MAURITANIA

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Secretary of State for the Condition of Women

Evaluation of the institution of the Recommendations of the Plan of Action

Of Beijing by the government of Mauritania

Beijing +10

April 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>FULL NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IGP</td>
<td>Income Generating Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APROMI</td>
<td>Association of Professionals and Operators of Micro-Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDHLCPI</td>
<td>Commission of Human rights, the Fight against Poverty and Insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDHLCPI</td>
<td>Center of Analysis of Policies of Mauritania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td>Center of community Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSLP</td>
<td>Strategic Framework of Fight against Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPF</td>
<td>Direction of the Promotion of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSM</td>
<td>Demographic Study on Health – Mauritania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMEA</td>
<td>Study on Families and Agricultural Exploitannts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPCV</td>
<td>Permanent Study on the Conditions of Life of Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information – Education – Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAED</td>
<td>Ministry of Economic and Development Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDRE</td>
<td>Ministry of Rural and Environmental Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM</td>
<td>Feminine Genital Mutilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Ministry of Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSAS</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDF</td>
<td>Female Heads of Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDH</td>
<td>Male Heads of Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTRICOM</td>
<td>Community Project of Nutrition BM/SSCW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS</td>
<td>National Office of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANVEC</td>
<td>Administrative Census for civil status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGPH</td>
<td>General Census of the Population and Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDSF</td>
<td>Strategy for rural Sector Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSCW</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Condition of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNPF</td>
<td>National Strategy for the Promotion of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPF</td>
<td>Directorate for the Promotion of Women within the Secretary of State for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Condition of Women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Education Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM-GB</td>
<td>OXFAM, Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilayas</td>
<td>Administrative Regions (13 Wilayas within the district of Nouakchott)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moughataa</td>
<td>Administrative Departments (there are 53 moughataas distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>throughout the 13 Wilayas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The government of Mauritania has multiplied its efforts since the beginning of the 1990’s by the creation of a significant number of programs to enhance the promotion of women, the family and children. In the same decade a similar large movement took place in the form of the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing from September 4-15, 1995, that constituted an important step forward.

Ten years after the Beijing conference we have an opportunity to establish a balance sheet reflecting the results achieved, as well as areas where insufficiencies remain to enable a new departure. This evaluation report covers the twelve areas that emanated from Beijing, as defined below:

- Institutional mechanisms for promotion of women;
- Fight against poverty
- Access to education
- Access to health care
- The fight against violence perpetrated against women;
- Women’s access to decision making;
- Promotion and protection of the basic rights of women;
- Women’s access to the media;
- Women and the environment;
- Discrimination against the girl child, as well as other areas of intervention such as gender disaggregated statistics, and the evaluation and follow-up mechanisms.

The methodology utilized has been to define the status quo, establish objectives and define the intervention strategies proposed.
PART ONE

GENERAL PRESENTATION

Introduction:

Mauritania adhered to the conclusions and recommendations of the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing from September 4-15, 1995.

This evaluation report on the decade post Beijing has, as its essential objective, the status of the evolution of the institution of the African and Beijing platforms of action, to present the initiatives undertaken by the government of Mauritania and results achieved for the equality of access of men and women to services, national resources and the management of the wealth generated by the population.

The report sets forth the progress achieved and the major challenges it faces for the promotion of women in Mauritania.

The last two decades have been marked by:

a. A significant improvement on an institutional level, with the creation of a Secretary of State Responsible for the Feminine Condition and the adopting of a an integrated strategy for the promotion of women;

b. Important social changes marked by the decrease in reproductive rates and the increased participation by women in community organizations.

c. A significant decrease in illiteracy and a convergence towards equality in basic education, with an increased rate of primary school enrollment of girls;

d. Public policy is taking more and more into account women’s health;

e. A progression of economic and political participation, even though it remains insufficient.

