

ALGERIA

**Reply to the Questionnaire to Governments
on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session
of the General Assembly (2000)**

PART ONE: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The principles of equal opportunity and equality between men and women are enshrined in Algeria's Constitution and laws. Furthermore, Algeria is bound by international principles and instruments eliminating all forms of discrimination. Accordingly, it has pursued its efforts to enlist women as participants in its national development with a view to achieving a balanced, stable society based on competence, fitness and merit.

The main achievements may be summarized as follows:

- *Poverty: elimination of extreme poverty by 2005.* The social safety net has been reinforced to assist excluded groups, especially women.
- *Education and training: achievement of universal primary education.* At the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, enrolment was 100 per cent, thanks to the fact that education is compulsory and free from the age of 6 to the age of 16, as well as the fact that educational institutions are located near communities. Higher percentage attendance rates were recorded for girls than for boys, especially at the secondary and university levels.
- *Reduction of illiteracy.* The illiteracy rate was down to 26.5 per cent in 2003.
- *Health: reduction of the under-five mortality rate.* According to national statistics for 1998, the under-five mortality rate was 34.5 per 1000 live births (35.6 per thousand for male children and 33.3 per thousand for female children).
- *Improve maternal health.* As a result of access to health care services, maternal health has been improved during the prenatal and postnatal periods as well as during childbirth.
- *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.* Action to this end has included improving means of prevention, ensuring comprehensive care for victims, and developing information and education activities, especially those aimed at young people.
- A pharmaceutical products policy has been developed, based on partnership and support for domestic and foreign investment for the production of basic generic pharmaceuticals, and essential medications are available free of charge to chronic patients.
- Health care in the area of reproductive health and family planning is provided free of charge by medical specialists for women in poverty, all costs being paid by the National Solidarity Fund. This service is in addition to the public health services provided by State-run health centres, where poorer patients also are guaranteed free treatment.
- The drinking water supply system has been substantially expanded: it served 79 per cent of all dwellings in 2002 (94 per cent of all dwellings in urban areas), up from 57.8 per cent in 1987.
- *Human rights and women: promote respect for women's fundamental rights, and create or strengthen institutional mechanisms for their advancement.*
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been translated into practice, mainly through amendments to legislation, including in particular the Family Code, and the possibility of withdrawing Algeria's reservations to the Convention is under consideration. Sexual harassment has been made a criminal offence, and special centres have been established to shelter women and girls who have been subjected to violence.

- *The economy.* The reform of the framework for economic growth has been completed. In that connection, Algeria has entered into partnership with the European Union and is negotiating with a view to joining the World Trade Organization. A General Directorate for Planning and Forecasting has been established. In addition, the framework for investment has been improved through partnerships or concessions. The economy grew at a rate of 6.8 per cent in 2003.
- Programmes and mechanisms to support youth employment and provide decent, productive jobs have been established, with the result that unemployment declined from 29 per cent to 24 per cent in 2003;
- *Decision-making.* Women's access to posts and functions has been enhanced. Women have entered the workforce in substantial numbers: 20 per cent of all women were economically active in 2003, compared to 12.61 per cent in 1998.
- *The media.* New information and communication technologies (ICTs) are regarded as making a meaningful contribution to economic development, and consequently the ICT sector has been strengthened by the establishment of an ICT park in the new town of Sidi Abdallah. The park offers optimal conditions for attracting pioneering ICT firms, developing innovations and providing opportunity for the creative application of skills.
- *Institutional mechanisms.* A Ministry for Family Affairs and the Status of Women has been established.
- Community action has been encouraged and enhanced: there are now approximately 60 000 associations, including 890 that are national in scope;
- *The environment.* The legal framework and international partnership have been strengthened with a view to integrating the principles of sustainable development into Algeria's environmental policy and programmes.
- *The girl child.* The rights of children have been strengthened, and legislative provisions relating to the protection of children have been reinforced (including prevention and measures to protect girls who are morally endangered or at risk of any form of violence). The principle of gender equality has been enshrined in the law.
- A National Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour was established within the Ministry of Labour in March 2003.

The main challenges confronting Algeria in its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other initiatives that have subsequently been identified may be summarized as follows:

- Cultural stereotypes and restrictions that still prevail.
- The fact that in many instances, women are reluctant to participate positively in political life and appear to find their traditional roles satisfactory.

PART TWO: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the general Assembly

The advancement of women and their enlistment as full, essential participants in development is a priority that is high on the agenda of the Algerian Government. This issue is being addressed with a new vision aimed at reducing the gap between the respective roles of men and women in the development process, strengthening the role played by women and safeguarding their rights in society.

Algeria's efforts to protect women and enhance their role pursuant to the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent initiatives are outlined below.

