

## **WOMEN AND VIOLENCE IN ALGERIA**

### **A. STUDIES AND REFLECTIONS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

Among the numerous studies and reflections on women's rights in Algeria, we would like to list the following:

- The national survey on 'women and socio-economic integration';
- The study on the state of documentary research concerning domestic work in Algeria;
- The study on the homes of children on benefits: situation and perspectives;
- The strengthening of the capacity of women for political participation and decision-making in Algeria;
- The evaluation by the Women's Council of the impact of actions done by NGOs and associations on women's life conditions;
- Participation of NGOs in the elaboration of an Action Plan for the Promotion and Integration of Women;
- Citizenship in Algeria today, representation and implementation;
- The process of the forming of a couple and the question of marriage;
- Women and life plans (single mothers and student mothers, novelists and activists);

Regarding health, we note with great satisfaction the launching of the national campaign against breast cancer in 2009.

### **B. PROMOTION OF THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF THE WOMAN**

#### **Towards the enforcement of article 31bis of the constitution.**

By means of the constitutional revision of 12 November 2008, a new constitutional provision has been introduced with article 31a dedicated to the promotion of political rights of women and the increase in their representation in the elected assemblies, at all the levels.

Article 31 bis provides that:

“The State works for the promotion of political rights of women by increasing their chances of access to representation in elected assemblies.

The mode of enforcement of this article is laid down by organic law.”

Within the framework of the implementation of this article, the President of the Republic has instructed the Minister of Justice in March 2009, to set up a national commission responsible for elaborating an organic bill to define the methods of enforcement of this article.

Indeed, one can read in the message delivered on the occasion of March 8 2009 “I instruct the Minister of Justice to set up a commission ... Of which the goal will be to propose to us an organic bill implementing the constitutional principles in favor of a larger participation of women in elected assemblies.”

This commission, composed of jurists, experts and the associative movement, gave its conclusions in June 2009.

The proposed bill recommends multiple provisions that match with what the President of the Republic is concerned about, namely to grant more space to women in the elected assemblies.

The text confirms the principle to grant a quota of 30% for the representation of women in elected assemblies, the alternating between male and female candidates on the electoral lists to guarantee a larger presence of elected women in the assemblies and, finally, measures sanctioning political parties that do not respect these provisions.

### **C. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women is both a human rights violation and a form of discrimination against women. It is an issue of human rights and health.

Endorsed by the Algerian government in 2007, the national strategy for combatting violence against women, implemented by the State secretary in charge of family and women, is intended as a general framework of intervention to raise awareness, protect, and address this issue.

As a reminder, this strategy rests on three principal strands: Firstly, it is about ensuring the protection and security of women by an appropriate support, a strong clinical management of the violence committed, and guaranteeing judicial assistance. Secondly, to organise solidarity through social and economic reintegration of abused women, and finally, to implement measures, procedures and reforms at the judicial and constitutional level.

In 2008, the police services registered 9.517 complaints of violence against women, while only during the first six months of this year, the number has reached 4.409 cases. This is enormous insofar as this number only represents the cases treated by the National Safety, that is to say in urban zones.

The same statistics reveal a considerable increase in complaints: during the first ten months of 2008, there were 2675 complaints, which increased to 4409 during the same period in 2009.

Among married couples, the rate amounts to 2.5% regarding psychological violence and 9.4% for the physical violence, while within the family, physical violence represents 5.2% of the cases and sexual aggression 0.6%.

A survey by the National Statistics Office, financed by UNICEF, reveals that 67.9% of Algerian women accept the violence of their husband, meaning more than 2 out of 3 women. This means that the weight of traditions is so important that it will be difficult and take a long

time to manage to convince women to break the silence, and to make them admit that a human right is denied to them.

It is necessary to convince victims that it is not about betraying a husband, brother, or any other perpetrator, but rather to become aware of the gravity of their harmful actions, not only for the victim, but also for the family and for the society, understanding that the violence against women is equally a problem of public health.

Fortunately, compared to the level of violence registered in numerous countries, Algeria sees a relatively weak prevalence of this phenomenon, which is moreover foreign to our habits. The religion protects women and specifically the mother: “paradise is located under the feet of the mother”.

In front of this phenomenon, which persists despite numerous efforts deployed at national and international level, the fight against diverse forms of violence against women remains a concern that has become a global priority.

In February 2008, the Secretary General of the United Nations launched a campaign for the elimination of violence against women, which will continue until 2015, in order to coincide with the end of term of the Millennium Development Goals.

