

TUNISIA

TUNISIAN REPUBLIC

Ministry of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs

Board of General Communications and Information

**REPLY OF TUNISIA 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)**

TUNIS, MAY 2005

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This report on the implementation of the Beijing Programme for Action (1995) and on the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) has been prepared in conformity with guidelines of the questionnaire addressed to Governments with a view to supplementing existing information and facilitating the review and appraisal to be conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women.

Bearing in mind the limitation as to the number of pages indicated in the questionnaire, the report presents a selection of the most significant achievements recorded by Tunisia over the past decade (Beijing + 10) in the sphere of advancement of women.

Fuller information appears in the national report on the follow-up of the implementation of the Beijing and Dakar Programmes of Action (1995-2000) submitted by Tunisia at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (New York, 2000). This report can be consulted on the Internet (cf. United Nations sites).

The present report consists, in essence, of responses to the recommendations defined in the Beijing Programme of Action (1995) and other initiatives and measures identified at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), as well as to the Millennium Goals (2000), without systematically referring to those documents.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| BTS | Tunisian Solidarity Fund |
| CES | Economic and Social Council |
| CNFF | National Council for Women and the Family |
| CREDIF | Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women |
| CNFCE | Council of Women Heads of Enterprises |
| CPE | Child Protection Code |
| CSP | Personal Status Code |
| FNE | National Employment Fund |
| FSN | National Solidarity Fund |
| MAFFE | Ministry of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs |
| ONFP | National Office of Family Planning and Population |
| OTEF | Tunisian Organization for Education and the Family |
| PAFN | National Programme of Aid to Needy Families |
| RSD | Constitutional Democratic Assembly |
| UNFT | National Union of Tunisian Women |
| UTICA | Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Handicrafts |
| UGTT | General Tunisian Labour Union |
| UTAP | Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries |

PART ONE

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

1. Women as development partners

The past decade (1994-2004) has seen a strong development of Tunisia's efforts, already well under way, to promote the rights of women and of the girl child, to consolidate gender equality and to achieve women's empowerment by drafting and implementing gender-specific laws and policies aimed at strengthening women's status and role.

Specific programmes and mechanisms also form part of the agenda of advancement of the status of women whatever their age bracket and their social and professional category.

After the change of 7 November 1987 a decisive turning point occurred in the advancement of the status of women in Tunisia, in terms both of the approach adopted and of the means of action available.

In 1991, four years before the Fourth World Conference in Beijing, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali decided to set up a special Women and Development Commission open to governmental partners, representatives of civil society and NGOs. This Commission has the task of examining the situation of women in all sectors of development.

For the first time in our country's history, a strategy for women entitled "women and development" took shape in Chapter 8 of the development plan for 1992-1996. This chapter was devoted exclusively to women's integration in development.

Since then, national women's plans have continued to be prepared within the framework of our five-year development plans in accordance with a global approach based on social gender perspectives in planning, advancement of the status of women and attainment of gender equality forming part of the strategic goals of integrated and sustainable economic and social development.

As a result of this deliberate approach, confirmed by the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and those deriving from the Millennium Declaration and Goals and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (Beijing + 5), the goals set by the international community have today been attained fully or, at the least, to a very considerable extent.

Progress achieved at the legislative, institutional, social and political levels has helped to advance women's integration in the economic circuit, strengthen their position as active partners in the development process, facilitate their access to decision-making posts and consolidate their participation in public and political life. This is true even if progress remains insufficient in certain areas, particularly those of literacy, access to decision-making positions, and economic integration of women, especially those with special needs.

Efforts are currently concentrated on the gradual generalization of the gender-based social approach, which makes it possible to identify and correct the gaps still existing between men and women.

2. Legislative achievements

Thanks to the political will to treat women's rights as an essential part of fundamental human rights, our most significant achievements have been accomplished in the **legislative area**.

The past decade was characterized in this respect by the enactment of laws that strengthened the status of women in all fields, including in particular the Act instituting the joint ownership of property regime for spouses, an optional system spouses may adopt at the time of concluding the marriage contract or later; the Act recognizing the right to a surname of children abandoned at birth or of unknown parentage, which for the first time in the history of our country grants such persons the right to an identity; the Child Protection Code, which naturally covers the girl child, the Act on the acquisition of Tunisian nationality by children of a Tunisian mother and a foreign father, and the Code of International Private Law.

3. Institutional mechanisms

The past decade has been marked by the creation of new institutional mechanisms and the reorganizing of ones already in existence. Action undertaken in this area related, in particular, to the restructuring of the National Council for Women and the Family (CNFF), the establishment within the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF) of a National Observatory on the status of women, and the setting up of commissions at regional level to carry out the national strategy for the advancement of rural women.

4. The economic sphere

Women's participation in economic life has progressed steadily. The proportion of economically active women rose from 22.9% in 1994 to 24% in 2001. It currently stands at 25% and is expected to rise to 26% by 2006.

The women's unemployment rate declined, falling from 17.2% in 1994 to 15.3% in 2001.

The economically active female population accounts for 23.6% of persons employed in the agricultural sector, 37.2% in industry and 39.2% in the trade and services sector.

A breakdown by occupational status shows that 15.7% of working women are heads of enterprises or self-employed, while 67.5% are wage-earners or apprentices.

The country currently counts 10 000 women heads of enterprises, half of whom are active members of the National Council of Women Heads of Enterprises (CNFCE), which forms part of the national employers' association, the Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA).

The same dynamic is to be found in the sphere of promotion of female human resources, thanks to the massive access of women to education and training.

In the area of education, the policy of equal opportunities for boys and girls conducted over the past decade has borne ample fruit at all levels of schooling, the enrolment rate for six-year-old girls equalling that of boys to reach 99%, whereas in 1987 there had been a difference of 8 points between girls and boys in the same age group.

The policy conducted in connection with the prevention of early dropping-out from school has helped to raise considerably the girls' school enrolment rate, which reached 92.2% for the 6-12 age bracket in 2001 as against 76.5% in 1985.

The same is true of the girls' school enrolment age in the age bracket between 13 and 19 years, which rose from 44% in 1983 to 70.2% in 2001 thanks to the introduction since 1991 of free compulsory schooling between the ages of 6 and 16.

In the higher education sector, the country has had more women than men students since 2000. Women at present account for 56.4% of all students, their success rate at all levels of university studies amounting to 52.9%.

Women account for 38% of all teaching staff in higher education and for 35% of university research workers.

In the vocational training sector, women accounted in 2003 for 36% of the staff of the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training as against 33.5% in 1999 and 27% in 1986.

5. Promotion of women's health

In the area of health, the generalized implementation of national measures and programmes aimed at reducing maternal and neonate infant mortality and the strengthening of awareness-raising and preventive health education campaigns are producing highly satisfactory results.

The proportion of women covered by family planning services has today risen to 66% as against 60% in 1966, while the rate of medically controlled confinements has reached 89.3%.

Women's life expectancy at birth reached 75 years in 2002 as against 51.6 in 1966.

Tunisian women, who in 1966 devoted half their lives (25 years) to childbearing, now devote only ten years or so to bearing children.

The life expectancy of women after the birth of their last child has risen from 15 years in 1956 to 35 years today.

Maternal mortality has fallen from 68.9 per 100 000 live births in 1994 to 54 per 100 000 live births in 2002.

The synthetic fecundity index (average number of children per woman of childbearing age) has declined appreciably, falling to two children per woman in 2002 from 2.9 in 1994 and 7 in 1966.

6. Women in decision-making posts

Women account for 13.6% of the total number of Government members. The six women in the Government are the Minister of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs and the Secretaries of State for Housing, Hospital Establishments, Social Advancement, Foreign Affairs and Children's Affairs.

So far as the Legislative is concerned, the proportion of women members of parliament had risen to 11.5% in 1999 (date of the last parliamentary election) as against 7.4% in 1994.

The Tunisian Parliament today counts 21 women out of a total of 182 members. A woman holds the post of Second Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies and another is the Chairperson of a committee.

Within the Judiciary, women account for:

- 25.7% of ordinary judges and magistrates,
- 26 % of the national complement of barristers,
- 27.36% of Court of Audit judges (18.29% in 1997) and
- 31.25% of Administrative Tribunal judges (20% in 1997).

