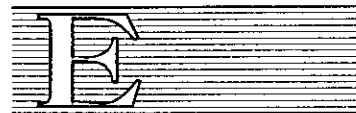




UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.: LIMITED

ECA/ACW/SRMN/98/7

October 1998

ENGLISH

Original: FRENCH

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Subregional Follow-up Meeting on the implementation  
Of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action – North Africa

Rabat, Morocco  
27-30 October 1998

***WOMEN IN NORTH AFRICA IN THE POST-BEIJING PHASE  
REALITIES AND PROSPECTS***

This study is based, firstly, on field studies on the status of women in North Africa and secondly, on interpretations of the results of a survey carried out through a collective questionnaire compiled by the African Centre for Women among various governmental and non-governmental entities involved in women's advancement in the subregion.

The study, and the suggestions made, also drew heavily on the meetings and work of the focus groups.

We are very grateful to the actors on the ground and to the researchers who actively participated in this undertaking and facilitated the preparation of the study.

September 1998

## INTRODUCTION

1. In the context of globalization and the attendant imperatives, North Africa faces a number of pressing challenges, including:

- (a) Population growth, which is still a major source of pressures in the labour market;
- (b) Growing demands in education, training, health, social welfare and human settlements; and
- (c) Pressures on the environment.

2. North African countries have made considerable progress in the economic sphere, but like other countries in various parts of the world, face the developmental problem of persistent disparities among different segments of the population.

3. Throughout North Africa, women and children constitute a significant element in the populations of the various countries and may face exclusion in the social and economic spheres.

4. Through the ages, women are the one section of society that has been most affected by marginalization and exclusion.

5. Now, the development agenda which prevailed in the 1970s, and which on the whole, was characterized by an inability on the part of States to recognize the enormous potential of women as agents of development and social progress, has given way to a new awareness of the role of women, and so there is room to hope that inequality will soon be a thing of the past.

6. Consequently, various gender-focused policies in North Africa are gathering momentum.

7. The current orientation, in the contexts of over-all educational development as well as capacity-building in the essential professional and technical spheres, is gender-focused.

8. Accordingly, planners and decision-makers now consider health, education and women's employment as objectives and long-term investments that tie in with the national interest; hence the remarkable progress made in these areas.

9. None the less, women are still hampered by glaring social disadvantages in the economic and political spheres, and some of the indicators of the status of women still lag behind expectations.

10. Initiatives in the area of women's advancement must be seen against the background of the various development plans. Thus, for instance, the objective of poverty alleviation is pursued through the development of income-generating occupations for women and the introduction of assistance programmes for disadvantaged social groups, which include women. In the same vein, employment creation entails the integration of women into the socio-economic milieu.

11. Women's advancement also entails enhanced social security, the consolidation of women's fundamental rights and women's empowerment at all levels.

12. The plan of action that emerged from the fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, identifies twelve (12) critical areas which have become priority areas for action by the international community towards gender equality.

13. Three main principles underpinned the deliberations of the conference participants: recognition of the essential role of women in development; the need to empower women; and the need for gender mainstreaming in all public policies and programmes.

14. The programmes of action recognize the need for strategic steps in poverty alleviation, education, training and health.

15. How far have we gone in North Africa?

# I. Key data relating to the status of women in North Africa

## (a) Population

16. North Africans belong to diverse ethnicities, cultures and civilizations; the total population of the subregion was about 160 million in 1996, i.e.:

Algeria	28.5 million
Egypt	59.3 million
Libya	5.6 million
Mauritania	2.3 million
Morocco	27.1 million
Sudan	27.3 million
Tunisia	9.1 million

17. Population poses a major problem for North African countries. The implications particularly as regards women – in the economic, cultural and social spheres, are adverse, and worsen social inequalities.

(a) Population growth rates have slowed down, as the current figures show:

### Population growth rates

Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	Sudan	Tunisia
2.4	2.3	2.6	2.4	1.8	2.4	1.6

(b) On the basis of fertility indicators for 1995, and the 1997 UNFPA report on the world population.\*

### Fertility indicators

Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	Sudan	Tunisia
3.81	3.40	5.92	5.03	3.10	4.61	2.92

18. Family planning programmes in all the other countries preceded those in Algeria, Mauritania and Sudan. {Algeria in 1978; even more recently in Mauritania and Sudan}. This explains the figures.

(i) Life expectancy has fluctuated considerably. The figures given below are based on UNFPA reports.

### Life Expectancy

Algeria		Egypt		Libya		Mauritania		Morocco		Sudan		Tunisia	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
67.5	70.3	64.7	67.3	63.9	67.5	51.9	55.1	64.8	68.5	53.6	56.4	68.4	70.7

(ii) Maternal mortality rates are still fairly high, as the following figures show:

Algeria:	160 per 100,000 live births
Egypt :	170 per 100,000 live births
Libya:	220 per 100,000 live births
Mauritania:	930 per 100,000 live births
Morocco:	660 per 100,000 live births
Sudan:	660 per 100,000 live births
Tunisia:	170 per 100,000 live births

\* State of World's Population, UNFPA.

