Equatorial Guinea

Country Overview

Politics

Equatorial Guinea is a presidential republic. The president, Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has been in power since October 1979 after being reelected in 2016. His party holds complete executive power. The elections were largely boycotted by opposition parties. According to Human Rights Watch, there is significant evidence of “mismanagement of public funds...high level corruption...torture, arbitrary detention and unfair trials.”

Economy

Equatorial Guinea is classified as an upper middle-income economy by the World Bank. However, GDP growth in 2015 was -8.3 percent. Since the 1990s, the largest sector of the economy has consistently been petroleum. Gold, oil, uranium and diamonds are other important contributors to GDP.

Social/Human Development

According to Human Rights Watch, Equatorial Guinea has “by far the world’s largest gap between per capita wealth and human development score.” The Human Development Index score for Equatorial Guinea for 2016 was 0.592, and the country ranked 135 out of 188 countries. As of 2006, the poverty headcount ratio was 76.8 percent.

Approximately 85.7 percent of the population of Equatorial Guinea are part of the Fang ethnic group. Other ethnic groups within the country include the Bubi (6.5 percent), Mدوة (3.6 percent), Anونbones (1.6 percent), and Bujeba (1.1 percent). Most of the population is nominally Christian, predominately Roman Catholic.

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 3

The U.S. Department of State reports that the oil sector is linked to a demand for sex trafficking and trafficked domestic work. Staff of sub-contractors in the oil industry and related construction sectors are reportedly vulnerable to indicators of labor trafficking. Trafficking and trafficking risk is present in the construction sector.

Read the full TIP Report at: https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271183.htm

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Equatorial Guinea has negative net migration. The International Organization on Migration estimates that over 81,000 people migrated from the country in 2015. Approximately 56,000 Guineans emigrated to Gabon and just under 20,000 Guineans emigrated to Spain in 2015. The immigrant population of Equatorial Guinea was estimated to be 10,825, or 1.28 percent of the total resident population. The top migrant-sending country is France. Other migrant source countries included Sao Tome and Principe, Spain, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Gabon.10

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) does not have data for vulnerable populations like internally-displaced persons and stateless persons within Equatorial Guinea. The U.S. Department of State reports that some foreigners complained of being detained and deported without knowledge of their charges, and there exists no system for providing protection to refugees.11
Migrants to Equatorial Guinea

- France: 4,561
- São Tomé and Principe: 1,493
- Spain: 1,279
- Cameroon: 798
- Nigeria: 359

Legend:
- Green: France
- Red: São Tomé and Principe
- Yellow: Spain
- Blue: Cameroon
- Purple: Nigeria
Migrants from Equatorial Guinea
Exports and Trade

The top exports for Equatorial Guinea are mineral fuels and oils, organic chemicals, and wood. All exports of mineral fuels and oil are of petroleum oils and gases.\textsuperscript{12}

### Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Value (USD Thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mineral Fuels</td>
<td>4,024,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemicals</td>
<td>270,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>279,517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top importers of all goods from Equatorial Guinea are China, the Republic of Korea, Spain, and Brazil.\textsuperscript{13}
Equatorial Guinea was the 107th largest supplier of goods to the United States in 2014, exporting a total of USD 255 million worth of goods. Mineral fuel was the most significant import.¹⁴
Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The right to Freedom of Association is protected by law but severely restricted in practice. Although the law provides workers the right to establish unions, it also requires a union to have 50 members from a workplace to register, which effectively blocks union formation. As of 2016, there was only one functioning union. The right to strike was affirmatively protected by legislation.

Working Conditions

The monthly minimum wage varies by occupation from CFA 129,035 (USD 233) to CFA 1,290,345 (USD 2,330) in the private sector. The standard work week is 48 hours a week for daytime work, 36 hours a week for nighttime work, and 42 hours a week for mixed day and night work. The U.S. Department of State reports that the government seldom monitors workers in the informal sector.

Discrimination

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, political opinion, national origin, social status, or union affiliation. However, the laws do not prohibit discrimination based on age, language, or HIV-positive status. The U.S. Department of State reports that the labor laws are not effectively enforced and discrimination against foreign migrant workers has occurred.

Forced Labor

Forced labor is prohibited by law, but the government has not met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking according to the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report. Penalties and enforcement mechanisms were inadequate, and the U.S. Department of State has reported various situations of forced labor around the country.

Child Labor

The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 18, except for light work between age 16 and 18. The Right to Education project reports that education is compulsory until age 12.
**Civil Society Organizations**

The U.S. Department of State reports that the government has abused and restricted NGO activity and failed to protect human rights. Human Rights Watch reports that the government imposes restrictive conditions and operation of NGOs.

**Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political Risk Factors**

**Political Instability or Conflict**

Equatorial Guinea scores 85.2 on the Fragile States Index in 2016 and was placed in the “High Warning” category as the 53th most fragile state. The score went up 0.4 points from the score in 2015, and the average indicator score was 7.1 out of 10. The U.S. Department of State reports that the political process is corrupt, with civil servants being removed for political reasons without due process, and opposition members subject to arbitrary arrest and harassment. Human Rights Watch has reported that political repression is not limited to election season.

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23. U.S. Department of State
24. Human Rights Watch
25. Ratification of ILO Conventions
26. Fragile States Index
27. The U.S. Department of State
28. Human Rights Watch
Level of Crime and Violence

The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), a division of the U.S. Department of State, reports that the most common crime in Equatorial Guinea is extortion by corrupt police officers.29

The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime reported that Equatorial Guinea had a homicide rate of 19.2 homicides per 100,000 people in 2012.30

State Persecution

The U.S. Department of State reports that societal discrimination and political marginalization of minorities are problems in Equatorial Guinea. The predominant ethnic group dominates political and economic power, and the president has referred to foreigners as a security threat in multiple public speeches. The U.S. Department of State has reported that the number of reports of security forces harassing and extorting foreigners at gunpoint has increased. This may occur at check points where foreigners are routinely stopped by officials and asked to provide documentation. Immigrants are reported to be vulnerable to such abuse, in part because government agencies delayed renewal of residence and work permits.31

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scored Equatorial Guinea as 19 out of 100 in 2013, where a 0 signals “Highly Corrupt” and a 100 signals “Very Clean.” Equatorial Guinea was ranked 163 out of 175 countries on that index.32 The U.S. Department of State reports that while the law provides severe criminal penalties for corruption, the government does not implement the law and officials have engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.33 Human Rights Watch reports that oil revenues fund only the elite surrounding the president, with allegations of corruption abound. Few private media outlets exist, and they are largely owned by people close to the president.34

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

The UN Human Development Index places Equatorial Guinea in the medium human development category, ranking the country 135 of 188 countries with a score of 0.592 in 2015. The majority of Equatorial Guinea’s neighbors rank lower than Equatorial Guinea, including Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Cameroon.35 The World Bank classifies Equatorial Guinea in the upper middle income
However, according to Human Rights Watch, Equatorial Guinea has “by far the world’s largest gap between per capita wealth and human development score.”

Level and Extent of Poverty

The poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty lines is 76.8 percent according to the World Bank. This number represents the percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines. The Central Intelligence Agency reports that the unemployment rate in Equatorial Guinea is 22.3 percent.

Degree of Gender Inequality

The UNDP Human Development Report Gender Inequality Index reports that approximately 71.3 percent of the female population was part of the labor force in 2015, compared to 92 percent of the male population. While the constitution provides for equality between men and women, the Spanish civil code is applied, which discriminates against women in matters of nationality, real property, and inheritance. Under traditional Fang law, women have no inheritance rights. The national law is not enforced by the government, so restrictions on traditional marriage like polygamy are not enforced. The U.S. Department of State reports that women are paid less than men for the same work and that the terms of their contracts are not often honored.

Landlessness or Dispossession

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that more than half of the total land area in Equatorial Guinea is made up of protected areas and productive forests. The U.S. Department of State reports that individuals may hold the title to land, but the state has full power of eminent domain and does not offer compensation to the titleholders when they exercise that power.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Oil and Gas

Oil and Gas Overview

Almost none of the state funds coming from oil revenues have been allocated to public projects or development initiatives. Instead, they have been funneled to state elites, particularly those close to President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. The government is known to be particularly oppressive,
jailing political dissenters, systematically torturing people, and murdering those who disagree with the government.45

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Oil and Gas

Sub-contractors from the oil/gas sector and related construction industry reportedly confiscate foreign workers’ passports and subject workers to substandard working conditions.46 Equatorial Guinea’s oil wealth has attracted migrants from China, neighboring countries, and Latin America. The U.S. Department of State reports that the oil sector is linked to a demand for sex trafficking and trafficked domestic work.47

Forestry/Wood

Forestry/Wood Overview

Forests cover over 60 percent of the landmass in Equatorial Guinea.48 The forests include tree species that are used for plywood and veneers, both of which are desirable for Asian manufacturers.49 The government banned logging exports in 2007 but, following a two-year drop, China has continued to import wood in large quantities.50

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Forestry/Wood

Equatorial Guinea lost over 12 percent of its forests between 2000 and 2012,51 and it is expected that deforestation will continue in spite of the ban if China continues to import products. Over half of the population relies on forest resources for subsistence livelihoods,52 meaning that a significant portion of the population will be at risk of losing their livelihoods and being displaced should deforestation continue. Greenpeace has reported that “the country is failing to enforce laws and create transparency in a forest sector plagued by rampant corruption, a lack of accountability and collusion between authorities and timber companies.”53
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Endnotes