In March 2000 a woman was appointed for the first time to the post of President of an Appeals Court.

Other important posts held by women include those of

- Administrative mediator
- First President of the Court of Audit
- Advisers to the President and
- Ambassadors.

In May 3004 a woman was appointed, for the first time in Tunisian history, to the post of Governor (Prefect).

The percentage of women in executive positions in the Civil Service amounted to 22,17% of all civil service staff holding such positions, as against 15.15% in 2000 and 14,01 in 1999.

In 2003, the Civil Service had

- One woman secretary-general (28 men),
- 28 women directors-general (355 men),
- 195 women directors (907 men),
- 403 women deputy directors (1 386 men) and
- 1074 women heads of departments.

The proportion of women members of municipal councils rose from 16% in 1995 to 20.6% in 2000 (857 women municipal councillors, including five mayors, out of a total of 4 162 municipal councillors).

Women are actively involved in associative life, representing more than one-third of all members of the country's 8 000 associations. Women hold 20% of leading positions in associations and in the country's major national and professional organizations.

The proportion of women in leading positions in the trades unions was estimated at 1% of the membership of leading committees of the General Tunisian Labour Union (UGTT), 12% of members of the Executive Bureau of the Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA) and 9.1% of members of the executive bureau of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP).

7. Women with special needs

The third national "Women and Development" plan of action being implemented during the current 2002-2006 quinquennium includes for the first time a strategy of support and protection for women with special needs.

The strategy is aimed, *inter alia*, at protecting female adolescents against delinquency, supporting unmarried mothers and their children and ensuring the protection of elderly women without family support.

Since 2003, MAFFE has been implementing support and protection projects and actions for such women as part of its programme of partnership with the country's NGOs.

As regards women emigrants, who account for 25% of Tunisian women living abroad, the action taken has consisted principally in creating centres known as "areas for women and the second generation" in the main cities with large Tunisian colonies.

Such centres, of which there were 16 in 2003, are used principally for holding meetings and discussions with the aim of injecting more energy into the social and cultural activities provided.

In 2004, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of its activities in support of emigrant women and families and of the social workers and NGOs operating in host countries, MAFFE set up an "Emigrant Women and Families Unit", whose programme consists essentially of awareness-raising activities.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

A. WOMEN AND POVERTY

1. Socio-economic actions

Tunisia's policy of combating poverty, including that of women, has resulted in a substantial reduction of the poverty rate, which fell from 40% in the 1960s to 7% in the mid-1990s and to 4.2% in 2000.

The remarkable advances achieved in the country's economic and social situation over the past decade reflect the enormous efforts made to improve the nation's economic performance and social well-being.

The Programme of Assistance to Needy Families (PAFN), which is benefiting nearly 121 000 families - in which women account for 53% - is a strong contributor towards socio-economic development.

In its interventions, PAFN gives priority to single-parent families with dependent children where the head of the family is a woman.

The national poverty reduction policy being implemented in Tunisia with active support from voluntary associations is also designed to create the basic conditions for integrating vulnerable sections of the population in the economic circuit by means of appropriate programmes, mechanisms and instruments targeting men as well as women.

These actions, although not intended directly and exclusively for women, have helped to improve the quality of life of women, particularly those living in economically depressed areas, rural enclaves and city outskirts.

The National Solidarity Fund (FSN 26/26), established in 1993, has enabled over 240 000 families to escape from isolation and poverty by transforming the rudimentary dwellings of 56 335 families into salubrious and decent housing, supplying 71 733 families with electric current and piping drinking water to 81 221 families.

Women's access to opportunities for economic integration has also been appreciably facilitated by health-related actions - improved health coverage, improved preventive services during the antenatal period, easier access to medical services due to the creation of health care units throughout the country, and free medical care and hospitalization for persons belonging to disadvantaged social strata.

The generalized implementation of the family planning and fertility control programme and its extension to cover measures of prevention of sexually transmissible diseases and cancer of the breast and uterus have helped to consolidate self-empowerment and a spirit of initiative among women in general and needy women in particular.

2. Promote micro-credits

First the National Solidarity Fund (FSN 26/26) and later the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS), established in late 1997, have been particularly active in granting micro-credits to women promoters of micro-projects without funds of their own and without the standard guarantees giving access to traditional bank loans.

Under Act 99/67 of 15 July 1999, a low-interest credit line for NGOs operating in the field has been established within BTS as part of a new micro-credits mechanism targeting low-income categories and needy families capable of exercising an economic activity.

The proportion of women beneficiaries of BTS loans has thus risen from 34.5% in 2001 to 37.4% in 2002 and 40.3% in 2003.

The breakdown of BTS loans by sector of activity at the end of 2002 was as follows:

- Handicrafts: 10%
- Petty trading: 34%
- Agriculture: 7%
- Services: 49%.

In addition, 20% of loans granted by BTS under the heading of “improving the quality of life” is reserved for women.

Micro-credits are also granted to women by associations operating in the social sphere, including the Tunisian Social Solidarity Union (39%), the Tunis Social Solidarity Federation (37%) and the Atlas Self-Development and Solidarity Federation (26%).

3. Support mechanism for women’s economic initiatives

The support mechanism for women’s economic initiatives, established in 1998 within the framework of the second “Women and Development” strategy (1997-2001), is a programme developed by MAFFE to promote women’s participation in economic life by facilitating women’s access to the funding sources and the training and guidance they need in order to embark upon sustainable income-generating activities.

The mechanism undertakes technical and institutional actions in support of women’s entrepreneurship and helps to strengthen the capacities of the project’s partners in micro-credit management and in assisting women entrepreneurs to create and develop their economic activities, while endeavouring, at the same time, to encourage the forming of a climate of mutual assistance and learning from one another propitious to exchanges of experience and expertise.

The mechanism, which addresses itself particularly to the NGO partners, started out as part of the Tunisian-Canadian co-operative “Support to Women’s Economic Initiatives” project (A.I.E.F.), conducted with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in close collaboration between MAFFE, the Canadian NGO “Oxfam Quebec” and 14 Tunisian NGOs, as well as the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS).

The mechanism also targets staff members of the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS) and women from disadvantaged areas in cities and city outskirts.

Between 1998 and the end of January 2003 the mechanism organized six training workshops for 200 women micro-project promoters.

In the same period it also held 35 training and further training workshops for over 400 executives and field workers belonging to development organizations and BTS.

Early in 2004 the mechanism embarked upon the execution of a new programme financed entirely out of the State budget and designed principally to provide training in grass-roots management techniques and procedures to women beneficiaries of micro-credits. In the first year, training will be provided to a total of 1 000 women.

B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

1. Ensure equal access to education

Equal access to education, free from discrimination of any kind, is not only a right guaranteed by law but also a legal obligation subject to judicial prosecution in the event of non-compliance.

The Orientation Act of 23 July 2002 concerning education and schooling, which introduced schooling for all on the basis of equity and equality of opportunities, provides in its article 1 that “education is an absolute national priority and schooling is a fundamental right guaranteed to all Tunisians without discrimination as to sex, social origin, colour or religion”.

Under article 4 of the same Act, the non-fee-paying nature of instruction in public educational establishments is guaranteed by the State to everyone of school age without discrimination.

Measures taken to ensure effective non-fee-paying education and strict application of compulsory schooling between the ages of 6 and 16 have resulted in the attainment of school enrolment rates close to 100% for children aged 6 years of both sexes.

For the 6-11 age group the rate for both girls and boys has stood at nearly 97% for several years past, while for the 6-16 age group the school enrolment rate for girls has risen from 86.5% in 1997/1998 to 90.1% in 2001/2002 and to 91.4% in 2002/2003, as against, respectively, 88.4%, 90.1 and 90.4% for boys.

The school enrolment rate for girls in the 12-18 age group rose from 67.4% in 1997/1998 to 74.9% in 2001/2002, reaching 77.8% in 2002/2003.

The total number of girls in the 2nd cycle of basic education and in secondary education is changing constantly, having risen from 390 287 in 1996/1997 to 549 943 in 2002/2003, which represents an average annual growth of 5.9%.

In secondary education, girls accounted for 55.6% of all students in 2002/2003 as against 52,1% in 1997/1998.