Women and poverty

In an effort to alleviate poverty, Algeria has adopted a strategy aimed at ensuring equal opportunity for persons of both sexes at all levels of social, political and economic life. The main features of that strategy include:

- Preparation of a "poverty map" of Algeria by the Ministry of Employment and National Solidarity, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Preparation and Rehabilitation Agency, in May 2001. The map is a reference tool that will yield a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of poverty and facilitate the tasks of evaluating it, identifying pockets of poverty, and creating a unified effort to eliminate extreme poverty through the preparation and implementation of policies oriented toward comprehensive sustainable development based on the characteristics of individual regions.
- Preparation of a national plan to combat poverty and marginalization: the plan was prepared by the Ministry of Employment and National Solidarity in 2001. It reflects the Government's determination to give material form to its efforts to upgrade the living conditions of excluded social groups. The plan has 12 objectives in all, including:
 - Mainstreaming a gender balance at all levels of social, political and economic life. To that end, courses have been organized to provide gender training for senior officials;
 - Measures to upgrade maternal and child health care services;
 - Action to combat violence and discrimination against women.
- A national workshop on the elimination of poverty and marginalization was held in October 2000. The event afforded an opportunity of estimating the scale of poverty in Algeria and identifying priorities for practical action. Measures contemplated in that connection included the preparation of a national strategy to eliminate poverty and marginalization. In 2003 a second workshop on ending poverty through work was organized by the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity in partnership with the International Labour Organization's office in Algeria.

Challenges

- Commitment to eliminate extreme poverty (most acute forms of poverty) by 2005: there are 1.2 million people in this category, and the task will require 13 billion Algerian dinars (DA), i.e. \$170 million, annually;
- Mitigating unemployment by means of renewed national economic growth, to be achieved through mechanisms for supporting employment among young people, especially women, and fostering employment in rural areas, home enterprises and the like;
- Pursuing, in greater depth, the implementation of measures aimed at modernizing socio-economic structures (the financial sector, justice, the basis of trade, and so on), in particular through privatization and fostering investment;
- Buttressing the social safety net designed to assist the poorest groups through the Social Development Agency and Social Activity Directorates, which will entail a 5 per cent increase in outlays from the budget for social sectors.

In January 2004, a new legal framework was created by four executive orders relating to small loans aimed at encouraging unemployed persons or low-income persons to go into business for themselves, especially by starting home enterprises. Under this programme,

- Bank loans in amounts ranging from DA 50 000 to DA 400 000;
- State assistance in the form of interest-free loans for projects costing more than DA 100 000
- Interest-free loans, or loans at below current bank interest rates, for the purpose of purchasing raw materials to a value of not more than DA 30 000. A total of DA 21 billion has been allocated to support youth employment projects, and banks have been enlisted as participants in the programme.

Integration of women through employment-creating initiatives.

In recent years, the State has put in place a number of initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment, and a significant proportion of the beneficiaries have been women. Data relating to these initiatives are summarized below.

Women's share of employment-creating initiatives, 2002

Type	Total beneficiaries	% women
Social utility activities (IAIG)	168 626	41
Labour-intensive public works (TUP HIMO)	203 632	-
Pre-employment contracts	9 022	65
Local initiative solidarity employment (ESIL)	141 000	45
Small loans	11 216	30.49
Small businesses	52 393	12.11

At the instance of the President of the Republic, with a view to fostering employment among housewives, markets have been established where women in this category can sell their products, and marketing services have been made available to them in an effort to raise their families' standard of living.

In a context of economic recovery and the first signs of renewed economic growth, these State-created initiatives have resulted in a significant decrease in unemployment. The most recent figures indicate that employment declined from 29 per cent in 1999 to 23 per cent in 2003.

Education and training of women

Algeria has devoted great attention to education. Making education democratic and free has been a fundamental duty of the national education system, in accordance with the principle of equal opportunity for all, without discrimination based on place of residence or gender. At the primary level, 99 per cent of all boys and 96 per cent of all girls now attend school.

Pupils enrolled in primary and intermediate schools, 2000 and 2003

Cycle	2000	2003
Pupils enrolled, first and second cycles	4 720 950	4 691 870
Percentage girls	46.82%	46.98%
Pupils enrolled, third cycle	2 015 372	2 116 087
Percentage girls	48.06%	48.04%
Total pupils enrolled, primary and intermediate levels	6 736 320	6 666 346
Percentage girls	48.19%	47.97%

At the secondary level, the picture is quite different, with attendance figures for girls noticeably higher than the corresponding figures for boys. At the threshold of the new century, the situation was as shown in the tables below.