With its participation in the revision of this document as well as the elaboration of a draft resolution concerning a series of concrete measures on the prevention of crime in the field of violence against women in March 2009 in Bangkok, Algeria has clearly displayed its willingness to intensify the fight against all forms of violence against women.

In 2009, in the framework of the national strategy for combatting violence against women, the State secretary responsible for the family and the feminine condition has set up an institutional information system on violence against women.

The program of this information system was done in consultation between the abovementioned State secretary, the National Safety, the national gendarmerie and the associative movement (associations).

The Plan of Communication and Awareness Raising for the Fight against Violence against Women (PCSLVF) that allows to ‘ask for safeguards’ just came into being at the level of this ministry.

Regarding the associative movement, the participants of a meeting on violence against women organized by the management of the social action of the province of Tizi-Ouzou launched an appeal for the creation of a national fund for the support of divorced women.

With the support of UN Women, a project was started that helps gather the cases of violence against women identified at different monitoring centers. In this project, the monitoring centers are federated in a network and have adopted a common framework for the collection of data.

The National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Prevention of Human Rights (CNCPPDH) proposed to study, together with associative movement, the implementation of programs of awareness raising and public education to prevent violence against women thanks to the promotion of equality and mutual respect between men and women, notably through:

- The elaboration and popularization of a guide that would identify all forms of violence and would list the sanctions incurred by their perpetrators as well as all the remedies at the disposition of victims of this violence.
- The creation of a database containing information disaggregated by age based on the range, the nature and the consequences of all forms of violence against women, in a way that enables the legislator to promulgate more coercive laws.
- The definition of multidisciplinary approaches, taking into account the gender specifics, especially thanks to the partnerships between those in charge of repression services and services specialized in the protection of women who are victims of violence.

## **D. PROMOTION OF SOCIO ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR WOMEN IN RURAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **1) PERFORMED ACTIONS**

In view of the promotion of socio-economic rights of women in rural environment, actions have been taken by public institutions, in particular the ministry of agriculture and rural development, the ministry of education and professional education, and the associative movement. These actions reflect the willingness to improve the economic situation of rural women and their exercise of the right to development. These actions are surely laudable but remain below the needs and expectations of those concerned and their results remain limited.

Regarding the actions undertaken by the ministry of agriculture and rural development, we appreciate the introduction of a participative approach that involves male and female populations. This approach is clearly formulated within the policy of rural renewal and the intervention consists in a project of local and integrated rural development. Indeed, rural development projects are initiated by actors on the basis of a bottom-up approach, which takes into account the needs expressed by those concerned. Rural women have an undeniable and recognised role in the family economy and economic development in general. In the framework of this new vision of rural development, they have an indisputable opportunity to exercise their right to development.

To ensure that their concerns and needs are taken into account, the plan provides for the integration in this cell of rural communal activities (a space for the expression of the needs of the populations in view of the initiation and the management of a project) of a female facilitator representing women from the concerned locality so that the specific needs of this fringe of the population are taken into account.

Many of the numerous outreach projects for rural integration development (PPDRI) that have been implemented in the framework of the support program of rural renewal, benefited women. The presence of women in these projects indicates the willingness to integrate rural women in the development process and to consider them as stakeholders in the rural development programs. Nevertheless, this willingness does not always resonate in the field.

For example, out of the 2.000 projects implemented in 2009, only approximately a tenth benefits women.

Taking into account the importance of the role of women in general in the social and economic development, the sector of vocational training has granted a particular attention to the issue of rural women. It has stressed the aspect of training for women, which constitutes the backbone of any of their promotion.

In this framework, it established an annual national conference on education and support of rural women and housewives. The first national conference took place in March 2008 and aimed at initiating a debate on the concerns and expectations of the participants (who had come from all regions of the country) on the training and support systems. This event was the first of its kind and has enabled the formation of a space of discussion, of dialogue and of consultation. The results of the workshops organized on this occasion have lead to recommendations, which have been translated into an cross-sectoral action plan for the year 2008.

A second conference of the same kind took place in 2009; it underlined the progress and addressed the shortcomings with regard to the expressed needs. The recommendations issued in this second meeting allowed the updating of the cross-sectoral action plan of the year 2009.

The cross-sectoral action program stemming from these recommendations involves not only the public services but equally the associative movement. It aims to improve the efficiency of the different plans developed by the sectors for the improvement and integration of women in social and economic sphere. This action plan is about:

- The aspects related to the organization of trainings for women,
- The support mechanisms to make sure that trainings are adapted to the specific needs of women,
- The literacy component,
- Employment and the creation of income generating activities.