The report underlines the existence of the important challenges:

- The reduction of poverty which in recent years has increased in households headed by women;
- The elimination of disparities in education, in particular post primary school level and in professional training. There has, however, been a significant improvement in retention in fundamental education.
- Improvement in maternal and infant health, in particular in the area of reproductive health;
- The increase in economic participation by women, with better access to production factors and employment, as well as an increase in their productivity.
- An improvement in the political participation by women.
- An improvement in the legal framework for the promotion of women.
- The reinforcement of institutional provisions for women’s promotion.
2. National Context:

Mauritania, a multi-cultural country, is marked by its dual heritage saharo-sahelien. The society of Mauritania is composed of different communities (Arab and African). The reference to Islam constitutes the unifying factor.

On a socio-demographic level, the population of Mauritania has increased from 1.8 million inhabitants in 1988 to 2.5 million in the year 2000. It is a youth based population – 43.9% of the population in 2000 was under 15 years of age. The distribution of the population according to gender has remained stable during the last two censuses in 1988 and 2000 – 50.5% were women. In 1999\(^1\) the life expectancy at birth was 51.1 percent. Among the female population it is slightly higher 52.7 percent, compared to 49.5 percent for men. The death rate is rather low: 3 per 1,000 for women and 2.8 per 1000 for men.\(^2\)

The annual population growth rate, in comparison to the rate between 1977 and 1988, has decreased, contrary to projections which had anticipated the rate remaining at 2.9%\(^3\). Related to a profound modification in the approach to the family that has existed for several years, this evolution is related to the decrease in the index of fertility of women. In the mid 80’s it was a bit higher than six, and decreased to 4.7 during the last few years.\(^4\)

There has been a tendency for women to marry at an older age for their first marriage. Some women in the age bracket 40-49 married at the average age of 16, whereas women in the 25-29 year age bracket married at 19. There is also an increase in age for the birth of the first child\(^5\). These changes are closely linked to the increase in the level of women’s education. Women now have the tendency to take responsibility with regard to their reproduction and family construction.

In the legal context, on July 20, 1991 Mauritania established its constitution, subject to popular referendum. This opened the political framework to plurality and integrated the attachment to human rights. This text consecrates, constitutionally, all the civil rights, and the political, economic, social and cultural rights as were proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in 1948 and the African Charter of Human Rights and the People in 1981 without distinction. On an institutional level, this text creates a political framework and regulates the relationship between the different constitutional entities.

On the economic level, since 1985 the government has adopted a significant number of economic and financial reforms intended to reestablish macro-economic balance. The strategies adopted are based on a progressive liberalization of the economy, the growth of participation in the economy of the private sector, reinforcement of administrative capacities and valorization of human resources. The various programs have led to important progress. However,

---

\(^1\) Human Development Report 2001
\(^2\) Study on Demographics and Health in Mauritania (ESDM), p 159, 2000-2001
\(^3\) Sources: WHO, RGPH 1988, volume IV; and ONS Projections by Wilaya and by age groups, 1988-1998.
\(^4\) It is however troubling to note the effect of the level of education of women, since the indicator of fertility is 5.3 for women without education, and 3.5 for women with a secondary education or more (ESDM, pp.36-39).
\(^5\) ESDM, p 47
poverty remains a major concern. More than half of the population still lives with less than one US dollar per day, per person.

Faced with this challenge, Mauritania created in 1988 a Commission of Human Rights for the fight against Poverty and Social Insertion. Its mission is the elaboration, the creation and the follow up of programmes for reduction of poverty.

In January 2001, following its eligibility for PPTE, Mauritania defined a Strategic Framework for the Fight against Poverty (CSLP). It resulted from cooperation between the administration, civil society and donors. This policy is focused on: (i) the acceleration of economic growth, (ii) its expansion into the economic sphere of the poor, (iii) the development of human resources and the expansion of basic social services and (iv) the promotion of an institutional development and good governance.

