Reply to question 14**

96. No specific timeline is in place for the adoption of a law and strategy. The timing of such processes often depends on the issues involved and the public's interest in the proposed law.

97. Data from 10 courts indicate that 70 individuals were apprehended in 2023, 28 of whom were involved in trafficking in persons (8 alleged perpetrators and 20 victims). The Victims, most often Beninese nationals, are often taken to Nigeria or Côte d'Ivoire. The reported cases involve trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. The cases are still under investigation.

98. Several measures have been taken to combat trafficking in persons in Benin, including:

- Prevention and awareness-raising campaigns
- Prosecutions
- Capacity-building
- Partnerships and cooperation

99. Victims receive assistance and rehabilitation services.

## **L. Equal participation in political and public life**

### **Reply to question 15**

100. The gender quota was raised in connection with the revision of the Constitution and the law establishing the Electoral Code.

101. Women now have a greater presence in the political and administrative spheres.

102. Benin ensures that there is greater representation of women in its diplomatic and foreign service posts.

103. Thanks to the most recent territorial administration reforms, women hold the position of executive secretary in 6 out of the 19 communes with intermediate status, with men holding the position in the other 13 communes. Among the 54 communes with ordinary status, 8 women were selected at random to hold the position of executive secretary, compared with 36 men. Across all 77 municipal governments, 26 women and 51 men are currently serving as executive secretaries of communes (34 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively).

## **M. Nationality**

### **Reply to question 16**

104. Pursuant to Act No. 2022-32 of 29 November 2022 establishing the Beninese nationality code, children of a Beninese father and/or mother may acquire Beninese nationality under the same conditions. Under the new provisions of the code, both men and women may pass on their nationality.

105. Through the promulgation of Act No. 2020-34 of 6 January 2021 establishing special provisions for streamlining and digitizing civil registration, the State established a legal framework for civil registry declarations and registrations, including for births, in the Republic of Benin.

## **N. Education**

### **Reply to question 17**

106. The policy of waiving school fees for girls pursuing primary, secondary and technical education or vocational training is still in place.

107. Certain supplementary measures have been taken to keep girls in school:

- School kits and other supplies have been distributed to female students (42,775 girls received school supply kits for the 2022/23 school year).
- Efforts have been made to promote safe learning environments and reduce gender-based violence.
- Campaigns have been conducted to raise community awareness of the importance of ensuring that girls have access to and remain in school.
- Scholarships have been awarded to girls in science programmes.
- Menstrual hygiene products have been made available in schools.
- Letter No. 063/SGM/MESTFP/SA was issued on 16 February 2022 to remind secondary schools actors of the good practices set forth in Order No. 2015 on the institutionalization of good practices for protecting against sexual abuse in school settings, currently in force.
- Order No. 2016-154 was issued on 31 March 2016 to establish the penalties to be assessed on perpetrators of sexual violence at public and private secondary, general and technical education and vocational training institutions.
- Brigades have been established to prevent deviant behaviour in schools.
- Single-sex latrines for girls and boys have been built in schools and other secondary and technical education and vocational training institutions.
- The Ministry of Secondary and Technical Education and Vocational Training has continued to provide operational funding for schools for young girls (funding eight schools).

### **Reply to question 18 (a)**

108. Pregnant girls attend school until they give birth.

### **Reply to question 18 (b)**

109. In Benin, concerted efforts are being made to improve education for girls, especially those who become pregnant during their studies. As part of those efforts, the Government has instituted a cash transfer programme for girls pursuing primary and secondary education who are facing difficult circumstances. The transfers amount to 450 CFA francs per day for girls in primary education and 600 CFA francs per day for girls in secondary education for a three-year period. In all, some 9,355,555,000 CFA francs have been distributed to 30,000 girls from families facing difficulties.

### **Reply to question 19 (a)**

110. Initiatives to protect children from sexual abuse in schools:

- Child protection committees have been established in certain schools.
- At the beginning of each school year, all system actors are sent reminders regarding Order No. 2016-154 of 31 March 2016 establishing the penalties to

be assessed on perpetrators of sexual violence at public and private secondary, general and technical education and vocational training institutions.

- Capacity-building on practical methods for preventing deviant behaviour in schools has been provided to school administrators.
- Campaigns have been conducted to raise awareness among students and teachers of the risks associated with deviant behaviour.

