

ICT AND EDUCATION

EQUATORIAL GUINEA



1. OVERVIEW

In Equatorial Guinea, there is no specific policy concerning ICT, although attempts to improve management in the Ministry of Telecommunications are being made. This could help facilitate the adoption of such a policy in the near future.

The efforts to strengthen the presence of ICT in communities, in schools are primarily made by non-governmental organizations, universities, and other actors. They collaborate on projects that make computer equipment, training, and management available and accessible to students, educators, and members of the community. These initiatives take the form of computer labs in schools or media centres in the community.

Because agriculture has such an influential presence in Equatorial Guinea's economy and employment sector, many people are too occupied with the agricultural industry to be able to benefit from the technological revolution and its opportunities. This remains one of the main constraints in universalising ICT.

However, those still in school can profit enormously from early exposure to computer science and communication and information technology, which is widely recognized as a key to the access unlimited opportunities for youth in Equatorial Guinea.

2. PROFILE

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a mainland enclave between Cameroon and Gabon and two islands on the Atlantic Ocean. This fragmented country covers a surface area of 28,051 square kilometres and has a population of over 540,109 people (July 2006 est.), of which 67%

live in the rural areas. Most of the 90,000 islanders live in Malabo, the capital city of Equatorial Guinea. A former Spanish colony, it gained its independence in October 1968, and it remains to-date the only country in Africa with Spanish as an official language.

The discovery and exploitation of large oil reserves have contributed to dramatic economic growth in recent years. Forestry, farming, and fishing are also major components of GDP. Subsistence farming predominates. Although pre-independence Equatorial Guinea depended on cocoa production for hard currency earnings, the neglect of the rural economy under successive regimes has diminished potential for agriculture-led growth (the government has stated its intention to reinvest some oil revenue into agriculture).

3. FACTS AND STATISTICS

Table 1: Country Data²

Area :	28,051 sq km
Natural resources	petroleum, natural gas, timber, gold, bauxite, diamonds, tantalum, sand and gravel, clay
Population	540,109 (July 2006 est.)
Age structure:	
0-14 years	41.7% (male 113,083/female 111,989)
15-64 years	54.5% (male 141,914/female 152,645)
65 years and over	3.8% (male 8,886/female 11,592) (2006 est.)
Population growth rate	2.05% (2006 est.)

4. EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system is organized into cycles and degrees:

- The levels of education are preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education
- The degrees are the Baccalaureate and advanced degrees in higher education

The institutional structure of the school system is as follows:

- The preschool cycle, for children under 6 years, is divided into two parts: nursery school and kindergarten. Preschool education consists of games, creative activities, etc.
- The primary cycle consists of 5 years of studies at two levels of study: The first level is for children aged 6-10, and the second for children aged 10-12.
- The secondary cycle is devoted to preparing for the Baccalaureate and to professional training. The Baccalaureate is obtained after two cycles of 4 and 3 years of study.
- The advanced cycle exists at three levels: the first cycle is 3 years, the second, devoted to specialized study, is 2 years, and the third is 3 years, devoted to research.

Distance education is a means of education that offers opportunities to pursue and continue academic study, in any circumstances.³

Table 2: Literacy

Literacy rate		1990	2000-2004
Adults (15+) %	MF	73.3	87.0
	M	85.8	93.4
	F	61.1	80.5
Young adults (15-24) %	MF	92.7	94.9
	M	96.6	94.8
	F	88.8	94.9

Table 3: Enrolment in Primary School

Primary		1991	1999	2002
Gross Schooling Rate (%)	MF	163	132	127
	M	166	148	133
	F	159	116	121
Net Schooling Rate (%)	MF	91	83	85
	M	92	93	92
	F	89	73	78

Table 4: Enrolment in Secondary School

Secondary		1991	1999	2002
Gross Schooling Rate (%)	MF	...	31	30
	M	...	45	38
	F	...	17	22

5. NATIONAL ICT POLICY

In Equatorial Guinea, there is no specific policy concerning ICT.