The CSLP is particularly focused on women and children. The social well being and the attribution of the rights of these categories are intended to be the end result of the programs targeting the fight against poverty that the government has undertaken since the adoption of this programme. Throughout the period 1990-2003, Mauritania has undergone a true mutation in the area of the promotion and protection of women’s rights. The orientation of the government has insisted on the promotion and protection of civil rights, as well as political, economic, social and cultural rights for women. Through the elaboration and creation of a “Strategy for the Promotion of Women “based on the adoption of family policy, the improvement of the profitability of work by women, the increase in participation of women and women’s organizations in the area of basic development and the strengthening of the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women.

3. Institutional Mechanisms for the Promotion of women

The creation in 1992 of a Secretary of State for the Condition of Women was one of the demonstrations of the will of the Mauritian government to take into account the gender dimension in the conception and creation of national development policies. A first National Strategy for the Promotion of Women (SNPF 1995-2000) following an extensive dialogue, resulted in a series of realizations to benefit the female population. There was a turning point with the adoption in 2000 of the Strategic Framework for the Fight against Poverty, which articulates the policies in all sectors. It created an extraordinary opportunity to develop an integrated approach for the promotion of the status of women into society. The SSCW is positioned as the advocate and best defender.

The Secretary of State for the Condition of Women has, as its mission, to ensure the promotion of the women of Mauritania and their full economic and social participation, in compliance with our Islamic values, our social realities and the demands of modern life. It has the responsibility to:

- Elaborate and propose a policy for the promotion of Mauritanian women and the protection of the family;
- Promote and expand the knowledge of the rights and obligations of women and the rights of children;
• Favorize, in collaboration with the relevant sectors, the development of economic activities and socio-educational to benefit women, especially in rural areas;
• In this connection, all projects relating to Mauritian women or children must be conceived and carried out in close collaboration with the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women.
• To institute the various policies and programmes, the SSCW has at its disposal the following:
  • De-concentrated structures: Regional branches and training centers for the promotion of women;
  • Mobile teams of trainers who offer decentralized services in the areas of animation, literacy, creation of awareness and training of women and rural women’s associations;
  • A training center for the trainers in the areas of education of small children, PFPE.
• A center of information and documentation.
• The SSCW also benefits from the support of certain structures for dialogue, among which:
  • National Counsel for Children;
  • The Commission for follow up on National Family Policies;
  • The Strategic Group IEC;
• The Group for follow-up on Gender; and
• The Committee for the fight against traditional detrimental practices

Other networks and groups exist which support the programs which benefit the family, such as the Network of Mayors Defenders of Children, and the Parliamentary Group for Small Children.

The Group Follow-up Gender (GSG) also constitutes an interesting experience in the area of integration and analysis on the gender approach. It is a multi-sector group created within the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women. It is responsible for the elaboration of an integration plan of the gender concept in policies and strategies in the various sectors of the country, to lobby decision makers, development partners and civil society for the adherence to the gender approach, and taking it into consideration in development programs. It is also responsible for creating a data base on gender and to oversee the mobilization of resources.

The GSG is comprised of focal points in each relevant structure, i.e. the various Ministries, civil society, development partners. They meet together every three months. It has, however, the facility to meet together as many times as is necessary to study the status of advancement and integration of gender approach within all sector policies.

**Policies and strategies**

In addition to these aspects of dialogue, the SSCW has actively participated in the elaboration of development policies and strategies. Among these are the National Strategy for the Fight against Poverty and Basic Development, The General States for employment, the National Policy for the Population and Social Development Policies. This participation has provided the assurance that the needs of women and children are taken into account in policies and programmes.

To effectively contribute to the equitable and durable development of the country by an effective participation of women in the socio-economic and political life, the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women instituted a National Strategy for the Promotion of Women. It has
facilitated the definition of a coherent national approach in the area of promotion of women, and to enumerate the main directions of the government in this area and to inform the development partners on the national priorities in this area. The SSCW has also put in place other policies and strategies currently being implemented, i.e. the National Policy of the Family and the Policy for Small Children.