Students enrolled in secondary schools, 2000 and 2003

Students enrolled	975 862	1 095 730
Percentage girls	56.15%	57.73%

Percentage school attendance by girls, all levels, 2003

Education level	School attendance rates for girls (%)
Primary	46.98%
Intermediate	48.04%
Secondary	56.73%
University	53%

Numbers of women teachers and professors, 2000 and 2003

Total	327 284	239 605
Women	154 507	161 523
Percentage women	47.20%	46.01%

Girl students successfully obtaining a secondary-school certificate (baccalaureate), 2000

Total students enrolled	445 468
Girls enrolled	250 321
Percentage girls	56.19%
Total No. obtaining a baccalaureate	119 325
No. of girls obtaining a baccalaureate	70 192

Percentage girls	58.82%
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Women students taking various university programmes, 2000

Total	Percentage women students
Humanities	70.43%
Natural sciences	62.17%
Exact sciences	42.17%
Civil, electrical and mechanical engineering	21.68%

Thanks to Algeria's school building programme, pupils can now attend school close to where they live, especially in rural areas. The purpose of the programme was to raise school attendance rates and reduce the dropout phenomenon, especially in the case of girls.

In addition, the State has devoted a good deal of care to the provision of social services in schools in order to enable pupils to continue their education, eliminate disparities resulting from social, economic and geographic factors and make it easier for families to send their children to school. These services include:

- Health care (an estimated 68.41 per cent of pupils use this service);
- School meals (an estimated 31 per cent of pupils use this service);
- School bus transport in rural and remote areas;
- Allowances for school fees and free supplies for poor pupils.

There are also educational and technical training establishments that accommodate students who have dropped out of the system and provide opportunities for training and skills development tailored to persons interested in upgrading their capacities.

Vocational training is provided by a network of public institutions run by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Education, comprising 819 institutions and five support structures. At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 172 subsidiary establishments were opened in rural parts of the country, in addition to the 391 that had previously been serving those areas. This initiative targets primarily girls in rural areas, and is aimed at giving them an economic role.

On 8 March 2004, the Ministry for Family Affairs and the Status of Women and the Ministry of Vocational Training and Education signed a cooperation agreement aimed at the following objectives:

- Provision of opportunities for training and vocational skills development for all family members, subject to programme availability;
- Preparation of training and skills development programmes for women, with a view to promoting their social and vocational integration;
- Reinforcement of training and vocational skills development for women, especially women living in rural and desert areas, by opening subsidiary branches and annexes to vocational training centres currently functioning in those areas;

- Preparation of vocational skills upgrading and training courses aimed expressly at women artisans and women interested in setting up small businesses.

Furthermore, under new draft regulations, there are various exceptional cases in which the age limit for admission to these training courses can be raised from 25 to 30:

- Women in difficult social or economic circumstances;
- Women living in isolated regions.

The table below presents some data on the numbers of persons who took training courses at vocational training centres in 2003.

Type of training	Residential training	Apprenticeship training	Distance training	Percentage
Men	91 684	83 834	4 254	56.44
Women	96 715	38 333	3 729	43.56
Total	188 399	122 167	7 983	100
Grand total	318 549			

In the area of literacy and adult education, Algeria has made substantial efforts aimed at reducing illiteracy rates. At the time of independence, approximately 90 per cent of the country's population could not read or write; by 2003, that figure had declined to 26.5 per cent, and is expected to continue to decline, reaching 24 per cent by 2008, according to a report published by the Ministry of Health. Among women, illiteracy has declined from 40.33 per cent in 1998 to 34.6 per cent in 2003 for the 40-and-over age group.

Statistics from 2002 indicate that 4 023 literacy courses were offered in that year. No more than 17.4 per cent of the participants were men, while 82.6 per cent of them were women.

Women and health

Reproductive health and maternal and child protection are national priority issues in the field of health and population, and they are among Algeria's public health policy objectives. The focus is on family planning, maternal health, childbirth under professional supervision, and the elimination of sexually transmitted diseases and waterborne diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, diarrhoea and hepatitis. Accordingly, the health and population sector and hospital reform are part of the effort to improve the situation of mothers and children. Measures to this end at successive life stages are outlined below.

Early childhood:

Algeria has developed a national programme aimed at combating childhood diseases and reducing mortality rates. Following independence, child mortality was 200 per thousand; after the programme was launched, the infant mortality rate declined steadily to 34.5 per thousand in 2002, while the under-five mortality rate was 38.8 per thousand in that year. The national programme comprises 10 subprogrammes, of which a national vaccination programme is perhaps the most important. As of the beginning of 2002, 90 per cent of all children between the ages of 12 and 23 months had been given all the appropriate inoculations (tuberculosis, triple vaccine for polio, whooping cough and measles). Furthermore, 97.1 per cent of all children had an

immunization record. Other subprogrammes are concerned with other diseases such as diarrhoea, good nutrition, respiratory disorders, and so on.

Children over the age of 6:

For children in this age category, the main health-related measure is the provision of school health services, delivered through 1000 centres in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The services include vaccination, dental care, and health education (such as efforts to discourage smoking).

Adolescence:

Programmes for young people in this age category are delivered through information and activation centres located throughout the country.