In the baccalaureate examination, which is an indicator of the success of the policy of promoting girls' education and gender parity, the female students' success rate rose from 49.5% in June 1997 to 72.0% in June 2002, as against, respectively, 43.3% and 68.7% for male students.

In higher education, women students, of whom there are at present 107 673, now outnumber men. Women currently account for 56.4% of the student population.

In 2002/2003 women accounted for 50.2% of teachers in the first cycle of basic education, 52.2% in the second cycle and 42.7% in secondary education.

Women account for 38% of the teaching staff in higher education and 35% of the staff of scientific research institutions.

2. Reduce the school drop-out rate

Apart from guaranteeing equal access to education for everyone, Tunisia's educational policy strives to create conditions that will enable all children to complete their schooling by combating repetition of the school year and early dropping out of school, in particular by girls in rural areas and in cities and city outskirts.

The number of students who complete either cycle of basic schooling with far fewer years lost through having to repeat a year has today increased for both sexes, with, however, a slight edge for girls.

The pass rate at all levels rose from 80.4% in 1997/1998 to 91.3% in 2002/2002 for girls as against, respectively, 76.3% and 87.5% for boys.

Under the 10th development plan (2002-2006), the rates of complete abandonment of schooling and of repeating the school year in the first cycle of basic education are to be reduced to 0.8% and 3%, respectively.

3. Eradicate illiteracy among women

Women's illiteracy has diminished consistently in the last few years owing to the policy of democratisation of schooling and to various specific actions conducted with a view to eradicating this phenomenon.

The national adult education programme, introduced in 2000 and intended principally for young people, women and rural dwellers, sets out to bring down the illiteracy rate to below 18% by 2006. The illiteracy rate of persons aged between 15 and 29 years is to be reduced to less than 3% by the same date.

While the programme gives priority to targeting younger people in the 15-29 age group, it is aimed at all women and girls, who account for 70% of all learners.

The programme also sets out to reduce the illiteracy rate among rural women from 53% in 2000 to 28% in 2004.

The proportion of women among the programme's beneficiaries has increased appreciably, rising from 85.8% in 1998 to 87.6% in 2000, as against 12% for men. Girls aged between 14 and 20 account for one-half (49.8%) of the beneficiaries.

The programme's activities are to be extended in the coming years to cover illiterate women workers employed in economic enterprises and public structures, as well as to include more vocational training for women and especially girls.

4. Improve access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education

Tunisian women's access to national vocational training facilities is guaranteed by the Vocational Training Act of 10 February 1993, which provides that young people, without distinction as to gender, shall receive training in accordance with their choice, motivation and aptitudes.

In 2003, girls accounted for 36% of all students on the books of the National Vocational Training Agency, as against 33.5% in 1999 and 27% in 1996.

Science and technology, on the other hand, continue to meet with some reticence on the part of female students.

The introduction of vocational counselling and information campaigns in secondary schools to encourage more girls to specialize in scientific or technical subjects have brought about a slight improvement, but parity has not been attained.

In 2002-2003, 30.5% of girls opted for arts subjects, 24.4% for experimental sciences and 5.2% for technical subjects.

C. WOMEN AND HEALTH

1. Increase human and material resources

The special efforts made to open new hospital establishments at local, regional and national level have helped to bring our health services closer to women, who have derived great benefit from the developments achieved within the national health system.

The number of basic health care centres (CSSB) reached 2028 in 2002 as against 1922 in 1998, that of district hospitals reaching 113 as against 105 in the same years.

While all governorate centres have hospitals with gynaecological, obstetrical and paediatric departments, 91.2% of the basic health care centres also provide mother and child health and family planning facilities.

High-risk pregnancies and neonates' health problems are treated at University Hospital Centres (CHU), with medical specialists permanently on call and with state-of-the-art equipment.

During the same period 1998 - 2002, numbers of medical and paramedical staff have also risen, reaching a level corresponding to international standards (1 doctor per 1 000 inhabitants and 1 midwife per 2 244 women of childbearing age) in 2002.

Training courses on planning according to the gender equality principle have been organized for doctors in charge of planning and programming with a view to providing them with a better understanding of women's health problems and helping them to identify suitable means of action.

2. Improve maternal health care

Since 1999, Tunisia has integrated its women's health care programmes, including promotion and prevention, in a new global approach towards maternal and infant health care.

The national strategy of reducing maternal deaths, drawn up as part of the National Perinatal Programme in 1998, has helped to bring down maternal mortality in hospitals from 68.9 per 100 000 live births in 1994 to 54 per 100 000 live births in 2002 (the goal being fewer than 40 deaths per 100 000 live births by 2006).

In the countryside, the actions of the National Solidarity Fund (FSN 26/26) to improve living conditions in general and the rural population's health in particular, as well as those conducted by the National Office of Family Planning and Population (ONFP), have greatly contributed towards improving women's health.

ONFP, helped by local rural women organizers, has conducted a special programme entitled "Promotion of family health in economically depressed areas", which aims to promote perinatal and reproductive health.

More than 800 economically depressed areas have received antenatal, postnatal, gynaecological and family planning services from stationary and mobile teams.

The programme of the strategy to promote women's health includes initiatives relating to women's needs in connection with sexually transmissible diseases, HIV/AIDS and other health problems related to sexuality and procreation.

April 2001 saw the introduction of administrative measures obliging legally authorized prostitutes to undergo a rigorous monthly medical check-up with a view to curbing the STD/AIDS hazard.

3. Improve reproductive health

The global approach to reproductive health adopted by ONFP in the early 1990s, encouraged by the recommendations of the Cairo Conference on Population and the Beijing Platform, was marked during the period 1999-2003 by the implementation of a specific strategy based on the introduction of informational and medical reproductive health services as part of stationary and mobile ONFP structures.

Parallel with family planning and perinatal services, the ONFP structures offer services pertaining to infertility treatment, detection and treatment of STD and cancer of the breast and cervix, and psycho-medical care of menopausal women.

The information and medical services relating to reproductive health are no longer restricted to married women of childbearing age (FMAR) but are now available, without distinction, to all persons of childbearing age (PAR).

4. Enhance men's involvement

A programme of action has been launched, in particular in the Centre-West and South regions, with the aim of involving men and encouraging their participation,

Under this programme, male schoolteachers, regarded as first-rate contacts with rural men, are mobilised to conduct individual discussions and group information programmes with a view to overcoming the reluctance observed among men and husbands in the regions concerned.

5. Promote a sense of responsibility in young people

Several Advice and Guidance Units (CEC), operated like medical clinics, have been set up at secondary and higher educational establishments in order to enable students to consult the school or college doctor in connection with their physical or mental health problems, educational or family difficulties, or simply for information on health matters.

In 2002-2003, 2 328 schoolchildren and students, more than half of them girls, availed themselves of these units' services.

The policy of health promotion among the young, including girl children and teenage girls, also provides for advice and guidance units on reproductive health (CIC/SR), which offer continuing information and counselling services by midwives and/or school doctors as well as information, advice and guidance classes at universities and halls of residence.

During the school year 2002-2003, 17 864 students of both sexes (71% girls) visited CIC/SRs and 22 730 students (73% girls) attended health education classes.

The fact that more people are marrying late or choosing to remain single and that sexual life now starts at an earlier age was the main motive behind the launching of the ONFP's specific "Young people and reproductive health/family planning" programme in 1997-2001.

The dynamic thus created in favour of the young is today reflected in the increasing readiness of this part of the population not only to participate in information and education activities but also to avail itself of the services on offer.

in 2003, 13 000 young people had access to services offered by ONFP regional centres.

5. Specific programme

The family health programme in economically disadvantaged areas, launched in late 1995 with the participation of rural women organizers from the areas in question, is being continued in 1016 isolated "priority" localities in the South and Centre governorates with the aim of appreciably improving the population and health indicators in these localities.

D. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1. Prevent and eliminate violence

Tunisia has taken the necessary steps to prevent and limit violence in general and violence against women and children in particular.

The strategy for combating violence in the family, in particular, has been built around three main axes: legislation, institutions, and information coupled with awareness-raising activities.

At the legislative level, Tunisia ratified in 1988 the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Recommendation No. 19 adopted by CEDAW at its 11th session).

The repeal in 1993 of the concept of the wife's submission to the husband and its replacement by that of mutual respect between the spouses (article 23 of the new Personal Status Code (CPS)) consecrated the idea of partnership within the married couple.