19. This is attributable to limitations in the family planning programmes in place, particularly owing to inadequate integration and harmonization with public health policy in so far as it relates to women, and a shortage of preventive medicine based on information, public awareness, and health care.

20. As appears in the figures given below, for children under five years of age, child mortality rates are still high.

Child mortality

Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	Sudan	Tunisia
41%	76%	75%	158%	75%	109%	50%

Source: World Bank 1997 Africa Development Indicators

(b) Education and culture

21. Even though North African countries have different political systems, they have made significant progress in education and culture.

School enrolment: percentage of girls  
(1980-1990)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Mauritania	Sudan	Tunisia
1980	54	54	63	39	16	28	53
1990	72	81	87	41	27	30	74

Source: ACW,ECA.

22. The education of girls has developed appreciably throughout the subregion. The following table shows literacy levels among the adult female population (1994, percentages):

Literacy levels by gender  
(1994, percentages)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	Sudan	Tunisia
Women	43.5	36.7	57.2	25.6	27.7	31.3	50.4
Men	71.8	62.6	88.9	48.4	54.4	56.4	77.9
Total	59.4	51.0	75	35.9	42.1	45	65.2

Source: ACW/ECA

23. The levels of school enrolment in the different countries vary significantly. (For instance, 57.2 per cent of Libyan women are literate, whereas the figure for Mauritania is only 25.6 per cent. Illiteracy levels are high on the whole, despite the efforts made in the area of education.

Illiterate population, 15+age bracket (percentage)

1985	65	71	60	71	84	90	53
1995	26/51	36/61	12/37	43/69	50/74	42/65	21/45

Source: WB

24. Glaring gender disparities persist, even though women in all seven countries have made considerable progress in the area of education. They do not in fact enjoy the rights enacted under national legislation relating to their right to education. Naturally, the disadvantaged status in the area of education is reflected in the social milieu, in terms of the participation of women in the economic and political sphere.

(c) North African women: economic activities

	Algeria		Egypt		Libya		Morocco		Mauritani		Sudan		Tunisia	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Economically active adult women (over 15)	8	75	22	71	9	77	21	81	25	87	26	86	26	79
% economically active women (1994)	10		23		10		21		23		23		24	
Agriculture (1994)	20		8		32		27		82		84		47	
Industry (1994)	21		20		15		46		4		5		44	
Services (1994)	69		71		54		28		14		11		10	
Entrepreneurs (1990)	2		20		-		11		23		-		17	

Source: ESCWA/CAWTAR

25. The level of participation of North African women indicates a fair degree of integration in the labour market. Differences occur, however, in relation to their presence in various sectors. For instance, Sudanese women are particularly active in agriculture (84 per cent), Moroccan women in industry (46 per cent), Egyptian women and Algerian women in the service sector – 71 per cent and 69 per cent respectively. However, Mauritanian women show the highest degree of participation as self-employed entrepreneurs and independent workers. **It may be surmised that these factors are governed by the operative economic policies in the various countries as well as the ability of women to participate in the economy after overcoming a number of obstacles such as those relating to educational and health opportunities as well as labour laws and social advancement. On the whole, however, the**

visible role of women in the economic sphere is still modest in the light of their actual contribution to the economy. The fact that women are invisible actors greatly influences perceptions of their actual participation in the social milieu and is the factor that most affects their status.

26. One unsettling possibility is that a global economic downturn and increasing pressure on resources may constrain governments to relegate the advancement of women to a non-priority category. None the less, this is an area that deserves more investment, to formulate strategies for generating employment and self-employment opportunities in North Africa.

(d) Legal instruments

(i) National level

27. In the wake of the fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), it is clear that the issue of equal rights is predicated upon the political will of the governments of North African countries. North African countries have endeavoured in various ways in the legal domain, to improve the status of women with the objective of actualizing their integration into modern life and democratic ideals while remaining faithful to Arab and Islamic culture. Although, however, North African women have equal rights with men in public law, they are unable, in reality, to enjoy those rights because they are hampered by legal incapacity in the domain of private law. This situation should be addressed with a sense of urgency because it is a formidable obstacle to women's access to positions of responsibility and influence.

(ii) International level

28. North African States have ratified various international instruments relating to the protection of human rights, as shown in the table below:

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Mauritania	Sudan	Tunisia
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	-	-	+	-	+	-	+
Convention on the Nationality of Married Women	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
Global Agenda for Women's Participation in Sustainable and Equitable Development (Pro-Act 21-chp24)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Convention on the Rights of the Child	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Source: ACW/ECA

29. Although North African States have acceded to and ratified various treaties and declarations dealing with human rights issues, they have at the same time formulated interpretative reservations *vis à vis* some of the international norms regarding the right of women in private law. Indeed, they have rejected some of those norms on the basis of other instruments emanating from regional organs.

Among North African States, Tunisia has acceded to the most international conventions (six out of seven), because its national laws are more progressive in this area. In that connection, there is a personal law code (code de statut personnel), promulgated in 1956, which grants Tunisian women a broad range of rights (including the abolition of polygamy, institution of divorce through the judicial organs, and provisions stipulating the consent of a girl as a precondition to marriage).