Reproductive health:

In this area, the focus has been on women's health through monitoring during pregnancy and safe childbirth. In 2002, over 80 per cent of Algerian women received pre-natal care, and close to 90 per cent of births took place in a public-health facility. The country has 600 public-health clinics offering these services. An estimated 3.6 per cent or more of all births took place in private health facilities in 2002.

In addition, there are a number of family planning programmes. These were originally launched in the 1970s, and have achieved noteworthy results: 80 per cent of Algerian women now use contraception, and 52 per cent use modern methods (IUD, the pill and so on). In the early 1970s, the fertility rate was seven children per women, whereas today it stands at 2.4. The maternal mortality rate in childbirth was an estimated 174 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births in 1996; it has now declined to between 2.15 and 2.25. Population growth, which was over 3 per cent annually in the early 1970s, is now 1.5 per cent annually.

It is noteworthy that all maternal and child welfare programmes are delivered free of charge in public medical centres, of which Algeria has over 5 000, distributed throughout the country.

Algeria also has a programme aimed at combating cancer, especially cervical cancer. This programme is delivered at 20 centres distributed throughout the country.

The year 2000 saw the introduction of a country-wide "risk-free childbirth" programme. In addition, Algeria has entered into a cooperation and partnership programme with UNICEF aimed at promoting the survival, protection and development of children as well as the care of mothers and children.

Some indicators on women's health

Percentage women who have taken iron, vitamin, calcium and magnesium supplements in tablet or liquid form, or who have had anti-tetanus injections during pregnancy to protect their unborn child, by area of residence

Area of residence	Took iron supplements in tablet or liquid form	Took vitamin, calcium or magnesium supplements	Had anti-tetanus injections during pregnancy to protect the unborn child
Urban	43.5	42.5	51.6
Rural	38.0	35.7	35.8
Total	41.75	39.6	43.4

Percentage distribution of women by description of health status and area of residence

Description of health status	Area of residence		
	Urban	Rural	Total
Good	47.4	39.9	44.3
Fair	47.3	55.2	50.6
Poor	5.3	4.9	5.1
Total	100	100	100

The commonest chronic disorders affecting Algerian women are, in order, hypertension, with an incidence of approximately 5 per cent, arthritis (3.05 per cent) and gastric ulcers (3.0 per cent).

Percentage women who suffer or have suffered from chronic disorders diagnosed by a physician, by type of disorder and area of residence

Type of disorder	Area of residence		
	Urban	Rural	Total
Diabetes	1.7	1.3	1.6
Hypertension	5.3	4.4	4.9
Asthma	2.0	1.9	1.9
Arthritis	3.2	2.9	3.0
Peptic ulcer	3.1	2.9	3.0

Knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases:

The 2002 edition of the Algerian Family Health Survey found that 68.7 per cent of women respondents were aware of the existence of diseases that were spread through sexual contact. If nothing else, they had heard of AIDS: 88.8 of women respondents stated that they knew it was a sexually transmitted disease, while 39.2 per cent were aware that it could be spread by means of an injection, 36 per cent knew that blood transfusion was a possible means of transmission, and 17.4 per cent knew that not using a condom was a risk factor.

Violence against women

Algeria has continued its efforts aimed at eradicating the phenomenon of violence (especially domestic violence, physical or psychological) that continues to affect women in some forms,

despite the severe penalties for which provision is made in the Constitution and the Criminal Code.

An obligation to protect women from violence is enshrined in the Constitution, most notably in articles 32, 33 and 34, and in the Criminal Code, which specifies in articles 264 to 267 that deliberate acts of violence shall be punishable by appropriate penalties.

The Code also includes provisions dealing expressly with persons who commit acts of violence toward minors (articles 269-272). Such persons are liable to terms of imprisonment ranging from three years to 20 years, depending on the circumstances.

Moreover, under the Family Code, a married woman has the right to petition for divorce on the grounds of physical harm (article 53).

In an effort to protect women from new forms of violence and excesses arising from changing relationships within society, new offences have been identified in the framework of the review of the Criminal Code. Sexual harassment is now a criminal offence, and on 29 December 2003 a call and assistance centre was established. The centre is administered by the Working Women's National Support Committee, which is an arm of the General Algerian Workers' Union (UGTA) and was established on 17 March 2002.

In addition, centres have been established expressly for battered girls and women, or girls and women who are at risk of violence. The main functions of these centres are as follows:

- Temporarily to receive and shelter these women and girls, and to provide them with medical, social and psychological care;
- To diagnose and assess nervous disorders in girls and women who have been received at a centre in order to provide them with individualized care;
- To ensure that girls or women who come to a centre are provided with training and/or placed as apprentices;
- To undertake, in cooperation with concerned institutions and organizations, activities aimed at helping these girls and women rejoin their families and society, and providing them with legal assistance;
- Medical monitoring of girls and women received at centres by staff members of the health care structures within the Ministry of Health.