Deadlines have been set for the implementation of each action. The responsibilities of each sector have also been specified to enable an evaluation of the implementation of the content of this action plan.

As the experience is recent, its impact cannot yet be assessed. We can observe however, that it is an innovative approach, involving all sectors and associations. The experience leads to advocating in favor of the respect of the exercise of the right to development of women in rural environment and of housewives.

The associative movement has a great role to play in the local actions towards rural women to inform them of the opportunities of development and help them become real actors. Here and there associations organise awareness raising and information actions. They are useful, yet they remain insufficient.

We observe that a few associations involved in the development process in the rural environment acknowledged the necessity to self-organize. This way, eight national associations and ten local associations have formed a network to join their efforts and support the implementation of the policy of rural renewal and its intervention tool, the local project of rural integrated development (PPDRI). One objective is to take into account the gender aspect, in particular, women. This network is named the Algerian Network of Rural Development Associations Integrating Gender – the RAADRIG – and is likely to expand to other associations. It has established partnerships with the sector concerned to contribute in an effective way to the local work and the implementation of projects that integrate more rural women.

## **2) OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

While the principle to integrate a female organizer in the rural communal organisation unit within the plan for a local project of rural integration development, which is an intervention tool of the policy of rural revival, is in itself a decision aiming at the promotion of rural women for the exercise of their right to development, it nevertheless remains insufficient for a systematic and effective integration of women in the process of rural development.

Raising awareness of all stakeholders on the relevance and importance of such a measure is essential. We can see on the field that women are not sufficiently involved. Very often it is still men who propose projects and actions for women, yet these proposals do not match the women's needs. For an effective promotion of the right to development of rural women, the implementation of the decision to integrate a female representative rural communal organisation unit necessitates that follow-up actions are integrated and executed at the grassroot level. We recommend the implementation of this measure be systematized at the level of each municipality.

Further, the information and awareness-raising actions on the various opportunities of development and funding as well as any program aiming at improving the status of women in the rural environment shall become the subject of national programs of local outreach towards women.

**About the effective inclusion of a ‘gender’ approach in development,** the commission observes that the recommendations formulated in the previous report in 2008 on this issue are still relevant. Indeed, while this concept is more and more mentioned, or even introduced into some training programs, further efforts still need to be made for the implementation of the gender approach to be included by all stakeholders and to **lead to changes in behaviors.**

Regarding the process of ‘awareness raising’, we observe that albeit the process started several years ago, it certainly remains to be strengthened by a qualitative improvement of the content for an accurate inclusion of the concept of gender. This concept is very often understood in an erroneous and restrictive manner in so far as it limits itself to a mere focus on ‘woman’. We would rather recommend an approach of ‘man and woman’, whose added value is that it includes the complementarity of social roles of each category.

Because of the insufficiency, or even the inexistence of appropriate indicators to measure the results of the implementation of this approach, the progress made cannot be reliably evaluated.

Moreover, some institutions implement a training program on the gender approach, yet this approach is not followed with implementation on the ground. Several reasons may explain this state of affairs, in particular: a limited targeting of the categories that should be sensitised or trained, and inadequate financial resources available. In terms of data disaggregated by sex and related to the socioeconomic situation of women in rural environment and their involvement in the development process, we recommend to resort to more studies and specific surveys for a more refined knowledge of the decision making process for a better inclusion of a ‘gender’ approach in the economic development.

#### **E. Creation and functioning of the network of monitoring centers**

The objectives of the project initiated by the CIDDEF are twofold: to inform and to raise awareness of society and the public authorities on violence against women, with the aim of preventing cases of violence, and to support victims. These objectives rely on the listening work of the centers and the sharing of collected data.

Also, to achieve the set objectives, a series of actions has been undertaken:

- The development of a network of associative monitoring centers;
- Elaboration of a database and training of (female) listeners to use it;
- Active coordination of the network;
- Specific training on listening female victims of violence;
- Analysis of collected cases of violence and dissemination of the results.

### **1) Formation of a Network**

The monitoring centers that gathered at the beginning of 2008 at the initiative of the CIDDEF, agreed on the project of a network of centers.