(e) Women in public life

30. The right to participate in what is sometimes described as public life features prominently among the considerations underpinning the issue of women's advancement in North Africa; it involves issues such as de facto equality before the law, the right to practice a profession and to pursue advanced education, the right to run for public office, and so on. Most of these issues have been satisfactorily addressed, but it is still clear that women are almost totally absent in the political sphere and decision-making organs.

#### Women in decision-making organs (%)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Mauritania	Sudan	Tunis
Parliament 1997	6.6	2.0	-	6	1.3	5.3	6.7
Government 1994	0	3.2	-	0	4	0	3
Ministerial level	3	1.7	-	2	5	1.2	7
Local authorities 1990-1994							
% women in mayoral positions (cities and municipalities)	-	1.0	-	0	1	4	14
Public administration 1992							
Senior professionals	6	16.0	-	26	8	2.4	7
Middle-level professionals	28	28.7	-	31	21	28.8	18

Source: ECA/ACW

31. What emerges from an examination of the governmental bodies, and membership of legislative organs, now and in the past, is the feeble presence of women. In this context, the pace of progress in North Africa is modest.

## CONCLUSION

32. The various socio-economic indicators in the North African context suggest that progress is being made in all the countries of the subregion to improve the status of women, though the scope varies from one country to another. None the less, there are a number of factors that hamper this process:

(a) Economic reform measures, and in particular, the structural adjustment programmes, have adversely affected women. Primarily, these reforms have caused industries such as textiles, confectionery, food processing and electronics, which most concern women, to diminish. Restructuring in these sectors has resulted in conversion of labour, and retrenchment, which have most affected women;

(b) Restructuring of the public sector, and particularly, the administrative institutions, which accompanied economic reform, involved severe retrenchment and dwindling of employment opportunities. Here too, women have been hardest hit because administrative functions in health and education, which mostly employed women, are now restricted;

(c) The most disadvantaged social groups, including women, have been the most adversely affected by the social consequences of economic reform. This has made women preponderant in the poorest districts, with so many of them doing casual labour in the rural areas that the feminization of poverty can be considered as an issue in North Africa.



33. Consequently, those constraints – which though societal in scope, are linked to the situation of women in the socio-economic milieu and are concomitant with the structural indicators already mentioned – underpin the case for policy initiatives designed to redress the situation (i.e. special programmes focused on women) as well as preventive measures (in areas such as education, basic health care and vocational training) in the context of women's advancement.

## II. SYNTHESIS OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE VIABILITY OF THE NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

### A. National Plan for the Implementation of the Global and African Platforms for Action (NPA)

34. Apart from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, all the countries of the subregion have national plans of action in place.

35. In Tunisia, the NPA has been adopted, and specific programmes are now being put in place; two such programmes are the support mechanism designed to strengthen income-generating activities for women, and the plan of action for rural women.

36. Egypt's NPA consists of the programmes put in place by the Commission on children and the family.

37. A draft NPA has been adopted by the government in Sudan. A national seminar is being organized to discuss the draft NPA. A three-member committee of experts is charged with the task of formulating recommendations within the framework of the national development strategy for the period 1992-2001.

38. Although no NPA has been drawn up in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as yet, the Secretariat of the People's Committee on Women's Affairs has a programme of work derived from the national programme of the People's General Committee.

39. In Algeria, the Office of the Ministry of State for National Solidarity and the Family organized workshops in 1996 (16-18 April) on the advancement and welfare of Algerian women as part of the implementation process in respect of the recommendations made at the Beijing Conference. Owing to the importance of the recommendations, a Standing Committee was established to oversee their implementation and follow-up.

40. In Mauritania, annual action plans, established on the basis of the Dakar recommendations, make up the strategies pursued by the Council of Ministers (1995-1998). These are also the priority areas of the annual plans of action.

41. The formulation of Morocco's NPA is under way. The key aspects of this plan of action were discussed in June 1998, following which a broad-based follow-up committee working under the auspices of the SEPSFE drew up a set of priority areas.

42. The following organs are, respectively, charged with the preparation of national plans of action:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Tunisia                | the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Family                          |
| • Egypt                  | the Commission on the Child and the Family                              |
| • Sudan                  | the Ministry for Social Planning  |
| • Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | the Secretariat responsible for women's affairs                         |
| • Mauritania             | the Commission on Women's Social Advancement                            |
| • Morocco                | the Commission responsible for social welfare, the family and the child |

### B. Priority Areas at the National Level

43. In connection with the 11 areas of concern of the African Platform for Action, there is a considerable degree of similarity in the priority areas identified in the various countries, as indicated below:

<u>Tunisia</u>	Strengthening women's participation in various sectors: economic empowerment Stimulating efforts to combat illiteracy, focusing on urban as well as rural women
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Alleviating poverty, within the framework of a national programme of work to integrate the most disadvantaged districts, which, in Tunisia are known as zones d'ombre dans le tissu socio-economique du pays (grey areas in the national socio-economic fabric).