Battered women receive medical and legal care, including a meeting with a specialist in psychology and an examination by a gynaecologist in cases of sexual violence, as well as supplementary examinations (testing for pregnancy and AIDS).

The judicial and security services also intervene effectively to punish perpetrators and assist their victims without discrimination. In addition, there are various associations that are very active in

providing battered women with support and guidance and opening shelters for them. There are some 23 national associations that are concerned with women and eight that are concerned with human rights, as well as dozens that are active in various other fields.

The Government has taken various encouraging measures, including the recruitment of women security personnel in an effort to support and develop neighbourhood activities and provide women who are in difficult situations or at risk of violence with a sympathetic ear. Every police division has a contingent of women officers.

The Ministry for Family Affairs and the Status of Women, in coordination with two United Nations agencies, UNIFEM and UNFPA, is preparing a project aimed at contributing to the establishment of mechanisms and procedures for the care of women and children who have suffered from violence, publicizing the issue, working to amend legislation and change mentalities, and strengthening national facilities, technical or institutional, in that connection through close coordination among State agencies, civil society institutions and relevant United Nations bodies.

Women and the economy

In quantitative terms, the numbers of working women in Algeria have grown considerably, although in percentage terms they still account for a relatively small part of the total workforce. A gender-disaggregated summary of the Algerian working population is shown in the table below.

Category	2000	2001	Change
Total workforce	6 178 992	6 228 772	+ 49 780
Men	5 381 909	5 345 223	- 86 366
Women	797 083	883 549	+ 86 466
% women	12.89	14.18	+ 1.28

In 2003, women accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the workforce, and in addition, there are over 600 000 women who work in the informal sector. Available statistics indicate that 56 per cent of all working women are under 40 years of age. Of these, half are between 24 and 29, while 21 per cent are between 20 and 24 years of age.

It is noteworthy that women account for a large proportion of total employment in several sectors and professions. Specifically, 49.62 per cent of all educational posts were filled by women in 2000, while 54 per cent of the country's medical specialists, 73 per cent of its pharmacists and 30.75 per cent of its judges were women.

Both men and women have been able to take advantage of regional and sectoral youth employment programmes and economic stimulation programmes initiated in 2001, as well as a national agricultural development plan that was launched in 2000.

Women have shown themselves to be very interested in applying for small loans with which to start their own businesses. Demand from women has grown year by year, accounting for 19.99 per cent of all applications in 1999, 26.59 per cent in 2001 and 33.90 per cent in 2002.

As regards the rural workforce, we find that 15 per cent of rural Algerian women are either farm operators (59 721) or permanently or occasionally employed on farms (293 527), in addition to 41 793 housewives who engage in some income-generating activity at home (farming statistics from 2002, the latest available).

The economic role of women has been enhanced as a result of a strategy developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Agriculture Development Programme and the National Rural Development Fund. Measures taken in the context of these three initiatives have included:

- Establishment of a gender-disaggregated statistical database incorporating the term “gender” as a discriminator;
- Workshops for brainstorming and exchanges of experience on the issue of the integration of rural women into rural development and agriculture;
- Preparation of a national training and skills development programme aimed expressly at providing women with support and guidance;
- Socio-economic research and studies on rural women, and, in a related initiative, training of women specialists in the fields of gender, communication, agricultural extension and reproductive health;
- Support for and enhancement of a socio-cultural environment conducive to gender-based local development through establishment of the base structures essential for group activities, action to promote literacy, and a systematic information effort targeting families in the context of sensitization campaigns and meetings with the local offices of the various ministries, in order to address the actual situation of rural women (with respect to health, education, measures to foster home-based work, and State financial support for farm women);
- Action to ensure that women are able to take full advantage of rural development programmes and projects by integrating them into the set-aside land improvement programme, the flatlands development programme, the agricultural regime conversion programme, agricultural programmes and youth employment support programmes. Rural works projects have included a number of activities administered by the Forestry Service which are funded by World Bank loans granted expressly for the benefit of rural women.

Thanks in part to this project, 1 386 women now have income from various activities. Under the second phase, the project will be extended to a number of *wilayas* and will benefit approximately 6 200 women.

On 8 March 2004, the Ministry for Family Affairs and the Status of Women and the Ministry for Rural Development signed a cooperation agreement aimed explicitly at promoting employment among rural women and integrating them economically.

Turning to the legal aspect, Algeria’s labour legislation (in accordance with the Constitution) prohibits any form of gender-based discrimination. The right to work is guaranteed for all, as is the equality of all workers, regardless of gender or age. The law states clearly that “workers shall be entitled to the same compensation and privileges for the same work, given equal levels of qualification and performance.”

