



**Guinea – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 April 2015**

**The reasonableness of IPA in general terms for single/widowed women set against the prevailing conditions in Guinea.**

Information on the possibility of an Internal Protection Alternative for single or widowed women in Guinea was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

A report published by Widows for Peace through Democracy, in paragraph 1, states:

“As recognized by the Government itself in its Report,<sup>1</sup> Guinean society is a patriarchal one. Stereotypes and negative preconceived notions about women’s roles are deep-rooted, and they are the basis of many forms of violence against them, including assault, repudiation, levirate, sororate, early marriage, forced marriage. Widows may be considered responsible for their husbands’ death and subjected to widowhood rites which are humiliating and go against their rights.” (Widows for Peace through Democracy (2014) *Issues of Discrimination in Widowhood in Guinea that Require Addressing in the Context of the CEDAW*)

In paragraph 2 this report states:

“Although no official statistics on the number of widows in Guinea seem to be available, their number is high, due to several reasons among which the practice of early marriages, and AIDS epidemics. Moreover Guinea, together with its bordering countries, is facing the threat of Ebola spreading. Not only the number of widows is increasing due to Ebola casualties. Widows often get blamed for ‘allowing’ their husbands to die, and might be treated as pariahs, witches or even the source of the illness, thus leaving them completely vulnerable and destitute.” (ibid)

Paragraph 3 states:

“However, women in Guinea often experience difficulties in acceding to credit, to family allowances and pensions, and to land. Especially in rural areas, land is family-owned and women can’t inherit it,<sup>6</sup> causing widows to live in extreme poverty, without the means to sustain themselves and their children.” (ibid)

The 2015 Freedom House report on Guinea states:

“Societal discrimination against women is pervasive. Rape and sexual harassment are common but underreported due to fears of stigmatization. While women have legal access to land, credit, and business, they are disadvantaged by inheritance laws and the traditional justice system. Guinean law allows husbands to forbid their wives from working. Female genital

mutilation is nearly ubiquitous, affecting up to 96 percent of all girls and women in the country.” (Freedom House (10 March 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Guinea*)

The 2015 Human Rights Watch report for Guinea, in a section titled “Women and Children’s Rights”, states:

“Despite a lack of data, sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls remains of grave concern. In 2013, the UN documented 72 cases of rape and sexual assault, 55 of which involved girls. Forced and child marriage is common, and according to government statistics, some 95 per cent of girls and women undergo female genital mutilation, although the government is making efforts to address the problem.” (Human Rights Watch (29 January 2015) *World Report 2015 – Guinea*)

The most recent US Department of State country report on Guinea, in a section titled “Women”, states:

“Rape and domestic violence are criminal offenses but were rarely prosecuted and occurred frequently.” (US Department of State (27 February 2014) *2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Guinea*, p.22)

This section of the report also states:

“Spousal rape is neither punished nor regarded as a criminal offense. Social customs and fear of being ostracized prevented most victims from reporting incidents of rape. According to a 2003 study, the most recent available, victims of sexual assault constituted more than 20 percent of women treated in a local hospital. A study by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children estimated that 87 percent of all women had been victims of domestic violence. The survey estimated that 49.6 percent of girls and women ages 15 to 49 were victims of sexual violence by their regular sexual partner. Due to fear of stigmatization and reprisal, women rarely reported abuse. The law does not directly address wife beating, although charges can be filed under general assault, which carries sentences of two to five years in prison and fines of 50,000 to 300,000 GNF (seven to 43 dollars). Assault constitutes grounds for divorce under civil law, but police rarely intervened in domestic disputes, and there were no reports of perpetrators being punished.” (ibid, p.22)

A report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in a section titled “Stereotypes and harmful practices” (paragraph 28), states:

“The Committee welcomes the commitment of the State party to fighting negative stereotypes and harmful practices regarding women’s rights. It is, however, concerned at the persistence of deeply rooted gender stereotypes, in addition to practices that are harmful to women, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, child marriages, polygamy or succession rites relating to widowhood, including levirate and sororate. It regrets the absence of a strategy to combat those stereotypes and harmful practices through education and awareness-raising campaigns, including campaigns using the media, and through legislation prohibiting such practices.” (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (14 November 2014)

*Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Guinea, p.7)*

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

**References:**

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