<u>Egypt</u>	Combating poverty Combating illiteracy Promoting women's health
<u>Sudan</u>	Combating poverty and strengthening national solidarity Combating illiteracy Promoting education of the girl child
<u>Libya</u>	Encouraging women's participation in the People's Bureaux Strengthening the education of girls Developing public health
<u>Morocco</u>	Developing education Developing reproductive health Integrating women into the development process: employment, training and poverty alleviation
<u>Mauritania</u>	Combating poverty Developing community life Promoting welfare at the level of the family
<u>Algeria</u>	Developing education Developing public health Creating more employment opportunities Promoting women's legal rights Encouraging research and forward-looking studies

44. On the basis of those priority areas, the cross-cutting issues are the following:

- Combating illiteracy
- Promoting public health programmes
- Promoting women's economic empowerment

45. Consequently, the priority areas in the context of women's advancement in North Africa relate mainly to the social sphere – in particular, illiteracy and public health – and to the development of small-scale economic activities, particularly in the context of poverty alleviation and employment creation. The main targets are the disadvantaged social groups at the level of the community or geographical area.

#### C. National Plans of Action: the Formulation Process

46. The priority areas are derived, in the main, from the development planning process at the national level, certain features of which are specific to each country. In Tunisia, for instance, the priority areas were identified through two separate mechanisms, viz a consultation process at the local, provincial and national levels to establish an economic and social development plan (the eighth and ninth development plans, respectively), with a special committee responsible for gender issues, and, secondly, the post-Beijing national plan of action, where the consultation process was spearheaded by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Family, and the Commission responsible for women's affairs and the family; the process involved provincial and national seminars as well as case studies.

47. The principal agency in Sudan was the technical committee of experts which drew up a draft national plan of action, to be considered by the Ministry concerned and submitted, after approval, to the consultation process at the level of a national seminar.

48. In Egypt, the consultation process was effected within the framework of the National Committee responsible for gender issues, which falls under the Commission on the Child and the family.

49. The elements of Libya's plan of action and the pertinent priority areas are elaborated by the People's Bureaux within the framework of the over-all development planning process.

50. In the case of Algeria, the priority areas were elaborated on the basis of a specialized study on the status of women, in the context of "enhancing their contribution for future generations".

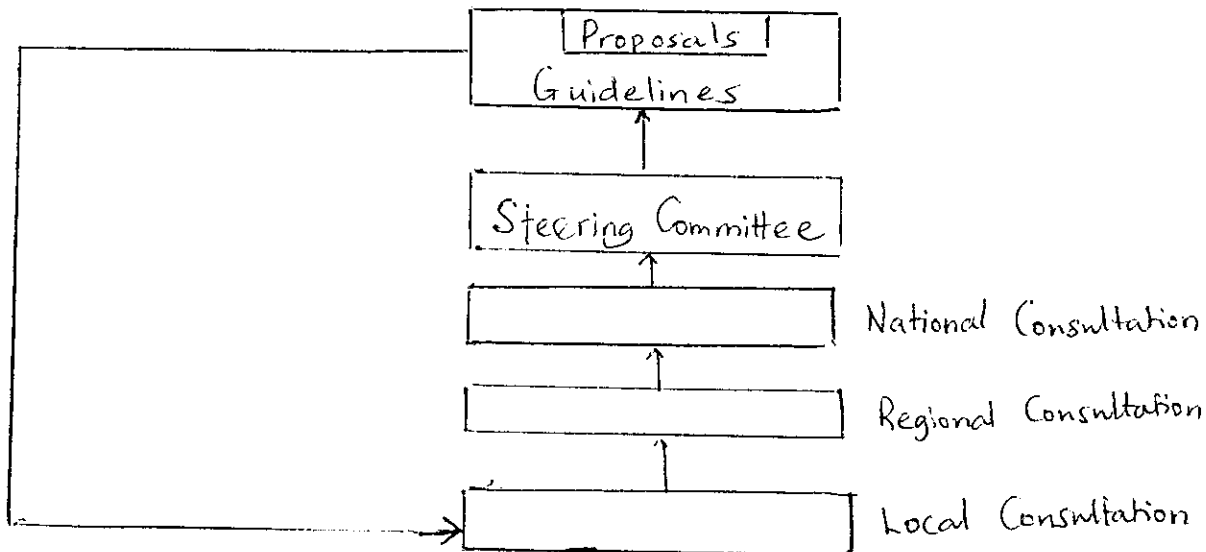
51. The priority areas in respect of Morocco's NPA were identified during a meeting of the national committee responsible for gender issues at a one-day seminar (held in June 1998), which was organized for that purpose. This is a broad-based committee comprising governmental agencies, NGOs, private-sector entities and experts, among others.

52. In the case of Mauritania, the priority areas were identified on the basis of thematic studies carried out for that purpose, and also on the basis of an overarching study for the interministerial technical committee.