Amendments to the Penal Code adopted as part of the legal reforms undertaken in July 1993 also considerably strengthened the right of women to physical integrity with the repeal of article 207 under which the conjugal link had been considered an attenuating circumstance in cases of

murder committed by the male spouse upon his wife or upon her accomplice if caught in flagrante delicto in the act of adultery.

Under new article 218 of the Penal Code, the conjugal link now constitutes an aggravating circumstance justifying a heavier penalty in cases of violence against a spouse.

By confirming the rule of law as the standard of individual and collective behaviour within the institution of the family, these legislative measures have helped to promote conjugal relationships based upon respect of each other's rights.

A new Sexual Harassment Act, currently being drafted, will for the first time in our country's history explicitly introduce the concept of sexual violence into the nation's legislative arsenal.

The policy of combating violence, and in particular violence against women, was also reflected in the establishment in 1992 of an operational unit for advice and legal consultation under the auspices of MAFFE, where requests for assistance are dealt with, in full confidentiality, within the space of 72 hours.

The service is authorized to intervene in cases of conjugal or family conflict and its assistance activities enjoy the support of a multi-disciplinary team of consultants.

Registers are kept in hospital emergency departments and at police stations in order to identify cases of violence against women. A joint circular issued by the Interior and Public Health Ministries on 11 November 1995 invites hospital emergency departments to inform the authorities concerned of any case of violence admitted to or treated by their services.

Associations, which are in closer contact with the population, also contribute extensively towards resolving this problem by setting up reception and legal counselling services at the premises of several women's NGOs.

The National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT), the country's oldest and largest women's organization, provides free legal consultations for women seeking advice and assists victims of violence by taking them, where necessary, into legal and psychological care at its "centre for the reception and guidance of women in distress".

The UNFT centre, inaugurated in August 2003, guarantees a safe temporary residence to threatened women and provides them with moral assistance and medical monitoring.

The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM) has recently opened premises for receiving women victims of violence or in distress, while the Tunisian Organization for Education and the Family (OTEF) has set up a corps of family mediators, which intervenes in cases of conjugal and family conflict, informing the protagonists of their rights and duties.

The Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (ATFD) is also participating in the national effort to combat all forms of violence against women.

In 1996, with a view to preventing violence, MAFFE launched a campaign entitled “civic responsibility begins at home” in the hope of promoting dialogue as a means of settling family disputes.

One of the main goals of MAFFE’s communication strategy is to prevent violence among young people and children by encouraging relationships based on mutual respect.

With this end in mind, awareness-raising clubs have been set up in university departments and halls of residence in order to promote a law-abiding culture of equality and human rights and to disseminate the new provisions of the Personal Status Code among the student population.

In addition, MAFFE has, as part of its family action plan, run a series of regional training and awareness-raising lectures on relations within the couple and the family for the benefit of NGO activists and social workers in direct contact with families.

2. Study the causes and consequences of violence against women

In addition to a first study on relations within the Tunisian family conducted in 1999-2000, MAFFE is currently completing a second study (CAP) on violence against women both within the family and in society.

The study, based on a sample composed of both victims and perpetrators of violence and conducted with the participation of professional law-court, prison and health workers, is expected to help to identify the causes and forms of violence and to establish the typical profiles of both victims and perpetrators, as well as to assess the consequence of violence against women in terms of health, the economy and society at large.

A study carried out by UNFT across the whole national territory in 1991 among the main actors concerned on the basis of a sample of 1 000 persons made it possible to analyse for the first time the social, cultural and institutional aspects of conjugal violence.

3. Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking

Trafficking in women is a phenomenon unknown in Tunisia. Nevertheless, our country has stigmatised and condemned the practice by adopting and ratifying the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Act No.5 of 21 January 2003 and Decree No.698 of 25 March 2003).

Authorized prostitution is controlled and subject to strict checks, in particular from the health angle, while surveillance measures are deployed to combat clandestine prostitution and procuring, both of which are prohibited and severely punished by law.

Children, including the girl child, are protected by the Child Protection Code (CPE) against all forms of violence that might be exercised against them.

Articles 31 and 32 of the Code make it obligatory for all persons, including those bound to observe professional secrecy, to notify cases of violence of which a child may be the victim in any setting whatsoever, including that of the family.

E. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICTS

Tunisia has ratified the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War as well as the 1981 Inhumane Weapons Convention, and participates actively in the international campaign for the prohibition of anti-personnel mines.

The women's group set up within the Organization of the Tunisian Red Crescent under the name of "Ladies' Committee of the Tunisian Red Crescent" participates in promoting women's participation in the development of a culture of peace, observed and implemented by Tunisia, by conducting awareness-raising activities among schoolchildren and young people.

F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

1. Promote women's economic rights

Over the past decade Tunisia has intensified its deliberate policy of promoting women's economic rights and independence, in particular by further improving women's access to employment, establishing appropriate working conditions and enhancing opportunities of access to training and to economic resources.

The law governing labour in both the public and the private sectors explicitly guarantees equality of opportunities and of employment without discrimination between the sexes. It grants special rights to women in connection with their status as mothers.

In the public sector, respect of equality of opportunities as regards the taking up and performance of duties is compulsory under the General Statute for personnel of the State, local authorities and public establishments of an administrative nature.

Article 10 of the Statute prohibits any mention of political, philosophical or religious opinions in the personal file of a civil servant, male or female. The same provisions appear in the General Statute for personnel of public enterprises.

The private sector, for its part, offers the same guarantees. The Labour Code and the Framework Collective Agreement prohibit discrimination between the sexes, the employment of women for night work or underground work, and wrongful breach of contract on grounds of pregnancy.

Paid maternity leave of variable duration depending on the sector concerned, as well as time off for breast-feeding, are also provided under the legal regulations in force.

Act No. 17/2000 of 7 February 2000 repealing certain articles of the Code of Obligations and Contracts abolished the outdated provisions that used to require the consent of the male spouse

as a precondition for employing a woman and gave him the right to dissolve, as he saw fit, any labour contract she might have concluded with an employer.

Tunisia's accession to international conventions proclaiming equality of opportunities and of treatment between the sexes in the sphere of work proceeds from the same will to promote women's economic rights and to safeguard women's inalienable right to work.

2. Programmes designed to stimulate employment

Within the framework of the policy of stimulating employment, our public authorities have developed programmes taking the form of work initiation training periods (SIVP, levels 1 and 2) with public or private enterprises, local public establishments or public administrations or of employment-training contracts (CEF) by agreement with enterprises.

These programmes, designed to enhance the capacity of job seekers to find their place on the labour market, are open without discrimination to both men and women.

Between 1997 and 2001, the number of women beneficiaries of work initiation training periods was 21 791 as against 17 427 men, or a proportion of 55.6%, for level 1 and 4 496 women as against 6 697 men, or 40.1%, for level 2.

During the same period, 3 702 women received employment-training contracts as against 4 502 men (45.1%).

3. Upgrading women job-seekers' qualifications

The National Employment Fund (FNE), set up under article 13 of the Finance Act (No.99-101 of December 1999) for the year 2000, finances operations designed to upgrade the qualifications of job-seekers having difficulties in entering the economic circuit irrespective of their age, sex, educational level or social origin.

By the end of December 2002, the Fund's beneficiaries numbered 218 029, including 69 067 women (31.7%). In 2004, that figure had risen to over 350 000 beneficiaries.

Thanks to various programmes conducted within the framework of FNE, 7 364 women holders of higher education diplomas have received training in a variety of specialized fields, in particular data processing and multimedia communications.

Over 150 women of different educational levels have also received training leading to qualifications in special fields such as telephone line maintenance, while 32 618 other women have attended training sessions.

Over 7 000 women were, moreover, admitted to courses of training at public or private vocational training centres, while 301 others received work-experience training as group leaders or organizers.

4. A strongly developing demand for employment

According to the Tunisian Employment and Self-Employment Agency's report on the employment market situation, the number of women in search of a vocational activity who addressed themselves to employment and self-employment exchanges increased by a factor of approximately 2.65 during the period 1994-2002, rising from 53 887 to 142 624 between the first and the last of those years.

A comparison with the number of male job-seekers shows that women accounted for 33.63% of the total demand for employment in 1994 as against 43.3% in 2002.