Algerian labour law includes measures expressly designed to protect women, notably provisions relating to maternity and women's role in the family unit. Among these measures are:

- Equality between men and women in the matter of employment and the enjoyment of the basic rights pertaining thereto, such as pay, social security, pensions and health insurance;
- Women may not be required to work at night or on an official holiday;
- Women may not be assigned to work that is dangerous, unsanitary or likely to be prejudicial to their health;
- Leave from work during the final stages of pregnancy;
- Leave at reduced pay to enable a woman to accompany her husband to a new place of work, or to care for a child under the age of 5 or a child with a disability such that he or she requires constant care;
- Nursing breaks.

Women in power and decision-making

Participation by women in decision-making is safeguarded under the Constitution and the law. In practice, it appears that few women do actually hold decision-making posts, but an upward trend has recently appeared, as is apparent from data relating to appointments of women to posts in State agencies.

Women holding decision-making posts in the public administration:

Women now make a substantial political contribution. This marks an important gain in the current context of democratic openness and multiple parties. The most recent Government (2004) includes four women members, and there are four women ambassadors. A woman Prefect was appointed for the first time in 1999. Since that time, two women have been appointed as supernumerary Prefects, one as a delegate Prefect, three as Secretaries of *wilayas*, four as Inspectors-General of *wilayas* and seven as department heads.

As regards legislative elections, the changing situation with respect to women's participation is shown in the table below.

	1997		2002	
	Women candidates	Women elected	Women candidates	Women elected
Communal People's Assemblies	1 281	75	3 679	147
Wilaya People's Assemblies	905	62	2 684	113
National People's Assembly	322	11	694	27
Council of the Nation	-	-	-	3

Women have successfully assumed the posts of President of the Council of State (1) and President of the Judicial Council (2), and there are no fewer than 34 women presiding magistrates out of a total of 56; women have thus come to account for a 60 per cent majority of the members of this important professional body. There is one woman public prosecutor, and 846 women magistrates, out of a total of 2 751; women thus account for 30.75 per cent, or nearly one

third, of all magistrates. Furthermore, there are 137 women examining magistrates out of a total of 404, or just over one third (33.9 per cent).

A woman now holds the post of Vice-Governor of the Bank of Algeria, and the Bank's Currency and Credit Council, the country's highest monetary authority, has one woman member. In the area of national security, Algeria has a total of 6 973 women security officers, including a woman police brigadier, the highest rank in that service.

Human rights of women

Gender equality and the protection of women from any form of discrimination are enshrined in articles 28 and 30 of the Constitution, under which Algerian women enjoy full rights as citizens. Furthermore, Algeria's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women shows its determination to safeguard women's human rights.

By way of giving concrete expression to these principles, a presidential executive order has been issued acceding to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by its resolution 640 (VII), dated 20 December 1952. At the present time, moreover, Algeria's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination are being reviewed with a view to their possible withdrawal. Algeria submitted its first report on its implementation of the Convention in January 1999, and will submit its second in January 2005.

In the area of domestic legislation, a national committee has been established for the purpose of reviewing the Family Code with a view to the incorporation of adjustments that are becoming necessary as a result of economic, social and even cultural changes.

The main provisions that appear to be in need of amendment are those dealing with marriage, support, women's work, reconciliation, dissolution of the marriage tie and its effects, polygamy, residence after divorce, assets of the spouses acquired before and after marriage, filiation and how it is confirmed, and guardianship within marriage.

The Algerian Women's Association, with the support and encouragement of the State, is working to enhance awareness with a view to changing people's mentalities as quickly as possible. The authorities, for their part, are enacting legislation aimed at moving society forward.

Women and the media

The openness and diversity that have characterized the media in Algeria since the 1990s have helped disseminate information and research on the status of women. Moreover, women have been encouraged to enter the media field, including both the print media (Algeria now boasts more than 50 newspapers) and the audio-visual media. Women now account for over 50 per cent of the personnel employed in the print media, including both State-owned and private publications, while according to statistics from 2002, the national broadcasting network employs 85 women journalists out of a total of 179, 12 senior managers out of a total of 43, and four producers out of a total of 17.

In television, there are 148 women journalists out of a total of 219, i.e. women account for 57.67 per cent of all journalists, besides women who are in charge of programmes or segments.

Programming aimed at the family in general and women in particular has changed both quantitatively and qualitatively, and this has facilitated women's participation in the media, especially in view of the fact that a large percentage of the students enrolled at the Institute for Advanced Communication and Media Studies are now women.

The girl child

In accordance with the principle of equality and equal opportunity, the Algerian girl child enjoys her rights without discrimination. Substantial progress has been made with respect to school attendance by girls at the primary level: 96 per cent of all girls now attend school, and they have achieved higher pass rates than boys. At some levels, there are more girl pupils than boys. Furthermore, girls are entitled to complete health care both in the school environment and in the context of the public health system.

Algerian legislators have taken a number of measures designed to protect human rights and freedom in general and the human rights and freedoms of women and girl children in particular, in line with international criteria applied in that area.