However, the government has a Ministry of Technology, Posts, and Telecommunications. An Office of Telecommunication Regulation (ORTEL) is set up and is preparing two documents on interconnection and numbering. At the sub regional level there is a harmonising project which is akin to the OHADA Telecommunications Project and well accepted by Equatorial Guinea. There is also the implementation of basic regional modern principles of regulation of telecommunications, as defined by the International Telecommunications Union, to **6. ICT**

INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 5: Fixed telephone lines in Equatorial Guinea (2003)

Service provider	Number of lines	Number of lines per 1000 people

GETESA	9,600	1.77
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Source: UIT 2004

Table 6: Mobile telephone lines in Equatorial Guinea (2003)

Service provider	GETESA
Number of subscribers to GETESA	55,000
Cellular telephone density	10.95%
Telephones - main lines in use :	10,000 (2005)
Telephones - mobile cellular:	96,900 (2005)
Telephone system :	<i>general assessment:</i> poor system with inadequate government services
Internet hosts:	19 (2006)
Internet users:	5,000 (2005)

7. ICT IN EDUCATION

In Equatorial Guinea, education and distance training is regulated by the Law of Education, section 6, article 46, which literally states: “Distance education is one of the educational tools that makes it possible to pursue and/or continue educational studies in any circumstance.”

8. MAJOR INITIATIVES AND CURRENT PROJECTS

PREPALY

A recent initiative was enacted on a platform called “Prépaly” (interactive multimedia training for PREParing high school students [LYcéens] in advanced scientific and technological studies). Its main activities are:

- To respond to the needs of young people in terms of information in science and technology;
- To give them basic training in computers and multimedia that will be their key to a successful academic career, and which will help prepare them for the world outside of school;
- To reinforce the ties between secondary and higher education establishments in the North with those in the South, as well as to reinforce the ties between establishments among different areas of the South.
- To facilitate the creation of multimedia content for teaching in francophone Africa.

This plan is clearly based on the organization, production and diffusion of knowledge and know-how from higher education towards secondary education, through information and communication technology in education (ICTE).

Project for supporting promotion and diffusion of ICTE in Equatorial Guinea through the French Cooperation

The objective of the project for supporting promotion and diffusion of ICTE consists in guiding the different domains of the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) in their approaches to appropriate these technologies. The Centres for digital and teaching resources are:

- **The Malabo Centre**, open since 2002, which runs a computer lab of 7 computer stations, all connected to high-speed Internet. Located in the UNGE Board of Education.
- **The Bata Centre**, open since October 2005, which runs a computer lab of 5 computer stations, which will soon be connected to high-speed Internet. It is located on the campus of the Teacher Training Academy.

The **Resafad-ICTE**, funded by the Cultural Cooperation and Action Service (SCAC), has been operating in Equatorial Guinea since July 2002. The Resafad-ICTE initiative has created some multimedia centres that host several servers, a training room equipped with a dozen work stations, and a room to produce educational resources. The centre functions through a network, with branches located in the country on one hand and with the centres in other capitals on the other. Resafad-ICTE currently possesses two multimedia centres hosted by National University of Equatorial Guinea. One is in the Board of Education of Malabo and the second is in the Teacher Training Academy in Bata.

9. CONSTRAINING FACTORS IN ICT USAGE

Equatorial Guinea is classified as a middle-income country because of oil income. As a consequence, donors are reluctant to grant more financial aid to the country, making it hard to fund education and development activities.

In Equatorial Guinea, the population has abruptly shifted from agricultural era to the age of computer and Internet and does not have time to integrate audiovisual technologies.

Therefore, the fact that audiovisual is not involved in its technological development process it is not due to a renunciation, but rather to a rejection. This might also explain the deficiency of this technology in other countries' contributions.

Its geographic configuration (Part Island and part continental) as well as its demographic configuration (low population) will sooner or later oblige the population to resort to ICT and distance training.

10. REFERENCES

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