53. Three distinct approaches emerge from the consultation processes:

- (i) Participation as well as consultation, in the case of Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritania and Algeria, are integrated within the framework of a national council (conseil supérieur);
- (ii) The main agency in the case of Sudan is the technical process and the draft NPA elaborated by the committee of experts, before the draft is passed on to the consultation mechanisms;
- (iii) The principal consultation mechanisms in Libya are the national political structures (the people's committees) established for the purpose of national development planning;
- (iv) In Morocco, the National Commission on Women has been constituted and is in the process of integration. It is a broad-based organ, consisting of representatives of governmental agencies and NGOs, among others, and is designed to embark on a consultation process among all the parties concerned.

54. The consultation process is structured vertically, but with hardly any element of interaction.



55. The following bottlenecks affecting the consultation process may be cited:

- unwillingness on the part of men to participate in the consultation process (apart from the representatives of the governmental agencies);
- paucity of mechanisms for feedback;
- difficulties in distinguishing between certain priority areas;
- the issue of feasibility (financial, practical, etc.)
- organizational considerations (particularly in the case of Sudan.

D. Agencies responsible for women's advancement oversee the implementation phase

56. Coordinating agencies are responsible for implementation of the national plans of action in the countries visited (i.e. Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria and Mauritania). In Tunisia, the coordinating body is the ministry responsible for the advancement of women and the girl child; in Egypt, it is the Commission on the Family and Child Welfare; in Mauritania, the Department of Women's Affairs; in Algeria, the Ministry for National Solidarity and Women's Affairs; in Morocco, the Department of Social Development, the Family and Child Welfare, and in Mauritania, the Department of Women's Advancement.

57. The institutions, which are organized in a horizontal schema coordinate the implementation process, in conjunction with the pertinent specialized units. In general terms, the following organigramme shows the organizational structure:

Social welfare services

- Poverty alleviation programmes
- Training centres for women
- Literacy

Agricultural services

- Agricultural projects
- Rural development

#### Health services

- Family planning
- Reproductive health

#### Educational services

- Information campaign
- Education of girls

#### Women's organizations

- Women's group
- GOs involved in gender issues; other associations

58. Thus, the distribution of tasks in the implementation process corresponds with sectoral structures. None the less many of the horizontal activities are carried out through the coordinating agencies, and in particular, the information mechanisms, case studies and joint projects which involve several entities at any one time.

59. Over and above the horizontal-sectoral coordinating mechanisms, there are other special, mechanisms for the application of the national plans of action. Two mechanisms of application may be cited:

- There are, firstly, support mechanisms for income-generating activities for women, which follow the implementation schedule given below.

60. The NPA adopts the establishment of a special mechanism for income-generating occupations for women.

61. The Ministry for Women's Affairs and the Family develops an implementation mechanism in consultation with NGOs and donors as follows:

62. Financing: debt conversion fund, in collaboration with the Netherlands and Sweden.

63. Coordination: Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Family, and a steering committee to oversee the equity.

64. Implementation: agreement between the Ministry and the NGOs involved in development issues and operating in income-generating initiatives across the country.

65. Evaluation and follow-up: the steering committee

The second implementation mechanism relates to a special facet of the NPA concerned with rural women: The Tunisian government has adopted a plan of action focusing on rural women, consisting of the following phases:

- A technical study to propose a prioritized plan of action (research unit);
- A steering committee for the purpose of conducting consultations across the country, in conjunction with governmental and non-governmental agencies;
- Proposals regarding priority areas for action by the Ministry responsible for women's advancement and child welfare by NGOs and the specialist entities concerned;
- Advocacy for the purpose of funding; objectives: the national budget and international cooperation;
- Implementation by specialized entities and by NGOs;
- Evaluation and follow-up by the national committee.

66. Apart from the NPA, the implementation mechanism in Egypt should be mentioned. It operates in conjunction with the National Council on the Family and Child Welfare which elaborates frameworks for the development of small-scale enterprises for women.

Ministry responsible for social affairs

= Department responsible for women's advancement, to implement the project in collaboration with UNICEF

NGOs

= participate in the work of the Ministry in the context of women entrepreneurs.

67. In Morocco, development initiatives focused on micro-credit mechanisms, and the poverty alleviation programme are gender-focused.

In the case of Sudan and Libya (the latter does not yet have an NPA in place), gender-focused projects connected with the implementation of the Beijing platform and the African Platform for Action are actualized through the activities of the Department of Women's Affairs (Sudan), and the Standing committee responsible for women's affairs (Libya).

68. In general terms, the advancement of women in all the countries concerned falls under the pertinent sectoral units, non-governmental organizations (particularly women's groups), and international cooperation.

69. Notwithstanding the abundance of entities concerned with the implementation of the national plans of action, there is no coordination among them. The mechanisms of cooperation and collaboration have not evolved sufficiently, particularly with regard to the interaction between, on the one hand sectoral initiatives (which are focused on specialized operators within a well-defined social context) and, on the other, cross-cutting initiatives which are focused on many multiplicity of operators at a time).

70. Accordingly, gender-focused initiatives in Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania and Algeria fall under the Prime Minister's office. This facilitates coordination, follow-up and overall leadership.