Under the Criminal Code, trafficking in women and girls (articles 342-349), immoral conduct (articles 333-395) and rape (article 336) are criminal offences punishable by terms of imprisonment ranging from five to 10 years, and the penalty is doubled (up to 20 years' imprisonment) where the victim is a minor. The penalty is also more severe where the offender is a relative of the victim or a person having parental authority over the victim (article 337).

We may note at this point that Algeria has ratified many international instruments aimed at abolishing trafficking in women and children, slavery, forced labour, involuntary servitude and the like. Perhaps the most important of these instruments are:

- ILO Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182), supplemented by recommendation 190, under Presidential executive order 387/2000 dated 28 November 2000;
- Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949);
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

While the Criminal Code contains no provisions dealing with pornography as such, Algeria has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thereby committing itself, like other States Parties, to protecting children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and to taking all appropriate measures to prevent the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials (article 34 of the Convention).

Furthermore, the Criminal Code contains a provision prohibiting actions and activities relating to the use of information and communication technology or the Internet for pornographic purposes (article 333 (b)).

Indeed, combating the use, exploitation or presentation of children for pornographic purposes, combating all forms of trafficking in children, especially girls, and monitoring all media that encourage pornographic activities in which women or girl children are used together constitute one of the priorities of the National Child Protection Office, which is directed by a woman with the rank of Governor.

Battered children are cared for at special centres, including:

- Centres for children who have been orphaned as a result of terrorism;
- Open custody education facilities.

Obstacles and challenges encountered in the implementation of the critical areas of concern may be summed up as follows:

- Inadequate information and awareness, especially in the area of early disease detection;
- Lack of interest on the part of women in political party work, despite their extensive involvement with associations;
- The stereotyped education that boys receive in various environments;
- The stereotyped images that continued to be presented through the media;
- Difficulty in reconciling the competing demands of a career and family responsibilities.

PART THREE: Institutional development

Concrete evidence of Algeria's concern with women's issues is to be found in the establishment of the Ministry for Family Affairs and the Advancement of Women, which reports to the head of Government.

At the present stage, the Ministry's main function is to promote the evolution and remedial development of the various Government departments and agencies within a National Plan for Advancement of the Family and Women, within a context of integration and coordination with the several branches of Government and a number of partners, notably civil society institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In the area of women's issues, the Ministry's mandate comprises the following tasks:

1. To develop women's capacities and foster their participation in various areas of political life (through accession to decision-making posts) and of economic, social and cultural life;
2. To promote women's issues, notably by means of:
 - Action to enhance women's awareness of their rights;
 - Action to enlarge women's participation in economic, social and political activities;
 - Action to combat violence and discrimination against women and all forms of exclusion and exploitation;
 - Action to improve women's health conditions in the work environment;
 - Encouragement for literacy programmes targeting women, especially in rural areas, and encouragement for the work of associations that are active in that field;
 - Preparation of development projects involving the agriculture and traditional craft sectors in rural areas;
 - Diversification of specialized training and education programmes for disabled girls and women.
3. Promoting the gender issue.

At the local level, a number of social action bureaux have been set up in every *wilaya* in Algeria for the purpose of enhancing the situation of families in general and of women in particular. Algeria is a State that is committed to gender equality, and to that end has established a new institutional mechanism to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and other initiatives.

The various ministries coordinate their efforts in pursuit of more effective integration of their respective programmes aimed at the protection and advancement of women, especially in the areas of health, education, rural development, employment and solidarity.

As regards data and statistics, Algeria has created a national database that serves as a monitoring system or observatory on the status of women. The Ministry of Health has instituted a systematic data-gathering operation on violence against women, and uses the resulting information in its

publications and research. The same Ministry compiles statistics on maternal mortality in order to keep its data up to date.

Algeria cooperates with the ILO's Regional Office for the Arab States in implementing a project aimed at developing national gender-disaggregated statistics programmes. In February 2004, a technical committee was established to develop an integrated information system and database to track the socio-economic situation of women and children, with members drawn from the relevant branches of the Ministry for Family Affairs and the Status of Women, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and National Solidarity, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, besides representatives from the Islamic Scout Movement, the National Statistics Office, UNICEF and the Institute for Information and Documentation on Children and Women.

This "INFOCHILD" programme will afford a means of gathering all currently available statistical information, sector by sector, and keeping it up to date from the results of field studies and research, analysis of the data and development of indicators, thereby providing government departments and agencies, scientific investigators and others with accurate data on issues of relevance for women and children which they can use scientifically to help the wheels of socio-economic life turn more smoothly.

This is part of a general trend aimed at adapting and developing the national system of information and statistics, both legally and institutionally, and establishing a permanent data-gathering system covering all government departments and agencies in the interests of maximum reliability.

The various stakeholders will have different roles to play. Parliament, for example, will debate and enrich draft legislation submitted to it, ultimately producing proposals for provisions that will be beneficial to women in the Labour and Social Insurance Code, the Criminal Code, the Apprenticeship Act, the Health Act and so on.