**Reply to question 19 (b)**

111. Efforts are currently under way to incorporate issues related to sexual education for adolescent girls and boys into school curricula.

**O. Employment**

**Reply to question 20 (a)**

112. The following measures have been taken:

- Scholarships have been awarded to girls in science programmes.
- The Ministry of Secondary and Technical Education and Vocational Training has continued to provide operational funding for eight all-girls high schools.
- A project entitled “Our girls are champions” has been implemented to encourage young girls to participate in sports.
- Interministerial Order No. 096/MPMEPE/MTFP/MS/DC/SG/DGT/DSSMST/DPEE/SA/012/SGG21 of 26 August 2021 was issued, defining the types of work and categories of businesses that are not permitted to employ women who are pregnant or nursing or young people and the age limit that applies, as part of the regulatory framework aimed at abolishing employment segregation while providing women the opportunity to freely access employment categories originally restricted to men.

**Reply to question 20 (b)**

113. No specific mechanisms are in place, because recruitment processes are gender-blind and non-discriminatory.

**Reply to question 20 (c)**

114. Ratification of International Labour Organization Convention No. 89 is under way.

115. The working conditions of children employed as what is commonly known as *vidomegons* have been monitored since 2018.

116. On the whole, the findings concern:

- Failure to comply with working hours
- Failure to provide legally mandated breaks and vacations
- Failure to provide compensation for overtime hours worked
- Low levels of compensation, which is often well below the guaranteed minimum wage and subject to improper deductions
- Violence and sexual harassment by customers and employers

117. Labour inspectors are trying to combat all these practices within their respective purviews, working with the morality police and human rights advocacy organizations to hold awareness-raising sessions for officials from employer associations and worker associations in the sector.

118. In this area, a distinction should be made between a job placement and family assistance.

**Reply to question 20 (d)**

119. In Benin, there is no gender discrimination in terms of employment access or compensation in the formal sector.

**Reply to question 20 (e)**

120. There is no specific regulatory framework for the monitoring of working conditions in the informal sector.

121. Departmental directorates of labour and the civil service frequently conduct inspections to monitor and supervise working conditions for women.

**Reply to question 20 (f)**

122. The following measures have been taken:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance has set up a database of women's competencies to promote women's leadership (updating the Compendium of Women's Competencies).
- Training in e-commerce has been provided to young girls under the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Project for Africa, and better Android phones have been distributed.
- Internet access has been improved with expanded coverage.
- Computer labs have been set up in institutions (in all schools/centres in each commune and in pilot colleges).
- The Tech4Girls project, which is aimed at bridging the digital divide with a view to empowering young girls in Benin, was implemented in 2021.
- Community digital hotspots have been set up in every commune (low-cost cybercafés).
- Under the project to support gender equality, women have been trained in, among other things, putting social networks to best possible use.

**Reply to question 20 (g)**

123. No sex-disaggregated data are available on the situation of women in the private and informal sectors.

124. With regard to measures taken to prevent sexual harassment:

- In 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in partnership with Association Béninoise pour la Planification Familiale (Beninese Association for Family Planning) organized a departmental tour (to the departments of Littoral and Ouémé), during which it visited universities and other higher education institutions to raise awareness among students of the new legal provisions prohibiting romantic relationships between students and teachers and, more generally, of the prevention and punishment of sexual harassment and sexual violence in universities.

- In 2022, sessions to raise awareness of sexual harassment were held at two universities in a department in southern Benin (Mono) as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign.
- Campaigns have been held in colleges, training centres and universities to raise awareness of the law establishing penalties for gender-based offences.
- INF focal points have been appointed at public administration entities (institutions, ministries and agencies under their supervision).

## **P. Health**

### **Reply to question 21 (a)**

125. The Government of Benin has incorporated family planning into its national health plan. The objective is to increase the use of modern contraceptives among people aged 15 to 49. Nevertheless, the practice remains limited: only 14 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 use a modern method of contraception.

126. Governmental organizations and NGOs are leading awareness-raising campaigns in communities, schools and health centres on the advantages of family planning, modern methods of contraception and the services available.