5. Some progress on the supply side

The number of women having obtained employment rose from 25 497 in 1994 to 33 120 in 2002, which represents an increase by nearly 30%. In 1995, the number of women job seekers corresponded to 49.9% of that of men, women accounting for 33.3% of all posts filled.

In 2002 the number of women job seekers corresponded to 61.26% of that of men, and women accounted for 38% of the general total of placements. These figures confirm the trend towards gender parity in employment.

6. Development of women's employment by sector of activity

Women account for a quarter (25.3%) of the active population (15 years and over) and for 25.1% of the active population in work.

The past decade has seen a clear progression of women's employment, characterised by a more massive entry of women into traditional sectors as well as into those generally reserved for men, such as mining, energetics, building and public works.

In parallel with this development, the period also witnessed a decline in the rate of women's unemployment, which fell from 17.2% in 1994 to 15.3% in 2001.

However, despite the progress achieved, Tunisia continues to explore ways and means of consolidating women's access to the labour market and of speeding up rates of development in that area.

7. Encouraging women's entrepreneurship

This has formed the subject of particular efforts in the past few years. Between 1996 and 2001, 2 137 women (or 37% of all beneficiaries) received special training within the framework of the "business creation – training of entrepreneurs" module set up in order to train future entrepreneurs of both sexes in the management of micro-businesses, market rules and business creation.

A breakdown by professional profile shows that 35% of these women are holders of higher education diplomas, 39.6% are holders of diplomas from vocational training centres and 33.5% are former employees who have lost their jobs for economic reasons.

Micro-businesses created by women beneficiaries of training sessions within the framework of this module were located in the industrial sector (39%), the services sector (45%) and the agricultural sector (18%).

8. Special actions on behalf of women with special needs

Handicapped women Taking the view that a handicap must not automatically preclude access to employment in the public or private sector, Tunisian law has removed the obstacles that had previously stood in the way of handicapped persons of either sex entering the labour sphere provided they possessed the necessary aptitudes.

A number of measures reflecting this choice have been adopted, in particular the granting of financial advantages to enterprises employing handicapped persons.

In 2002, 1 689 handicapped persons including 382 women, or **22.26%** of handicapped jobseekers, were recruited. Of these persons, 21.2% obtained paid work in the private sector.

9. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks

The "Hirafyet" (craftswomen) Forum of Women Producers, held annually for the past seven years under the auspices of MAFFE, sets out to promote a more efficient integration of craftswomen in commercial networks and the economic circuit as a whole.

A second major national economic event, EXPO-FEMINA, held periodically by the National Council of Women Heads of Enterprises, participates in the Government's effort to strengthen the economic capacities of women entrepreneurs by exploring new commercial outlets for women.

G. WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

1. In the Executive

Women account for 13.6% of Government members. There are six women in the Government, one being the Minister of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs and five being Secretaries of State for, respectively, Housing, Hospital Establishments, Social Advancement, Foreign Affairs and Children's Affairs.

2. In the Legislative

The proportion of women in Parliament has varied from one legislature to another, rising from 7.4% in 1994 to 11.5% in 1999.

Today, the Tunisian Parliament, in which several parties are represented, counts 21 women deputies, including one from an opposition party (UDU), for a total of 182 members.

A woman holds the post of second vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies and another is the chairperson of one of the Chamber's standing committees.

3. In regional and local bodies

The proportion of women members of municipal councils rose from 16% in 1995 to 20.62%, or 657 women councillors out of a total of 4 193, after the latest municipal elections (2000-2005).

Of these women, 169 (or 19.53%) hold responsible positions in their town halls, 5 women being Mayors, 5 First Deputy Mayors and 59 Deputy Mayors.

4. In consultative bodies

Women are also represented on consultative bodies. There are 19 women, or 17,5%, among the 110 members of the Economic and Social Council (CES).

They also sit on higher advisory councils, such as the Higher Council of the Magistrature (13/3%) or the Higher Council of Communications (6.6%).

5. In the Judiciary

In 2002, Tunisia counted

- 392 women magistrates out of a total of 1 524, or 25.7%, of whom 15.13% in positions of responsibility;
- 1132 women barristers out of a total of 3 976, or 28% ;
- 42 women judicial experts out of a general total of 1 757, or 2.39%;
- 63 women notary bailiffs out of 647, or 10%;
- 98 women notaries out of a general total of 783, or 12.5% ;
- 13 women sworn interpreters out of a total of 64, or 20.3%;
- 3 women court agents and judiciary liquidators out of 51, or 5.9%; and
- 4 judiciary administrators out of 45, or 8.9%.

6. In political parties

Women are particularly welcome in the ranks of the Constitutional Democratic Assembly (RCD), the party in power, which, acting upon the President's recommendations, has provided multiple opportunities for women's participation over the past decade.

Since 1992, the RCD has:

- Established a Permanent General Secretariat for Women's Affairs;
- Appointed 28 women deputy general secretaries of Coordinating Committees in all parts of the country.

Following the last Party Congress, held in July 2003, women's representation on the Central Committee was strengthened and a second woman was appointed to the Political Bureau, the party's supreme body.

Women at present account for:

- 26% of the membership of the Central Committee of the RCD;
- 21.25% of basic party cells, as against 2.9 in 1988; and
- 21% of local federations, as against 2.1% in 1988.

The other (opposition) parties, seven in number, namely the Movement of Socialist Democrats (MDS), the "Ettajdid" ("Renewal") Movement (ex-communist party), the People's Union Party (PUP), the Social Democratic Party (PSL), the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), the Unionist Democratic Union (UDU) and the Democratic Front for Labour and Freedoms (FDTL) all support a policy of promoting women's status in political life.

7. In trade unions and employers' associations

Tunisian women exercise their trade union rights, guaranteed under article 8 of the Constitution, within both local and national trade union structures.

In 2002, women's representation on the governing boards of the three major trade union organizations was as follows:

- 1% of members of the governing board of the General Tunisian Labour Union (UGTT);
- 12% of members of the Executive Bureau of the Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA); and
- 9.1% of members of the Executive Bureau of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP).

8. In national institutions

Tunisia has entrusted certain highly responsible positions to women, including those of:

- Administrative Mediator
- First President of the Court of Audit.

9. In the civil service

Tunisian women have access to the highest ranks of the civil service.

Two women currently hold the post of adviser to the Presidency of the Republic.

In 2003, women holding executive posts in the civil service accounted for 22.17% of all such posts, as against 15.15% in 2000 and 14.01% in 1998.

In May 2004 a woman was appointed for the first time in the history of Tunisia to the post of Governor (Prefect).

At present the civil service counts:

- One woman secretary-general (28 men);
- 28 women directors-general (355 men);
- 195 women directors (907 men);
- 403 women assistant directors (1 386 men); and
- 1 074 women heads of section (3 296 men).

I. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

1. Equality before the law: a vital choice

During the past decade, four legislative codes – the Personal Status Code, the Nationality Code, the Criminal Code and the Labour Code – have undergone reform, which has further consolidated women’s rights.

The period also saw the promulgation of the Code of International Private Law, which extends the acquired rights of Tunisian women to non-Tunisians.

The obligation of obedience imposed on the female spouse has been replaced by mutual respect between spouses, goodwill and mutual assistance in the management of the home and of children’s affairs (new article 23 of the Personal Status Code).

In the same spirit of gender equality, women’s position in guardianship matters has been strengthened by the institution of the principle of co-responsibility within the couple in matters pertaining to the management of the affairs of the children and of the family in general. This was achieved by strengthening the prerogatives of mothers in decision-making and guardianship matters, going as far as to award guardianship to the mother in the event of the father’s inability to exercise it. In the past, this right had always gone to a male member of the family.

Amendments introduced since 1990 have also appreciably strengthened the right of women to physical integrity. The existence of a conjugal link is now regarded as an aggravating circumstance in cases of murder committed by the husband against the wife or her accomplice surprised in the act of adultery. Under the amended Criminal Code, such an act is now treated as a crime.

Another step towards gender equality was taken in 1997 when non-discrimination on grounds of sex explicitly took the rank of a constitutional principle under new article 8 of Constitutional Act No. 97-65 dated 27 October 1997, which enjoins political parties to undertake to “ban all forms of discrimination”.

