

■ ALGERIA

Greater investment in development, more progress in gender issues



Favoured by high oil prices, the Government increased social investment, achieving such advances as a significant reduction of poverty. For their part, Algerian women are now revealing a greater presence in positions traditionally occupied by men.

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With the Plan in Support of Economic Reactivation (PSRE) 2000-2004, the Government is preparing to grant about USD 55 billion to the Complementary Plan in Support of Economic Growth 2005-2009 (PCSCE). This is a considerable amount for a country like Algeria.

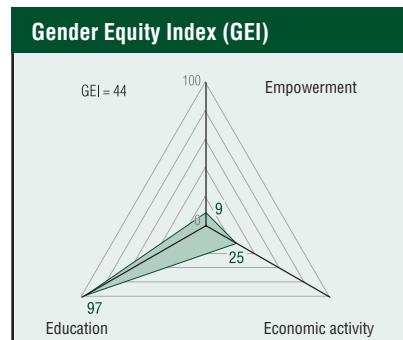
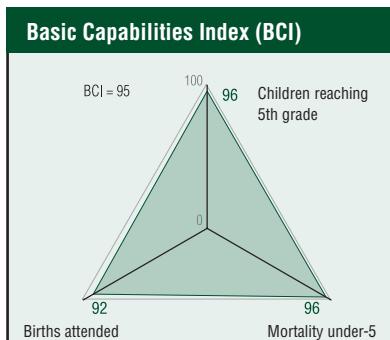
Social indicators should experience significant progress, given that this budget allots 25.5% for housing and environment, 15.8% for human development (2005 Finance Law) and 22.7% for infrastructure.

A goal achieved

According to estimates made by the General Commissioner for Planning and Prospects, the proportion of the population living on less than USD 1 per day decreased from 1.9% in 1998 to 0.8% in 2000. This means that the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people living on less than USD 1 per day by 2015 has already been reached. The percentage of poverty increased from 3.6% in 1988 to 5.7% in 1995 and then decreased to 3.1% in 2000 and 1.6% in 2004. In absolute terms, the number of poor people of this category of the population decreased from 1.6 million in 1995 to 605,112 in 2003, a reduction of more than 62%.

Child malnutrition

According to the National Economic and Social Council (CNES), malnutrition in children under five years, measured by weight deficiency, increased markedly, from 9.2% in 1992 to 10.4% in 2002. This regression is an alert in itself, revealing a situation that appears paradoxical in comparison with the other changes. The CNES is



concerned about inflation, which is affecting the family basket, in particular the price of milk. The purchasing power of the national minimum wage decreased, and the percentage of that wage necessary to purchase one litre of milk increased from 0.16% in 1992 to 0.3% in 2002.

Oil benefits

From a global perspective, these results should be perceived in terms of a favourable economic situation due to the spectacular increase of the price of oil. Exceptionally high State income has permitted the implementation of the PSRE which, according to the CNES, culminated in the creation of 728,000 jobs, 63% of them permanent.¹ The same source indicates that job creation appears to have responded favourably to the concern over regional stability, since the index of jobs created per 1,000 inhabitants has been favourable for southern regions, followed by the highlands. Although state subsidies for employment policies represent only 0.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) – compared with figures ranging from 3% to 5.5% of GDP in countries of the Organization for Cooperation and

Economic Development – funding for these programmes doubled between 1997 and 2002.²

Additionally, in January 2004 the minimum wage was raised by 25%, thus improving purchasing power. Added to this is a greater State intervention in gross family incomes. Transfers went from 16.2% in 1996 to 20.3% in 2000 and 23% in 2004. In June 2006, the State granted a budget of more than DZD 100 billion (USD 1.4 million) for the improvement of the insurance system for government employees. This will allow the public minimum wage to be raised by approximately 15%. This minimum wage increase is one of the points to be discussed in a tripartite meeting in September of this year.

Another achievement was a programme for the construction of one million homes under the PSRE, already implemented to a great extent. The occupancy rate per dwelling decreased from 7 people to 5.5 between 1999 and 2004. It should reach 5 in 2009, after the construction of another million homes projected by the PCSE.

The progress of women

The strong presence of women in schools and universities is a strong and objective signal of a restructuring of the gender system in the mid term. The education of girls is now an established tendency in Algeria. Inequalities between the sexes no longer exist in the secondary school system.

TABLE 1

Incidence of poverty and food poverty (1988-2004)				
	1988	1995	2000	2004
Incidence (%) beneath food poverty line	3.6	5.7	3.1	1.6
Incidence (%) beneath general poverty line	8.1	14.1	12.1	6.8

Source: General Commissioner for Planning and Prospects

1 <www.cnnes.dz/cnnesdoc/plein25/conj12004.doc>.

2 These figures correspond to the Programme of Local Initiative for Salaried Employment, the Labour Program of Intensive Labour of Public Utility, the Pre-employment Contract and the Mechanism of General Interest Activity.