71. The schedules of implementation at the national level fall into four distinct categories:

- (i) National action plans with the steps in the implementation spread over covering the short-, medium- and long-term, as is the case in Tunisia and Egypt;
- (ii) National action plans setting out priority areas and orientations in relation to the advancement of women, with a time-frame indicated for the socio-economic development dimension; Morocco's and Algeria's NPAs may be placed in this category;
- (iii) Gender-focused actions integrated into the national strategic framework and the development plan, as with Sudan's NPA;

72. The orientation of the implementation phase tends to be decentralized throughout the subregion.

73. In the case of Egypt, the implementation phase ties in with the decentralized structure of government projects, but various units at the centre spearhead certain sectors.

74. The implementation phase in Tunisia, for large-scale national projects, is similar to Egypt's; the community-focused projects, and the projects initiated by the NGOs, are highly decentralized.

75. A programme, in Sudan, to strengthen the implementation of gender-focused initiatives, is under way, and coordinating units are operational in seven of the country's provinces. More such units are to be set up across the country during the next three years.

76. The implementation phase in Libya is similar in structure to the national development plan.

77. In Mauritania, implementation within the framework of self-help projects, and in particular, those that are internationally funded, are entirely decentralized.

78. In Algeria and Morocco, responsibility for the implementation of the national action plans is spread out among the various government departments according to their respective areas of competence. Other entities, particularly NGOs and multinationals, are also involved.

79. In parallel with the planning and execution structures for gender-focused projects, the research capacities on gender issues has been strengthened at the level of the various government departments, governmental agencies and NGOs.

80. For example, there have been several training programmes on research capacities on gender issues, in Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan and Morocco, including, in particular, those carried out within the framework of cooperation programmes with UNDP, the World Bank, UNFPA and UNICEF.

81. Apart from training, all the seven North African countries are trying to make it a requirement that all data be gender-specific. The respective government departments responsible for gender issues are giving high priority to this question, being sorely aware of the particularly serious inadequacies in this domain, at the local and national levels. Moreover, all seven countries are endeavouring to integrate a gender perspective into the national development plans.

#### E. Resources

82. The implementation of the national plans of action is funded in three distinct ways:

- (i) Within the context of the national budget, particularly in so far as it covers education, health and social development. These aspects of development, which affect women, are mainly funded by governmental agencies;
- (ii) Most of the gender-focused actions that are based on support and capacity-building initiatives funded by international agencies. For example, the UNDP programme for 1997-2001 funds gender-focused projects, and in particular, income-generating projects in the context of poverty alleviation; UNICEF has major literacy programmes in Egypt and Sudan, focusing on women. The Canadian International Development Agency supports women's project in the subregion. Debt conversion to support women's projects in Tunisia is another noteworthy initiative, in conjunction with the Netherlands and Sweden. UNFPA is involved in a similar capacity-building project in Algeria.

In the context of international cooperation, Germany has mainly been involved in financing training programmes for women. The contribution of the international community has been steadfast, but governments tend to give priority to training, education and technical assistance. It is evident, however, that public works and infrastructure projects are important social needs which are certainly relevant to women.

- (iii) Special programmes and funds are an important element in the financing of gender-focused projects. The social fund in Egypt and the micro-credit facilities in Morocco are cases in point; both are programmes that focused on women's advancement. Most beneficiaries of Tunisia's Fonds d'insertion et d'adaptation professionnelle (53 per cent) are women; the Fonds national de solidarité (also operating in Tunisia) is focused on poverty alleviation. The Savings and Social Welfare Bank in Sudan gives financial support to programmes focused on poor families (18 projects).

All these special programmes and in particular, those concerned with poverty alleviation, are increasingly focused on women. This orientation should be strengthened, however, to take into account factors such as sustainability and the support mechanism. Both factors are often relevant to special projects of limited duration.

83. Notwithstanding the foregoing, however, the countries considered are facing difficulties with the financing of women projects. Among the many reasons for these are:

- (a) The obvious lack of financing in the Sudan;

(b) Mauritania's inadequate machinery which does not make for easy access to financing, not to mention the lack of coordination among the various projects;

(c) The imbalance between the enormous need in the women sector of Egypt and Morocco in terms of literacy in particular and the paucity of available resources; and

(d) The increasing lack of international cooperation resources in Tunisia which has been justified in terms of per capita income achieved by that country. This situation is creating difficulties and is considered as an inadequate reward for the effort made.

84. In the circumstances, several specific strategies have been worked out for resource mobilization. Three examples can be cited in this context:

(a) In Tunisia, the specific strategy for mobilizing resources has taken two forms: (i) the first has to do with recycling the country's external debt and channeling the proceeds into projects targetting women and the environment; (ii) the second relates to the drafting of a plan of action and the institution a coordinating mechanism among donors in order to ensure that women's project financing is properly coordinated.

(b) In Morocco, the thrust of this effort has gone into enhancing the role of women in various development programmes. Indeed, particular effort has been made in the area of micro-financing and the UNDP poverty eradication programme. The social project funds currently being mobilized in collaboration with the World Bank will pay particular attention to women's project; and

(c) In Egypt, UNDP has prepared a three-year development programme and is supporting government efforts to mobilize funds. The setting of programme priorities has made it possible to place the advancement of women at the top of the list with poverty eradication and environmental protection.