Once the necessary funding for the project was obtained from UN Women the work of the network started with the joint development of a listening structure. A preliminary plan for identical listening report, both for the centers with an anonymous hotline and for those with a reception desk, was discussed. Once it was tested and improved, this structure was adopted by all centers. It was overall satisfactory, although the systematic exploitation of data done in June 2009 highlighted the necessity to amend some items to assure a uniform interpretation and to limit the difficulties of filling up this outline. The monitoring report includes the characteristics of the victim and those of the aggressor, specifies the nature of the suffered violence and their effect on the victim and their children, identifies in the entourage of the victim the persons that support them or on the contrary that weigh them down, and finally notes the expectations of the victim. The outline also includes a space for narrating the situation of violence. The story is essential for the correct understanding of the data, and has been the subject of a great reflection work during the network meetings.

### **2) Elaboration of the database**

Technically, the network of monitoring centers was established through the realization and creation of a database hosted on a server and accessible on the internet.

It gathers information collected from all monitoring centers according to a normalized framework that is used as a template. It was agreed upon to have a decentralized organization and online tools.

A WEB application was created to enable all centers of the network to insert their monitoring reports and to use the results. It also enables the CIDDEF to manage all administrative tasks related to the database (statistics, utilization of data, managements of users, passwords etc...).

The most recent technological tools have been selected, namely:

- Database client/server 'MYSQL'
- The 'HTML' language, PHP script, JavaScript script and the java language.

Every monitoring center of the network is equipped with a microcomputer, a printer, an internet subscription and financial support. Because the listeners of the network were usually not familiar with the input systems, several trainings were carried out to introduce them to the use of the database without problems.

### **3) The centers participating in the network**

At the start of the project, 8 monitoring centers joined the network and choose to call it 'BALSAM', a balm for victims of violence. Others from the associative movement just joined the network.



Indeed, it is the ministry responsible for the family and the female condition that is in charge of establishing a database on cases of violence against women that are supported in institutional monitoring centers.

The BALSAM centers are spread from East to West (Tebessa, Annaba, Constantine, Tizi-Ouzou, Alger and Oran) of the territory, excepting the South. Since June 2009, five monitoring centers have joined the network: FARD in Oran, BNET el Kahnia in Tebessa, the cultural association M'barek Alt Menguellet, the human rights league in the province of Annaba, and the Women's Commission of UGT from the province of Constantine.

All centers are located in the capital of their province, except for the association M'barek Alt Menguellet located in the village of Iboudraren in the province of Tizi-Ouzou, which just joined the network. This will enable us to better identify non-urban violence.

Three of these centers provide listening by telephone (SOS Women in Distress, El Kahina, SOS Nour). The others provide personal contact, they receive women who come to them, but some can also come closer to the victims' place of residence. Most centers only accept women or women and children, but SOS Nour receives all the calls from people in distress. The center of the women's commission of UGTA from the province of Constantine is dedicated to working women.

The CIDDEF is rather specialized in legal advice but, like most centers, it also provides psychological support. Two associations located in Alger have both a monitoring center and a reception center providing accommodation and social and professional integration of women who were forced to leave their marital or family home.

#### **National network of monitoring centers**

Location of monitoring centers	Number of monitoring reports	Rate
Alger	247	45
Tizi-Ouzou	100	18
Constantine	89	16
Oran	51	9
Tebessa	33	6
Annaba	26	5

The concentration of centers in some provinces creates a selection bias; this way, 45% of the cases of violence reported come from the monitoring centers of the country capital. Nevertheless, the outreach of the centers surpasses the border of the province where they are set up: the women who speak to them are originally from thirty different provinces.

#### **4) Analysis of collected cases in the database**

The database of the network, once irrelevant cases and doubles (cases that have been registered twice) have been screened out, counts at the beginning of August 2010, 546 women victims of violence.

Before analysing the content of these cases of violence, it is interesting to question what guides women to the monitoring centers. To the question: how did you get to know about the center, the answers are as following:

- 21% of the women say they have been informed through a means of communication, such as the radio (mostly local), the internet (10 specified it), the press.
- The word of mouth remains, however, the most widespread medium of information: 41% of women received information from a friend, from a beneficiary of the center or from a close relative.
- Thanks to the information work and the lobbying done by some centers, the institutions represent significant vehicles of orientation of female victims towards the monitoring centers: 10%. It is essentially the hospital from which the information originates, but also the police station and the court.
- Finally, the associations are at the origin of 5% of the information given to victims on the existence of the centers.

Among the abused women who come to the centers of the network, the great majority (65%) is married. Single women follow with 23% of the cases. Divorced women represent 10% of the whole and widows only 1%.

One case could not be classified by the listener: a woman married according to civil law, but whose religious marriage had not taken place yet. This is a relatively frequent phenomenon where the formality of civil marriage has been carried out but socially-speaking the woman is not married yet. The situation becomes more complicated, from the social point of view, when for instance the woman gets pregnant, or from a legal point of view when the 'spouse' indefinitely postpones the marriage or even disappears. The woman is thus obliged to ask for a divorce, without effectively having been married.