The numbers of 6- to 15-year-old girls who attend school has evolved positively and more quickly than that of boys. As a result, discrimination has decreased against girls in this age range, 91.87 of whom were educated per 100 boys in 2002, compared with only 81 in 1990-1991 and 87.8 in 1999-2000. In 2006, the rate of women who received a secondary school diploma was 62%, while the overall rate was 52%.

The most significant growth is that of women in the labour force. According to the General Census of Population and Housing, the rate of female activity in the labour force increased from 1.8% in 1966 to 9.6% in 1998. The World Bank estimated the rate of female labour for 2001 at 27%³. The rate of female unemployment increased from 9% of total unemployment in 1992 to 15% in 2003 and to 18.1% in 2004.

Socially acceptable professions

This entry of women into the labour market in the last decade is due in part to the dynamics of the informal sector, which attracted more women to the labour market, and also to the increase in women's level of education. Paradoxically, Algerian women appear to have a greater presence in jobs that require more competence and qualifications, excepting political positions. Certain branches of activity considered socially appropriate and prestigious for women are admitting them in greater numbers; women are already a majority in some. The main professions lie in the arena of health care. In the pharmaceutical industry, for example, women represent 74% of the professionals; they comprise 71% of the country's surgery-performing dentists, 52% of doctors, 53% of medical specialists and 55% of residents.

Limited political participation

The number of female parliamentarians increased from 14 to 24 in the 2002 elections, representing only 6.6% of the legislature. A not insignificant number of women have been named to key administrative positions during 2004, for example in the heart of the diplomatic and judicial bodies. Nevertheless, these very favourable changes cannot conceal the fact that the proportion of women in political representation continues to be extremely low.

In the area of small business, women have shown a greater presence in the professions, where they reached 39% in 2003. That year they operated close to 25% of small businesses in the service sector and close to 21% in the industrial sector, and they began to work in spheres of activity traditionally reserved for men, such as agriculture, maintenance, transportation and construction, public works and hydraulics.

More girls in school

The efforts made by the State to achieve compulsory and free education resulted in the schooling of nearly all children aged 6 to 12. The rate of edu-

TABLE 2

Children's health situation (results per 1,000 live births)					
INDICATORS	1990	1991	2000	2002	MDGS
2015					
Infant mortality	46.8	44.9	36.9	34.7	15.6
Under-five mortality	54.6	52.7	43.1	40.0	18.2

tion drops abruptly in the age range from 16 to 19, in which the rate for boys increases. Additionally, the ratio of teachers per students in primary and secondary school remains low.

In 2002, the illiteracy rate in those over 10 increased to 26.5%, with a significant difference between urban and rural figures (20.1% and 35.7% respectively) and by sex (13.5% of men and 26.6% of women in cities and 24.6% and 47%, respectively, in rural areas).

The Government outlined a strategy to teach literacy skills to between 150,000 and 200,000 people per year, in order to reduce the illiteracy rate by half before 2013. Also, the National Literacy Office collaborated with UNICEF to initiate a pilot project prioritizing women.

Communicable diseases, child mortality

In the 1980s, Algeria entered a transitional demographic phase, experiencing a reduction of mortality and a significant decrease in the birth rate. This phenomenon is accompanied by an epidemiological transition, characterized by a decrease in endemic communicable diseases and diseases controllable by vaccination, signifying an increase in life expectancy despite the appearance of new diseases. Nevertheless, in spite of these decreases, communicable diseases remain at a worryingly high level.

Facts from a 2002 survey carried out by the Pan-Arab Project for Family Health (PAPFAM) set the child mortality rate at 38.8 per 1,000 live births, with a significant difference between urban (35 per 1,000 live births) and rural areas.

Given the slow pace of progress, successful arrival at the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015 appears difficult. According to the survey, the probability of death among children under five years of age whose mothers are illiterate is four times higher than that of those whose mothers have completed secondary education and beyond. Also, the risk of death before one year is twice as high for children born in a traditional home than for those born in apartment buildings.

In terms of prevention, the vaccination programme covers more than nine children out of 10, in all types of vaccines. Children aged 12 to 23 months who are fully vaccinated account for 88.9%, with a significant difference between those from urban (91.2%) and rural (86.1%) areas. On the other hand, the survey indicates that 97.1% of children born during the five years prior to the survey had a vaccination card. These results demonstrate that the public health system has two challenges before it: one is a question of quality; the other of equity. A programme of action against child mortality was

initiated in 1985 with a vaccine against measles. The survey of the PAPFAM reveals that 90.6% of children were vaccinated against measles in 2002, in contrast to 85.7% in 1992.

Conclusion

The reversal of social and economic rights recorded during the period 1986-1999 makes necessary the current integration of these rights into a process of sustainable development and for the assurance of an equitable division of the fruits of that development. Income from oil comprises 70% of the State's total income. These resources can be fleeting; thus, it is necessary to find a way of utilizing them in order to guarantee the production of lasting, long-term resources. Sustainable development depends on the mobilization of renewable resources. This is essential in order to absorb the social and economic consequences linked to the association agreement with the European Union reached in September 2005 and after accession to the WTO. ■

³ <<http://publications.worldbank.org/WDI>>.