The promulgation in 1998 of two Acts, one of which grants women the right to attribute a family name to their children if the father is unknown and the other institutes the regime of common ownership of property between spouses, further consolidated women’s rights and their status as fully-fledged individuals and citizens.

Two amendments to the Nationality Code (Acts No.93-62 of 23 June 1993 and No. 2002-4 of 21 January 2002), broadening the conditions under which Tunisian women married to foreigners may transmit their nationality to their children born outside the national territory, further reflect the will to bring discrimination between men and women definitively to an end.

2. Women's right to work: equal pay for equal skills

By ratifying numerous international instruments, including in particular the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibiting all discriminatory practices against women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the normative international instrument in this sphere, and ILO Conventions No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration, No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, No. 117 concerning Social Policy (basic goals and standards) and No.122 concerning Employment Policy, Tunisia has confirmed its commitment to promoting women's rights and combating all forms of distinction, exclusion and discrimination against women.

The revised Labour Code (February 1994) expressly provides that no discrimination between men and women may be made in implementing the Code.

The principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" is in full force within the civil service. The same is true of the Act governing the general rules for employees of public enterprises, which prohibits any distinction between the sexes.

In the agricultural sector, the wages of women workers have been aligned with those of male workers of the same category, thus ending the system that made women workers' pay 15% lower than that of men. This was achieved by repealing the provisions concerning the minimum wage in the agricultural sector, some of which – in particular those referring specifically to women's wages for agricultural work - were liable to give rise to discriminatory interpretations.

In order to guarantee women's full enjoyment of the right to non-discriminatory remuneration, our lawmakers have provided for inspections of the proper implementation of legal provisions, regulations and agreements governing labour relations and for the detection and, where necessary, the punishment of any breaches. Those who infringe legal provisions, regulations or agreements relating to the minimum wage incur criminal and administrative sanctions.

3. Adhesion to universal human rights

Tunisian has also become party to international instruments and conventions relating to the consolidation of women's human rights and individual freedoms that command a consensus on the world scale.

Thus it has ratified all international conventions directly or indirectly concerned with the rights of women and of the girl child in both public and private life, including, in particular, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married

Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

J. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

1. Improve women's means of self-expression

Tunisia's media landscape, which has undergone profound qualitative and quantitative changes in the past decade, the latest being the admission of private companies to television broadcasting – previously a State monopoly – in early 2004, makes it possible for women to make their voices heard more than in the past.

Besides the women's pages of general information newspapers, our press now offers 7 women's periodicals, as follows:

- The review "Femme" of the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT);
- "Info-Crédif", a fortnightly review published by the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF);
- "Mères Echos", a quarterly issued by the Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM);
- "Kawthariat", a review issued by the Centre of Arab Women (KAWTAR);
- "Alkalil" ("Bouquets"), a monthly published by the "Alkalil" cultural association;
- "Nuances", a private monthly; and
- "Siwar" ("Bracelet"), likewise a monthly publication.

2. Training and continuing training of women in journalism

Since 1998, the Tunis Institute of Press and Information Sciences (IPSI), an academic institution offering basic training to Tunisian journalists, has seen a marked increase in the number of women in its student body.

Young women admitted to IPST in 2002/2003 numbered 1 351 as against only 485 in 1998/1999. Male students accounted for half of the intake.

In 2002, the profession included 327 women journalists as against 951 men, which means that women accounted for 34.38% of the total number of journalist's card holders. The corresponding figure in 1991 had been 21%.

The largest proportion of women journalists is to be found in the printed press (newspapers, periodicals and agencies). The progression of women's participation in the audio-visual media and in image production is slow but sure, as is also the case with regard to women's accession to decision-making posts, a woman having been appointed President Director-General of one of the country's largest press organs in 2002.

3. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media

MAFFE is implementing an information, education and communication strategy (IEC) focused on the dissemination of a culture of equality and non-discrimination against women.

The IEC strategy, which is based on participatory methods, is designed to combat sexist behaviour and retrograde attitudes in the short term, so that in the medium and longer term our society, and particularly its male members, may become more firmly rooted in democratic culture and human rights and so that values of equality and partnership may become irreversibly anchored in the mentalities and lived experience of Tunisians.

Recourse to multimedia plans associating all means of audio-visual and written communication (TV ads, leaflets, posters, brochures), as well as other means of interpersonal communication (direct contacts, meetings, symposia, seminars), forms part of the global approach adopted by MAFFE in pursuing its goals of promoting equality and women's empowerment while preserving respect of the national identity and the fundamental principles of Tunisia's culture.

Within this framework, MAFFE has conducted awareness-raising campaigns among young people, in particular in the form of clubs for the promotion of education in legal matters organized at university halls of residence.

Awareness-raising seminars have also been organized by MAFFE for the benefit of people involved in producing images, such as anchormen and producers of television broadcasts, editors and journalists, script-writers and producers of TV series, advertisers, authors of strip cartoons, etc., in an effort to persuade them of the importance of communicating a positive image of women through their products.

CREDIF, the scientific institution sponsored by MAFFE, also continues to participate in the battle against stereotypes through its mechanism (Observatory) for monitoring the image of the Tunisian woman, established in 1996.

K. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

1. Active involvement in environmental decision-making

Tunisia's actions to ensure women's effective involvement in the protection of ecosystems and the promotion of sustainable development continue to enjoy the support of all governmental and civil society partners, united within the framework of the strategy adopted in this area.

From its inception, the annual celebration of a National Environment Day has provided an opportunity for communication and information about the year's attainments in spreading environmental culture.

Tree-Planting Day, another important date on the ecological calendar, offers women an annual occasion for planting tree shoots in all parts of the country, especially those threatened by desertification.

Besides actions organized by the public authorities, many women's NGOs ("Women for Sustainable Development", "Women's Action for Sustainable Development", "Tunisia 21", "Inter-Arab Enda", "Tunisian Mothers' Association - ATM", the "Women and Environment" alliance of the National Union of Tunisian Women – UNFT), as well as professional associations connected with the environment (Collective Interest Association - AIC and Agricultural Services Cooperatives – CSA) are conducting environmental awareness-raising activities aimed at the public at large or at intermediate audiences.

2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development

Our integrated development programmes, constructed around the three major goals of soil and water conservation, woodland development and more intensive tillage of irrigated land, devote particular attention to women's integration in land management and use as both actors and beneficiaries of the policy of preservation of natural resources.

L. THE GIRL CHILD

1. Promote individual rights

In the past decade, Tunisia has done everything possible to provide the girl child with all legal and institutional guarantees capable of strengthening her equality status, protecting her against possible harmful social practices, safeguarding her rights and making her needs and her potential better known to the population at large.

In 2002, Tunisia became party to two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and that on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Decree No. 2002-42 of 7 May 2002).

The ratification of ILO Conventions No.138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Act No. 95-62 of 10 July 1995) and No. 182 concerning Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour testifies to Tunisia's will to align itself with international legislation guaranteeing human (women's and children's) rights and to contribute towards the process of eliminating discrimination and consolidating better living conditions for all and especially for children.

Furthermore, the legal obligation to attribute a family name to children abandoned by their parents or those of unknown paternity (Act No. 2003-31 of 7 July 2003 amending and supplementing Act No. 98-75 of 28 October 1998) should guarantee the right of such children to an identity and to protect them, from birth, against dangers arising from possible discriminatory practices due to the lack of a family name.

2. Establishment of protection mechanisms

The monitoring mechanism (Observatory) for information, training, documentation and studies in children's rights, set up by Decree No. 2002-327 of 14 February 2002, is proving most effective in helping the public authorities to develop policies and programmes designed to promote the rights of the child, formulating observations and proposing new measures to improve the children's rights situation.

The mechanism is also responsible for facilitating communication and disseminating a culture of children's rights among structures involved in implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or in other activities in that area.

The establishment in 2003 of the Higher Council for Children (Decree No. 2003-1054 of 5 May 2003), presided by the Prime Minister, has created another centre at which the situation of children in our country is monitored and national plans are developed for their benefit.

The Children's Parliament created by virtue of the Act of 17 April 2002 supplementing and amending the Child Protection Code, as well as the Municipal Councils for Children, are likewise in line with the national imperative of inculcating a culture of democracy and human rights in our citizens from an early age.