## **F. Project of support of implementation of laws, policies and action plan in force related to violence against women**

### **1) Pertinence**

Since its conceptualisation in 2007, the project remains very relevant and still corresponds to a real need for information on Violence Against Women (VCF). The specific objective is the establishment of a reliable and credible tool to make VCF visible through targeting the most frequent cases of violence, with the aim of advocating to the public authorities and the society so that they take action, create programs for a better support of VCF, and so that they actively support the implementation of the National Strategy for the Fight Against Violence Against Women (SNLCVCF). Three results are expected. They are clear, precise and coherent:

- Result 1: a database and analysis thereof are realized on VCF from the main monitoring or reception centers managed by NGOs; there are 12 of them, located in different cities and regions of the country.
- Result 2: a network of monitoring centers is established from this database
- Result 3: the members of these monitoring centers have strengthened their capacities of listening and production of reliable data.

They support the specific objectives well and are fully integrated in the foreseen goal which is to contribute to supporting the implementation of laws, policies and action plans already in force on violence against women. In addition, this project is part of the policies and programs, especially the SNLCVCF. The stakeholders, i.e. here the NGOs or monitoring centers are identified and their needs for capacity building were met through a participatory approach (minutes of the different coordination meetings).

## **2) Efficiency**

The management of the budget is fully done by the CICCEF. Transfers of budgetary allocations from one activity to the other are done to better adapt the budget to activities of the project. This flexibility in the management has enabled to strengthen particularly result 3 of the project.

## **3) Effectiveness**

The expected results of the project have all been achieved: the database exists and is operational, the network has been established and the stakeholders' capacities have been strengthened.

## **4) Durability**

The follow-up is based on the fact that the institutional partner acquires the capacities and tools necessary for the accomplishment of these future missions.

This project led to extremely interesting results thanks to the efforts of the CIDDEF and the Balsam network. These results are relevant for the associative movement but also greatly for the Ministry Responsible for the Family and the Female Condition (MDCFCE), who promoted the SNLCVCF. This indicates a support from the side of the government, thus opening the possibility for the Balsam network to grow and to be sustainable in the long-term.

The downside of a sustainable existence of the Balsam network is the fact that the monitoring centers are young, and even though they technically own the project, they are not yet

capable of ensuring their functioning and even less so their funding. The building of capacities for resource mobilization should be considered.

## **5) Impact (indications)**

It is difficult to speak about the impact of such a short-term project, nevertheless, it seems obvious that the 571 cases registered in the database could very soon be published in the second volume of the results, and represent an example and a basis for inspiration for other information systems about VCF, such as in the unavoidable sector of the fight against VCF both by NGOs and by the institutions of which the governmental leader is the MDCFCF. The database is a scientific achievement, which surely can still be improved, but it represents an undeniable improvement in the field of information systems on violence against women.

## **G. Recommendations**

### **1) Legal**

- Penalize domestic violence.
- Prohibit marriage through the Fatiha without prior registration in the civil register.
- Strengthen the right to housing in case of divorce or separation.
- Take legal measures allowing the removal of the abusive spouse or ex-spouse, for the protection of the woman and the children.
- Establish, in consultation with serious associations, regulations enabling associations to get a status of public interest. Plan for regular funding from the budget of the state or of the local communities for associations of public interest.
- Extend the paid care of children who are wards of the state beyond their coming of age (until they work or they marry).

### **2) Social**

- Facilitate the creation of reception centers for women victim of violence, either run by associations or public.
- Establish hotlines freely available to monitoring centers.
- Organize at the local level (APC/province) periodic (quarterly) consultations between all players, public and private, concerned by the support of women victims of violence: police, associations, local governments, the management of social action, services and health professionals, with the following objectives:
  - o Assessing the magnitude of the cases by sharing collected data by the various participants
  - o Highlighting the problems related to the support of victims.
  - o Allocating the material, human, regulatory and/or organizational means necessary for the improvement of the situation.

### **3) Education**

- Do not overwhelm the boys under the weight of the duty of protection towards girls.

- Teach them to manage their frustrations (for example by not giving into all their desires).
- Teach young girls that they have rights and must enforce them.

#### **4) Training of professionals**

- **General medicine**

Detect and identify physical and sexual abuse of women and children.

- **Psychology**

Train psychologists in listening; help them go beyond social taboos.