

## Trade logic takes precedence

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### Government's strategy

Social and economic development policy is incorporated in the government's Five-year Plan 2000-2004, with the following major activities scheduled:

- Reforming education to achieve universal basic education by the year 2004 and higher literacy;
- Creating the National Agency for Promotion of Employment;
- Establishing the Agency for Social Development;
- Restructuring of the National Mutual Aid Fund;
- Accelerating the implementation of rural infrastructure programs so that populations can benefit from basic social services.

Despite this declared intention, the social sectors—particularly education and health—were subject to budget cuts and came under independent management.<sup>1</sup> This put an end to free education and healthcare at a time when half of the Moroccan population lives below the poverty line. To explain why the government's social strategies have not been implemented, reference is made to certain economic and climatic conditions such as currency exchange rates (fall of the EURO) and drought, and to oil prices, the Sahara war and so on.

The crisis in fact resulted from the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). The government's approach is in terms of macroeconomic balance, which is simply resignation to the rules dictated by trade globalisation. Such orientation means greater inequalities and increased unemployment and poverty.

Trade logic dominates and determines the behaviour of public authorities. An analysis of the 2001 government budget is revealing:

- The operating budget for the Ministry of the Interior (MAD 6,263 million/USD 574 million) is 38 times greater than the budget for the Ministry for the Arts (MAD 172 million/USD 15.8 million), twice as much as the budget for Higher Education, Executive Staff Training and Scientific Research, more than 1.5 times the amount allocated to the Ministry of Health, 4.28 times allocations to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water and Forests, 16.75 times the budget for Youth and Sports—in a country where over 50% of the population is under 20—and more than 320 times the amount allocated to the ministry in charge of human rights (MAD 19.5 million/USD 1.8 million). With regard to investment budgets, the Ministry of the Interior, with MAD 1,020 million (USD 93.6 million), is second to Defence, which swallows up the lion's share.

- The operating budget allocated for the Ministry of Defence and for former resistance members absorbs 36.6% of the general budget, compared with 29.1% for education and 5.4% for health. The military machinery will absorb MAD 20 billion (USD 1.8 billion) of the total government operating budget of MAD 75 billion (USD 6.9 billion) for 2001.

Payments on the foreign debt decreased by 12.9% (principal) and 9.3% (interest) from 1999 to 2000, but domestic debt increased by 34.5%. The reduction in foreign debt payments was accompanied by a reduction of 16.1% in expenditures for public services. This retreat from public spending is all the more serious considering the huge profits the state made in 2000 from the privatisation of public companies.

### Insufficient social security coverage

The National Social Security Fund (CNSS) covers only half the two million salaried employees. Domestic help, farm labourers and workers in the informal sector are excluded. Non-salaried employees do not benefit from any compulsory social security coverage. The government has not provided incentives or taken steps to enforce company participation in compulsory funds.

Nearly 80% of elderly people do not receive social security payments. Of every ten senior citizens, six suffer from health problems and 92% are illiterate. This category represents 7% of the Moroccan population.

### Women and children do not come first

The use of children as salaried employees is a common practice. No legal sanction is pronounced against those who exploit children and teenagers in conditions that are harmful to their health and to their development. Morocco has not ratified International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 138, which stipulates the minimum age for employment as over 15. A survey<sup>2</sup> showed that, among little girls working as «domestic employees», 77% have never been at school and 75% are from rural areas.

Maternal mortality stands at 228 per 100,000 births. This figure is even more alarming in rural areas—307 for every 100,000. A 1997/1998 national survey shows that only one in eight married woman has chosen her husband herself. Women head nearly one in five households in urban areas.

The government prepared a plan for integrating women into development. This had the advantage of raising issues of equality at national level. But the plan has not yet been implemented for political reasons. The government considers it to be part of the monarch's religious function. In the meantime, women continue to be subjected to violence and repudiation.

<sup>1</sup> State services managed independently, referred to as *SEGMA's*.

<sup>2</sup> Survey carried out by the *Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance* (Moroccan League for the Protection of Children).

### Increasing unemployment and poverty

The unemployment rate in urban areas was 21.4% on average for the two first quarters of 2000 (compared with 22.4% in 1999). The unemployment rate for women was 28.2% in the third quarter of 2000 (32% in urban areas and 10.5% in rural areas). This was a slight drop from the same period in 1999 (28.3%).

The number of people in poverty increased in the last eight years, to 5.3 million in 1999. About 9.1% of urban households were affected by poverty, compared with 21.7% of rural households, and 14.5% nationally in 1998.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the wealthiest 10% of Moroccan people consumes 14 times more than the poorest 10%.<sup>4</sup>

### 20% healthcare coverage

The right to health care is not guaranteed. Barely 20% of Moroccans benefit from healthcare coverage. Only 5% of the budget is allocated to health. Seventy-five per cent of citizens cannot afford the services of private doctors.

Access to public hospitals is no longer free since patients have to pay part of the costs of hospitalisation and medical tests. The rate of infant mortality remains very high, at about 37 deaths per thousand before age one, and 46 per thousand before age five. There is only one hospital bed for every 1,062 inhabitants, one nurse for every 1,076 inhabitants, one gynaecologist for every 15,000 women, and only 12.8% of households in rural areas can access a community clinic. Government spending on health does not exceed 1% of GDP.

Countrywide, 55.9% of households have access to electricity, but the figure is only 15.6% in rural areas. Only 6.2% of rural households have access to piped drinking water.

### Illiteracy rate among girls in rural areas: 58%

The adult literacy rate is 48% for people over age 15. The gross schooling rate for primary and secondary school combined does not exceed 50% of the eligible population. The government aims to reduce illiteracy from its current level to 35% by the year 2004 (24% in 2010). This means a decrease of 2.6% per annum, 2.5 times faster than the pace so far. The literacy campaign targeted 300,000 people per year, but reached only 30,000 or 10% of its target.

The illiteracy rate among girls aged 10-14, in rural areas, was 58% in 1998. Although it decreased 16 points from its 1994 level of 74%, it is still among the highest in the world.

### Democracy

Despite all the fine words, there is still no adequate legal framework for real democratic participation. The government is suspicious of attempts by civil society associations to develop a more democratic society and wants total control; thus some newspapers are banned and journalists imprisoned.

### Conclusion

There is no social policy without a social movement capable of implementing it. If this social movement affirms itself in opposition to the dominant form of social regulation, it should be no surprise that the relationship between public authorities and the associations involved in social development is governed by suspicion. In Morocco, the achievements of the associative movement sometimes exceed those of certain ministries, *e.g.*, in literacy, health, electrification, micro-loans, building schools in rural areas, drinking-water, revenue-generating projects, and sanitation.

The government's social and economic strategy is always subordinate to a policy of maintaining macroeconomic balance at the expense of real promotion of social justice. As a result, social and economic disparities between sectors, sexes and geographical areas are increasing and social exclusion of large parts of the population is reinforced.

The misappropriation of public funds and resources for the sole benefit of those in power constitutes a major barrier to human development in our country. Citizens confront corruption in their every-day lives as an obstacle to accessing fundamental social rights, such as education, healthcare and administrative services. ■

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<sup>3</sup> National Survey on Household Standard of Living (1998/1999).

<sup>4</sup> Morocco's Economic and Social Report - Social Situation Report 2000.