85. These various strategies mainly seek to achieve coordination among the various programmes and donors and to set priorities in terms of needs justified under realistic indicators. The financing scheme used by most donors requires the country to allocate 20 to 50 per cent of national counterpart funds to the programmes. This principle has helped to mobilize national resources and to integrate women-targetted development projects into the national budget management structure.

## **F. Follow-up and coordination**

86. Women's advancement projects are monitored by those institutions responsible for coordinating women's affairs on the one hand, and the national plan monitoring units on the other hand. Both mainly used the tool of reporting on progress achieved in women's programme activities.

87. In Tunisia for example, the progress report prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs is submitted to the National Council on Women and Family Affairs meeting every three months under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

88. In Egypt, the Women's Committee of the National Council on Family and Children's Affairs prepares progress report for submission to the periodic meetings of the Council held every six months. These meetings are presided over by the First Lady.

89. In Algeria, there is a follow-up committee which considers progress reports at periodic meetings.

90. In Morocco, as part of the national planning exercise, a national monitoring committee will assume this responsibility in coordination with the secretariat of the National Office for the Social Advancement of the Family and Children.

91. It could be concluded, in this regard, that the specific responsibility for monitoring women's programme is institutionalized in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria and integrated in the national development planning exercise of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Sudan and Mauritania. Such monitoring is generally based on progress reports on



programme activities. With specific regard to quality control, there is an obvious deficiency in terms of quality evaluation and impact assessment.

92. Within this context, it might be helpful to mention the effort of collaboration between the World Bank's Project Impact Assessment Unit and the Tunisian Ministry of Women's Affairs to assess the impact of development projects of women. This important exercise has not resulted in institutionalizing this impact assessment methodology despite the enormous need of all the countries in this area.

93. That said, however, the monitoring tool used by the national plan monitoring committees and commissions has an important impact on the rate of project implementation and the exceptional measures taken to facilitate the process. In the progress report submitted to the Committees in Egypt and Tunisia can be found proposals for overcoming the difficulties encountered. Once such proposals are approved by the National Council and submitted to the Head of States, they have a high likelihood of being implemented

94. In addition to their monitoring role, the National Councils to women also play an important role in avoiding duplication at the level of project implementation. Indeed, looking at the cases of Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, the Councils happen to play a major role in coordinating the efforts of the various players. This is how those institutions responsible for women's affairs come to implement like-minded project components such as women's NGO support, training in project preparation, sensitization campaigns and so on, while the sectoral institutions implement the technical components that fall within their purview.

95. It should be pointed out, however, that the various actors interviewed acknowledged that some duplication existed with several projects financed by various donors. They all affirmed that greater coordination would result in the achievement of economies of scale. Indeed, the plan of action for the advancement of women was one tool for strengthening such coordination and ironing out the difficulties encountered in the project implementation.

96. In addition to the problems of coordination, the national planning exercises run into specific implementation difficulties in the various countries. While the degree of those difficulties vary widely from country to country, mention could be made of:

(a) The inadequate institutional capacity for local development projects. In Morocco for example, the NGOs show a limited capacity to implement projects for rural women while in Tunisia the problem is more with the urban areas. In Algeria, this inadequacy is felt both by NGOs and small-scale private enterprises. To strengthen institutional capacity, most of the players stressed the need to programme institutional backstopping into every project for the advancement of women. Such specific project backstopping was more helpful, in their view, than general institutional support.

(b) The difficulties relating to disparities between the genuine needs of people and programme activities are caused by the lack of capacity to prepare project documents at the grass-roots level. The proposal put forward to address this difficulty consists of developing a two-phase feasibility and implementation methodology. The first phase would focus on defining the project guidelines under major headings and estimating the cost. This document would be used to secure agreement in principle while the second relating to project implementation would be based on a grass-roots participatory needs assessment involving such players as the beneficiaries and institutions. This study would make it possible to set project priorities and to control the implementation process more flexibly and effectively.

(c) Difficulties arising from lack of male interest in women's project arise from the fact that such project exclude men in the area or project zone and create tension even within families. The proposal to address this consists of eliciting the active participation of both groups within the framework of a gender approach ;

(d) Difficulties arising from the generalization of project activities at the expense of specific activities have mostly to do with the failure of the national planning machinery to take specific needs of local women generally into account. To address this, grassroots participatory planning tools need to be developed.

(e) The difficulties encountered by all the countries in terms of interface between national planning for women and national gender projects and activities can be described in three ways :

- (i) First, in the name of equality and non-discrimination, little importance is attached to programmes specifically targetted at women. Naturally, the substantial inequities that prevent women from benefitting equally with men from national development planning are overlooked ;
- (ii) Second, so much importance is accorded to projects specifically targetted at women that they become the only national programme for women, leaving the impression that the other common programmes only concern the men ; and
- (iii) Third, the need to take specific measures for the advancement of women should be weighed carefully against that of achieving more equitable sharing of national human resources and what is to be gained ultimately if women become integrated in the national fabric as a matter of policy and principle under gender supporting activities. Accordingly, gender analysis has been used in an attempt to devise the methodological and practical tools for making such integration choices with the help of specific support.