127. Health professionals receive training on how to advise patients about modern methods of contraception.

128. Media campaigns involving radio spots, posters and television broadcasts are used to disseminate information to a wider public.

129. Continued efforts to those ends are essential, in order to improve women's reproductive health and reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies.

### **Reply to question 21 (b)**

130. The Government has taken steps to make modern contraceptives more accessible. Health centres and clinics offer family planning services, including distribution of contraceptives at a low cost or free of charge. Nevertheless, access to health services, including family planning, is limited in certain regions of Benin. In many cases, far distances must be travelled to reach health infrastructure, which hinders access to contraceptives.

131. Furthermore, certain modern methods of contraception may be costly for low-income families, which is a major obstacle that must be addressed. Lastly, there is also a need for studies or research on how to adjust certain contraceptives to genotypes and phenotypes.

### **Reply to question 21 (c)**

132. The mortality reduction plan is aimed at reducing the number of maternal and infant deaths and is supervised by the Ministry of Health of Benin. Some 1,500 maternal deaths and more than 12,000 infant deaths are reported in Benin each year.

133. The plan receives funding from several sources, including the national budget, financial and technical partners, the development assistance fund and local and private initiatives by local organizations, private businesses and NGOs.

### **Reply to question 21 (d)**

134. The following measures have been taken to improve hygiene conditions at health centres in Benin:

- Health-care workers and patients are required maintain proper personal hygiene.
- Handwashing systems with soap or alcohol-based disinfectant have been made available to workers and patients.
- Surfaces, equipment and common areas in health centres are regularly cleaned.
- Programmes have been established for medical waste management, including collection, storage and disposal.
- Workers are required to use masks, gloves and personal protective equipment.

135. Those measures help to create a safer, more hygienic environment in health centres, thereby reducing the risk of infection for patients and workers.

**Reply to question 21 (e)**

136. The project is being developed.

**Reply to question 21 (f)**

137. Decree No. 2023-151 of 19 April 2023 establishing the conditions for voluntary termination of pregnancy has been issued. It sets out the specific terms for application of the law. The decree stipulates, inter alia, the obligations information and consent, approved facilities, psychological and social support, monitoring and control, as well as the rates charged for procedures.

**Q. Rural women**

**Reply to question 22 (a)**

138. The following initiatives have been implemented:

- The Act has been the subject of a major awareness-raising campaign for the general public involving various media outlets, including national and community radio, television and social networks.
- The programme to register sales agreements, launched in 2023, provided an opportunity to raise awareness among the general public of the issues addressed in the Act.
- Awareness-raising and outreach sessions have been organized to inform the people, in particular women, religious leaders and traditional leaders, that women and girls have the same inheritance rights as men and boys and that men and women have access to land, as part of the legal clinics organized by the Ministry of Justice and Legislation.
- INF has been collaborating with departmental and commune authorities to organize tours on land rights, inheritance rights and the of succession of surviving spouses.
- The fourth project set out in the strategic plan entitled “Advancement of women and girls through the use of positive religious and traditional values” has been implemented. One of the project measures concerns holding regular dialogues with traditional and community leaders on cultural practices that feed into discrimination against women, including denying women their rights to inheritance and landownership.



**Reply to question 22 (b)**

139. In Benin, there is no discrimination against women with regard to access to land and property. Pursuant to article 6 of Act No. 2017-15 amending and supplementing Act No. 2013-01 of 14 August 2016 on the Land and State Code in the Republic of Benin, the State and local authorities, as guarantors of the general interest, must “ensure respect for the equality of men and women in access to land”.

140. Agricultural cooperatives are increasingly being established by rural women to process agricultural goods with easy access to land.

141. The establishment of mobile courts for rural areas has helped to settle inheritance-related land disputes.

**R. Marriage and family relations****Reply to question 23**

142. The following initiatives have been undertaken:

- Several campaigns have been organized to raise awareness of the Persons and Family Code.
  - Legal clinics on the rights of women and girls were held in 2022 and 2023.
  - With respect to measures to combat child and forced marriage, the Government adopted Act No. 2021-11 on 20 December 2021 establishing special provisions to repress gender-related offences; the Sexual and Reproductive Health Act also sets out severe punishments for such practices. Furthermore, cases of gender-related offences are tried by a special court, the Economic Crimes and Terrorism Repression Court.
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