The Children's Parliament, which is composed of equal numbers of girls and boys, enables children to express their views and to participate in the national debate on national issues, including those relating to civic responsibility, democracy and the rights of the child.

PART THREE: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the past decade Tunisia has consolidated the institutional mechanisms called upon to support the promotion of women's rights.

1. Ministry of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs (MAFFE)

Set up by virtue of the measures of 13 August 1992, the ministerial Department initially entrusted with Women's and Family Affairs was expanded in September 2002 to cover children's affairs as well.

This restructuring has enabled MAFFE to further develop and improve its action and to achieve its goals with greater efficiency.

2. National Council on Women and the Family (CNFF)

The membership of this consultative body, which supports MAFFE in developing partnership relations between governmental and non-governmental institutions in matters of policy on women and the family, was expanded in March 2004 to include more partners from civil society, social agencies and national bodies recognized for their action in the promotion of women's rights.

CNFF remains the appropriate centre for discussion on major policies and reports relating to women and the family, the coordinating instrument par excellence between governmental and non-governmental institutions in matters of policy on women and the family, and the appropriate framework for debate on actions and programmes to be undertaken.

3. National "Women and Development" Commission

This body, set up by the President of the Republic in 1991, is responsible for drafting and implementing plans of action concerning women designed to promote increased participation by women as both actors and beneficiaries in the nation's development effort.

Three plans of action have already been prepared and two have been implemented in the course of, respectively, the eighth and ninth National Development Plans.

In the third plan of action, executed during the tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan, emphasis was placed on the five following priority areas:

- Women and the world of science
- Women and the economy
- Rural women
- Women with special needs
- Women in public and civic life.

4. Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF)

This body has confirmed its position as an efficient mechanism for reflection, training and national and international exchanges on matters pertaining to women.

CREDIF 's main tasks consist in encouraging study and research on women and their status in Tunisian society, collecting and ensuring the dissemination of data and documentation relating to the status of women, and producing progress reports on the status of women in Tunisian society.

CREDIF has set up an Office (or Observatory) for Monitoring the Status of Women, whose job it is to provide reliable information on the realities and progress of the situation of women in Tunisia by conducting studies and surveys, preparing annual reports and organizing national and regional seminars.

CREDIF has also set up a bibliographical database and a computerized library on women, offering access to information on the status of women in Tunisia, North Africa, the Arab world and the French-speaking world.

In addition, as a result of information exchange agreements with various institutions providing information on women in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, it has established two information networks, the Information Network on Women (RIF) and the North African Information Network on Women (REMIF).

Chosen as a centre of excellence by UNFPA, CREDIF has, since 1996, run a training course for Arab and African women on the subject of gender, population and development.

In 1997, with the support of UNESCO, CREDIF established an International Chair of Status of Women Studies, whose activities include holding international conferences for research workers, academics and others active in the status of women area and organizing training and study visits in Tunisia as well as training sessions designed to introduce "gender analysis" into research, planning and organizing.

It also runs a training course for Tunisian women executives on career development, the introduction of the "gender and development" approach, and work psychology in human resources management.

5. The Children's Parliament

The Children's Parliament, created by virtue of the Act of 17 April 2002 supplementing and amending the Child Protection Code, participates in inculcating values of civic responsibility, tolerance, democratic culture and human rights in children from an early age, without distinction as to gender.

The Parliament, which is made up of equal numbers of boys and girls, provides children with an area in which they can express their views, take part in the running of civic affairs, and be initiated into the world of civic responsibilities and duties.

6. The monitoring mechanism (Observatory) for information, training, documentation and studies on protection of the rights of the child

Created by virtue of Decree No.2002-327 of 14 February 2002, the Observatory assists the authorities in developing policies and programmes aimed at promoting the rights of the child, including those of the girl child. It formulates observations based on its monitoring activities and proposes measures designed to improve the status of children and the protection of their rights.

It is, moreover, entrusted with facilitating communication and the dissemination of a culture of children's rights among all structures involved in the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection Code.

7. Child Protection Delegates

These officers, of whom there are at present 24, intervene in all cases where the health or physical or moral integrity of a child (boy or girl) is threatened or endangered.

The delegates, all of whom are specialists in preventing child abuse, protecting children and promoting their rights, are empowered to take all necessary measures in order to determine the child's needs and safeguard his or her best interests.

A post of General Delegate for Child Protection was created in 2002 to oversee, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the activities of the Child Protection Delegates.

PART FOUR MAIN CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

In accordance with its political will to consolidate women's rights and strengthen their role as citizens and partners in the development effort, Tunisia has drawn up a list of the priority areas on which its future action is to be focused.

From today until 2006, emphasis will be placed on the following:

- Women and the world of science
- Women and the economy
- Rural women
- Women with special needs
- Women in public and civic life.

1. Women's access to the world of science

Efforts in this area will be focused on:

- Conducting actions aimed at increasing the number of women in scientific and technical departments of teaching and training establishments;
- Raising the level of women's qualifications with a view to enabling them to adjust more readily to the demands of today's information society and to the world of science in general;
- Consolidating women's mastery of new technologies so as to facilitate their access to the new occupations generated by these advances.

2. Women's integration in the economy

Women's increasing presence on the labour market, in new occupations and in more developed branches of economic activity calls for the strengthening of their capacity to meet the challenges of a constantly changing economic environment and to adapt themselves to new economic demands.

Actions advocated in this connection will consist in:

- Devising programmes and instruments to assist women's integration in the labour market;
- Creating mechanisms to monitor the development of the economic situation on behalf of women;
- Collecting and processing relevant information on the labour market and disseminating it to women;
- Conducting studies to assess women's presence on the labour market as employees or employers and to measure the impact of existing employment programmes and investment incentives;
- Identifying new occupations and new methods of work and production.

3. Promotion of rural women

(a) Integration of rural women in the development process

Rural women play an important role in creating the family income, maintaining the stability of the family and preserving the balance of rural life at all levels.

Yet despite all the progress achieved in improving conditions of life in the countryside, rural women's integration in development continues to meet with difficulties in certain regions.

In order to address these shortcomings, efforts from now until 2006 will be concentrated on pursuing the execution of the national strategy for rural women and on upgrading the instruments employed to that end. This will be achieved by:

- Taking specific measures to protect rural girls from dropping out of school and returning to a state of illiteracy by intensifying the mobilization of illiterate women within the framework of an adult education programme and by adapting teaching methods to the realities of rural women's lives;
- Upgrading training centres for rural girls and rehabilitating vocational training centres, in particular through the introduction of new subjects more in line with present-day requirements;
- Consolidating the economic role of rural women and expanding their participation in collective development by improving coordination between activities and programmes launched on their behalf and by bringing closer the services offered, especially those relating to agriculture and handicrafts, in terms of popularization as well as of production and distribution;
- Developing a programme to promote a better image of rural women in the media;
- Strengthening the effective participation of a greater number of rural women in the work of associations as both actors and beneficiaries.

(b) Upgrading the vocational qualifications of rural girls

After conducting an evaluation of the attainments of training centres for rural girls, which are meeting with difficulties due, in particular, to a shortage of basic infrastructures, equipment and qualified female training staff, MAFFE has developed, in collaboration with the parties concerned, a strategy of restructuring and upgrading these centres so as to make them capable of dispensing training that will equip rural young women with appropriate qualifications and assist their social and economic integration.

The 42 centres eventually affected by this strategy will offer polyvalent training to rural young women providing them with qualifications that will enable them to become employed or self-employed in such areas as agriculture (bee-keeping, poultry-keeping, market gardening), cutting and dressmaking, industrial cutting, data processing, embroidery, upholstery, weaving, hairdressing, dry-cleaning, animal breeding, flower drying, wood carving, etc.

In addition to vocational training, the training modules on offer initiate the young beneficiaries into project management and the use of marketing techniques. Literacy classes and courses in social skills (infant care, domestic science) are also provided.

4. Support for women with special needs

Action taken to remedy shortcomings observed in this area and to meet future challenges will focus principally on the following:

(a) Protection of adolescent girls

This action will take the form of:

- Strengthening programmes for the protection of female adolescents against delinquency
- Broadening the scope of support, prevention, awareness-raising and educational programmes.