NGOs will also have a role to play as essential partners in the task of promoting women's rights and working for gender equality. Their action will focus primarily on:

- Contributing to the formulation of awareness programmes and activities;
- Contributing to the debate over implementation of international recommendations in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Copenhagen Declaration;
- Reaching out to victims of violence and caring for them with a view to rehabilitating them, facilitating their reintegration and developing their skills;
- Making the issues of citizenship and gender equality part of the debate over democracy that is currently taking place in Algeria;
- Calling for the repeal or amendment of the Family Code;
- Implementing State-funded projects in the areas of microcredit, literacy, training and the like.

NGO's working in the area of women's issues have contributed to the preparation of a document entitled "Elements of a strategy for the integration of the gender issue into governmental policies and programmes

United Nations agencies and other bodies are participating in various activities as well. These include UNFPA, which over the period 2000-2003 implemented a project aimed at the integration of a gender perspective in the field of reproductive health. The project, which was funded by the Italian Government, significantly reinforced national efforts to introduce a gender perspective in the field of reproductive health, combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women, and enhance the status of women in society. Another organization that has been very active is UNIFEM, which has implemented two major projects in Algeria:

- (a) A project on trauma management for women who have been emotionally damaged by violence, run by UNIFEM in cooperation with NGOs such as Au secours and Femmes en danger. The project includes a study and violence and the preparation of a guide containing advice on psychological problems and one on sexual violence.

In this context, the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the National Public Health Institute, has announced that it intends to distribute the above-mentioned guide to hospital workers as part of a course of training in caring for battered women. In addition, there is a study currently under way, now nearing completion, on building national capacities for responding adequately to the economic needs of women victims of domestic violence. The aim of the study is to identify economic activities that will enable women at the shelter run by the Femmes en danger organization to earn cash income.

- (b) A research project on internalization of the principles of equality among the population, which was conducted by the Algerian branch of the Collectif 95 Maghreb Égalité organization. The project has yielded a substantial quantity of data on social views of the situation of women with respect to work, education, political participation, domestic violence, divorce and civil status.

A third United Nations organization is UNDP, which in July 2002 joined forces with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct a study on a strategy aimed at supporting the socio-economic and political position of women in the development process. The study included, in particular, strategic factors for integrating a gender perspective in public policies and programmes.

PART FOUR: Main challenges and action to address them

There are a number of actions and initiatives that the Government intends to take in order to implement in full the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing + 5) beyond 2005. Among the most important of these actions and initiatives are the following:

- Completing the review of the Family Code as soon as possible, and also reviewing other relevant legislation;
- Developing more effective tools for investigating, enhancing and monitoring the family environment and women's issues by creating data banks and supplying them with data from relevant research;
- Advancing women's issues on a broad front by means of communication activities, including the use of printed information and publications;
- Implementation of international instruments and enactment of relevant legislation;
- Enhancement of participation and partnership in matters relating to the advancement of families, not only among various branches of the Government and at the level of central and local State bodies, but also at the level of community organizations. This will yield more satisfactory returns in terms of the outlays involved, and will also strengthen participation within society itself;
- Enhancement of the social situation of women, both as regards employment and the assumption of responsibilities in general, and as regards their participation in economic activity;
- More adequate health care for women and children, combined with further action to heighten awareness in the family environment and among women in the matter of preventive health and encouragement for family planning, as well as literacy training;
- Directing and enhancing housewives' contribution to the creation of wealth and increased family income through microcredit facilities and other support mechanisms;
- Developing assistance and solidarity activities directed at women and children living in difficult situations;
- Preparation of a national new ICT development strategy, with updating and adaptation of training programmes to accommodate these new technologies, and reinforcement of the network of academies specializing in that field;
- Extending the drinking water distribution system to give more people the permanent benefit of clean water;
- Mobilizing the forces of solidarity to mitigate social exclusion and poverty, and working to reduce the incidence of extreme poverty to 2.85 per cent and the percentage of the population living on \$1 a day to 1 per cent by 2015 through the action of the Agency for Social Development and programmes designed to reinforce the social security network;
- Reducing the maternal mortality rate from 117 for every 100 000 live births to 57 per 100 000 by 2015, and increasing the percentage of deliveries in a health care facility to 99 per cent;
- Controlling the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS through a national programme to combat these diseases, along with the development of a malaria monitoring strategy;

- Continuing vaccination campaigns and continuing efforts to sensitize people, especially in the school environment;
- Completing the work of reforming the education system, in particular by supporting teacher training and education reform (programme review) and restructuring of the system, combined with the development of a network of basic education and skills development establishments based on needs; continuation of the drive to open cafeterias in day schools, residential schools and semi-residential schools, along with school transport services for the benefit of pupils, especially girls, in rural areas.

The time frame for attainment of these objectives is laid out in the five-year plan covering the period 2004-2009.