97. With all the difficulties arising from the financing of women's programmes, particularly in view of economic constraints, on the one hand, and the pressing needs that have accumulated on the other hand, gender-focused activities still show a striking dynamism.

98. In connexion with the guidelines for the implementation of the regional and global platforms for action of the African Centre for Women, there is a considerable degree of variation in respect of awareness within the various countries of the subregion. However, it seems to be greater in Tunisia, Egypt, the Sudan and Morocco than in Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.

99. The proposals derived from these mandates are based on the joint implementation support projects using the experience accumulated within the subregion, and replicating the success stories of the countries in the subregion, particularly those produced in Arabic.

100. The various actors find the guidelines very useful but would like to see more collaborative initiatives on the ground, with greater support to gender-focused programmes. The issue of coordinating the various women's advancement monitoring initiatives was raised particularly when it came to the international support machinery of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the League of Arab States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Indeed, follow-up activities are being conducted in all the countries at the initiative of the various parties although with little coordination.

101. Regarding the sensitization and mobilization of national players around the platforms, what was observed was that this is basically happening in connection with national programmes coming from international mandates and recommendations.

102. Indeed, there is a dynamic for the follow-up and preparation of specific programmes and plans in each country of the subregion. This has been strongly reflected in national consultations including :

(a) The meetings and seminars organized in Tunisia in 1996, 1997 and 1998 to prepare the national plan of action and the local, regional and nation-wide consultations on the women's programme component of the 9<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Development Plan. The consultative machinery has now been institutionalized and activities on the ground comprise domestic and international cooperation initiatives. In March 1998, the Ministry of Women's Affairs organized an international Forum for the Maghreb region with a view to preparing for the regional conference. CREDIF is currently organizing an exchange and training programme for development actors in the region and with UNFPA support, the National Bureau of the Census has established a subregional centre for training in reproductive and basic health care.

(b) In the Sudan, monitoring and implementation activities are being conducted simultaneously within the context of activities programmed by UNIFEM and ECA particularly since the Sudan participated in the Dakar meeting and happens to be a member of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. A workshop was organized in September 1995 and a forum during the Arab Family Day celebrations in December 1997. A technical preparatory committee was set up to draft an Action Plan and a national seminar on the action plan is being prepared.

Institutionally, women's units have been established within the ministries and regions of the Sudan in cooperation with the Minister of Social Planning.

103. In Egypt, the consultative process took off with the establishment of a think-tank in December 1996 and working committees within the various ministries. The National Commission for the implementation of the Beijing Platform comprises 20 experts who propose national policy and regional commissions which are working towards the same objectives within the specific purview of each unit. The National Congress of March 1998 provided an occasion to make recommendations for strengthening the five-year development plan.

104. In the Jamahiriya, the recommendations and Global Platform activities are monitored under a UNDP support programme which commissioned expert to prepare a draft report on the Situation of Women in Libya and to devote a substantial part of the National Human Development Report currently being prepared to the concerns of Libyan women. The women's secretariat of each of the 330 People's Bureaux are making substantial efforts to programme gender issues into the grass-roots consultation exercise.

105. Algeria's committee was created by the Prime Minister to oversee the implementation and follow-up of the various platforms. However, the Ministry of National Solidarity and the Family is responsible for implementation and follow-up of the NPA at all levels. In that capacity, the Ministry issues periodic reports to the committees and agencies concerned with gender issues.

105. In Morocco, the National committee responsible for preparing the NPA is elaborating a programme of work to sensitize people on the implementation of the global platform. The National committee will be responsible for evaluation and follow-up of the NPA, in collaboration with the SEPSFE.

106. In Mauritania, the process is proceeding on the basis of the African platform; it involves inter-sectoral meetings, which are followed, when the implementation process is well-established, by a national strategy for women's advancement, which has been submitted to a broad-based consultative forum within the framework of national workshops.

107. Moreover, following the meetings that were held in Cairo within the framework of this report, with the unit responsible for women's advancement in the League of Arab States, a mechanism for follow-up of the implementation process, and an Arab platform, were put in place during the Amman meeting (September 1996), and following that meeting, a programme of action was drawn up, and a regional meeting is scheduled for late 1998.

## CONCLUSION

108. What emerges from this report is that there is a new impetus at the subregional level towards broader dissemination of gender issues and towards a more action-oriented conception of programmes for the implementation of the proposals that have been made.

109. There are considerable possibilities for collaboration between various stakeholders in the subregion which can be actualized, and the African Centre for Women can play a key role if the subregional conference makes concrete proposals for building the capacity to implement the Beijing recommendations.

110. The experiences described in the section on obstacles encountered can be used to develop these priority areas into action proposals, and also to identify various implementation institutions and mechanisms.

111. We crave the indulgence of the various stakeholders in the subregion in respect of the aspects that have not been covered or mentioned in this report, reiterate our readiness to enrich this draft with corrections that will be made during the conference and thank all the institutional stakeholders for the assistance they afforded us. It was pivotal in the elaboration of the report.