(b) Support for unmarried mothers

Programmes of assistance to unmarried mothers will be focused on:

- Multiplying actions for the prevention of unwanted pregnancies
- Intensifying support, advice and guidance activities aimed at girls.

(c) Support for women emigrants

The interest taken in emigrant women will be intensified through the following actions:

- Development of the special programme of social and cultural support to emigrant women of the second and third generation;
- Setting up new specialized centres in cities with a high emigration density;
- Encouraging emigrant women to promote projects in the home country;
- The **“Emigrant Women and Families” unit** set up by MAFFE in 2004 to ensure more effective targeting of actions in support of emigrant women and families and of social workers and NGOs operating in the host country.

(d) Combating violence against women

Action will focus, in particular on:

- Intensifying activities designed to raise awareness, educate the public and prevent violence against women;
- Strengthening the role of civil society associations operating in this field.

(e) Combating exclusion

In this respect, the national strategy of promoting women’s rights will focus on:

- Reinforcing all forms of assistance to low-income or needy women, elderly women without family support and handicapped women;

- Promoting a policy of solidarity, mutual aid and prevention of exclusion.

5. Women in public and civic life

From now until 2006, emphasis will be placed on:

- Increasing the number of women in decision-making posts;
- Increasing the number of actions designed to strengthen women's participation in various structures of public and political life;
- Widening the range of application of programmes designed to change people's mentalities through awareness-raising and educational activities within the framework of the **IEC strategy** (Information, Education and Communication) dedicated to the principle of gender equality and partnership between men and women.

6. Institutionalization of the gender approach

The establishment of the "Women and Development" Commission marked an important turning point in Tunisia's development planning.

In entrusting the Commission with drafting and implementing five-year plans for women's integration in development as both actors and beneficiaries, Tunisia has equipped itself with an effective institutional mechanism permanently committing the Executive, the Legislative and civil society to the dynamic institutionalization of the gender approach at all stages of preparation and implementation of development policies.

This technical commission, in collaboration with all relevant Government departments and with representatives of civil society, prepares draft plans of action for presentation by its Chairperson, the Minister of Women's Family and Children's Affairs, to the Council of Ministers presided by the President of the Republic.

Upon approval by the Council of Ministers, the plans are submitted to the Chamber of Deputies for discussion and adoption.

During the execution stage, the plans of action are annually evaluated within the Commission by the various departments involved.

This set of procedures has provided MAFFE with a monitoring and evaluation mechanism based upon the formal commitment of all partners.

In 2003, with a view to accelerating the institutionalization of the gender approach, MAFFE introduced a programme targeting the departments engaged in the development of human resources and employment. This programme is to continue until 2005.

The main activities envisaged during this period will focus on the following:

- Institutionalisation of the gender approach in the health sector (training of doctors and statisticians);
- Preparation of a national report on “women and men within the health system” (including a guide to the gender approach);
- Carrying out a national survey on the “time budgets” of women and men in Tunisia in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics.

ANNEXES

Table 1: Development by gender of school enrolment rates (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Age group
2. Gender
3. Boys
4. Girls
5. 6-11 years
6. 6-16 years
7. 12-18 years

Table 2: Development by gender of student rates in the second cycle of basic education and in secondary education (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. School year
2. Student rate (girls)
3. Student rate (boys)

Table 3. Development by gender of specializations chosen by students entering secondary education (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Boys
2. Girls
3. Total
4. Sports
5. Arts
6. Mathematics
7. Experimental sciences
8. Technical subjects
9. Economics, management

Table 4. Success rate by gender at the end of the 6th year of basic schooling (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Boys
2. Girls
3. Total
4. June

Table 5. Pass rate by gender, all levels (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Year
2. Gender
3. Boys
4. Girls
5. Pass rate, all levels

Table 6. Development by gender of success rates in the baccalaureate examination (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Year
2. June
3. Gender
4. B
5. G
6. Arts
7. Mathematics
8. Experimental sciences
9. Technical subjects
10. Economics and management
11. Total

Table 7. Development by gender of rates of repeating a school year (TR) and of school drop-out (AS) in the 1st cycle of basic education (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Year
2. Gender
3. B
4. G
5. 1st year
6. 2nd year
7. 3rd year
8. 4th year
9. 5th year
10. 6th year

Table 8: (identical with Table 3)

Table 9: Development by gender of the student population aged 20 to 24 years (Source: CREDIF Observatory)

1. Year
2. Male students
3. Female students

Table 10. Development of the number of female students registered in the adult education programme (Source: Report of Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity)

1. Year
2. Total number of students
3. Women students
4. Women, %

Table 11. Development by gender of number of teaching staff, basic and secondary schools (Source: Ministry of Education and Training)

1. Level
2. Women
3. Men

4. Total
5. Preparatory year
6. 1st cycle
7. 2nd cycle
8. Secondary schools
9. Technical schools

Table 12. Development of the number of medical and paramedical staff (Source: Ministry of Public Health)

1. Medical staff
2. Midwives exercising in peripheral facilities
3. Ratio of midwives to women of childbearing age
4. Ratio of doctors to number of inhabitants

Table 13. Principal results attained in the field of maternal health (Source: Ministry of Public Health)

1. Results recorded
2. Improved prenatal control
3. Improved proportion of medically controlled confinements
4. Improved post-natal control
5. Improved rate of contraception use

Table 14. Number of consultations at reproductive health services, 2002 (Source: Ministry of Public Health)

1. Type of service performed
2. Number
3. Early detection of breast cancer
4. Early detection of cancer of the cervix
5. Consultations relating to sexually transmissible diseases
6. Consultations relating to infertility
7. Consultations relating to the menopause

Table 15. Development of the main women's health indicators (Source: Ministry of Public Health)

1. Indicators
2. Synthetic fertility index (SFI)
3. Life expectancy, women
4. Rate of contraceptive use
5. Birth rate
6. Overall death rate
7. Natural growth rate
8. Age at 1st marriage, women/men
9. Mother's age at birth of 1st child
10. Years of life devoted to motherhood
11. Life expectancy at birth of last child

Table 16. Cases of violence against women (Source: Ministry of the Interior and of Local Development)

1. Year
2. Trials for violence against women within the family
3. Cases of violence against women outside the family
4. Total

Table 17. Development of the economically active female population by sector of activity (Source: Population and employment survey, INS, 2002)

1. Sector of activity
2. Agriculture
3. Manufacturing industries
4. Mining and energetics
5. Building and public works
6. Services/administration
7. Undeclared
8. Total

Table 18. Progression by gender of SIVP1 (“Initiation into the World of Work” Strategy) contracts (Source: Ministry of Employment)

1. Year
2. Men
3. Women
4. Total

Table 19. Progression by gender of SIVP2 (“Initiation into the World of Work”, upper level) contracts (Source: Ministry of Employment)
(Same as in Table 18)

Table 20. Progression by gender of Job Training Contracts (Source: Ministry of Employment)
(Same as Tables 18 and 19)

Table 21. Development by gender of the demand for jobs (Source: Ministry of Employment)

1. Year
2. Demand: men
3. Demand: women
4. Total demand
5. Percentages

Table 22. Progression by gender of placements (Source: Ministry of Employment)

1. Year
2. Placements: men
3. Placements: women
4. Total

5. Percentage

Table 23. Development by gender of the number of students at the Institute of Press and Information Sciences, 1998-2003 (Source: General Directorate of Information)

1. Year
2. Male students
3. Female students

Table 24. Development of the number of professional women journalists (Source: General Directorate of Information)

1. Year
2. Professional cards issued
3. Men
4. Women
5. Men %
6. Women %

Table 25. Numbers of women journalists in different national media (Source: General Directorate of Information)

1. Year
2. Printed press
3. TAP (agency)
4. ERTT (audio-visual)
5. Total

Table 26. Proportion of women journalists in different media (Source: General Directorate of Information)

1. Year
2. ERTT
3. TAP
4. Printed press

Table 27. Proportion of women in the judiciary system, 2002 (Source: Ministry of Justice and Human Rights)

1. Sector
2. Total number
3. Number of women
4. %
5. Magistrates
6. Barristers
7. Judicial experts
8. Notary bailiffs
9. Bailiffs
10. Sworn interpreters
11. Judicial liquidators
12. Judicial administrators