



MINUTE FOR MISSION

May 15, 2005

Education: A Priority for the Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, like many African countries that gained independence in the 1960s, is still struggling to develop an identity of its own. It was claimed by the Portuguese in 1472, then dealt to the Spaniards in 1778. Officially awarded to Spain at the Conference of Berlin in 1885, it finally broke free of colonial power in 1968. Nevertheless its search for identity has been hampered by several factors.

The government, headed by dictator Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, has a dismal human rights record and until recently has been shunned by most world powers. Smaller in size than Maryland, the population numbers fewer than 500,000. And its colonial legacy means that not only is it the sole spanish-speaking country in Africa but also that the population is predominantly Roman Catholic—about 90 percent.

The tiny Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea fights hard to be a witness in the midst of these overwhelming obstacles. One place where it is making a significant impact is in the area of education.



The Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea makes quality education available to all.



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In the past, it was highly desirable for parents to send their children to schools administered by the Roman Catholic Church. They were the best-run, with the best-educated teachers, and if your child did well, he might earn a beca—a scholarship—to study in Spain. But in order to attend a school run by the Roman Catholics, your child had to be baptized Catholic.

This put Protestant parents in a moral bind. They could have their child baptized by the priest and claim to be Catholic so their child could enroll in the better school. Or they could send their child to an inferior school, while knowing that a good education is one of the best ways to raise one's self out of poverty.

In 1980, shortly after the ban on Protestant schools and churches was lifted, the Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea opened "El Colegio Resurreccion" in Bata. The school now has both primary and secondary levels with over 800 students. It stands as a witness to the community not only of the Protestant Church in its midst but also of the importance of Christian Education, in a country still searching for its identity.

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For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

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