**Perspectives:**

The promotion of women represents a multi-sector area where it is necessary to intervene from all directions and in as much of an integrated manner as possible to have an impact and to manage to reach all of the population.

Despite the considerable achievements made since its creation in 1995, the SSCW still does not have sufficient human and material resources to be able to manage the situation alone and efficiently respond to the numerous challenges it faces. It is necessary to focus the majority of its efforts on four complementary strategic axis: (i) the system of follow up of the situation of women, girls and children and the evaluation of the policies which have been implemented, (ii) the strategy of Information, Education – Communication (IEC) and the lobbying (iii) the reinforcement of the institutional framework of inter-sector collaboration and the partnership with civil society and the private sector, and (v) the integration of the gender approach.

An exploitation that is more supported by the data collection tools available could ensure a better follow up of the realities to which women, girls and children are confronted. This would permit the evaluation of: (i) the situation and its evolution over time, and (ii) the impact of the initiatives undertaken to benefit women and their families. Interventions, that are adapted and relevant, which seek to reinforce access of girls to education and professional training, the enlargement of access of women and girls to maternal and child health care, the improvement of their position in the employment market and the progressive removal of the multiple constraints which those in a rural environment face, could also be conceived and implemented in priority.

In this framework, the effort of SSCW in the matter of IEH and to lobby will be oriented toward all members of society, and not only women. It will be given an important place in the sensitization of the public departments and other national partners (elected officials, media, private sector and labor unions. etc.).

This work could be greatly facilitated by taking into account, in a more explicit and visible manner, the socio economic conditions of women at the level of CSLP, which would constitute a strong tool for the SSCW in its effort of initiation, animation, dialogue and collaboration on an inter-departmental level. This is indispensable to ensure a successful impact of the endeavors for the promotion of women. It is perhaps in this area that one of its largest challenges lies, as well as one of the conditions of success of its mission.
PART TWO
THE PRINCIPAL AREAS OF INTERVENTION

1. WOMEN AND POVERTY
(Poverty, economy and employment)

1.1 Present situation

According to the Profile of Poverty WHO 2002 forty six percent of the population of Mauritania lives below the poverty line ($1. per day, per person). The rural population is much more affected by poverty than the urban population, and women are more affected than men. (ESDM 2000-2001)

According to the results published by EDSM 200-2001 precarious conditions and poverty characterize most of the families. 64 percent live in housing with the ground covered in sand, whereas 30 percent have cement floors, and 4 percent have tiled floors. 50 percent of families are without toilets, and only 30 percent cook using bottled butane gas.

To address this situation Mauritania elaborated a Strategic Framework for the fight against Poverty, focusing, on the fight against the feminization of poverty, as well as other issues. Examples are the acceleration of economic growth and its expansion into the economic sphere of the poor.

Families with a Female Head of Household (MDF):

In Mauritania, despite the improvement in the standard of living for families between 1996 and 2000, as reflected by the index of poverty, showing a decrease from 50 percent to 46.3 percent, economic conditions have worsened in households headed by women. The incidence of poverty has increased from 40.5 percent to 45.6 percent for the same period and families in rural areas with female head of households were the most affected. This fact is disconcerting considering that they represent more than half of the households in rural areas, despite the fact there has been a decline between 1988 and 2000 (according to the RGPH from 36.4 percent to 28.8 percent. The elevated number of households headed by women is also correlated to the rate of women who are either divorced or widowed in Mauritania.

Chart 1: Evolution of the rate of poverty according to the gender of the head of household and milieu (1996-2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>57.4 percent</td>
<td>64.1 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>26.5 percent</td>
<td>24.0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.5 percent</td>
<td>45.6 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EPCV 1995-1996 and EPCV 20000
The economic growth rate of Mauritania today is 3.9 percent. An estimate of the contribution by women to the production of this national wealth reveals that they invest primarily in the following three sectors:
Agriculture and stock farming (agriculture, forestry, forestry exploitation, stock farming); Food industry (RGPH, 1988) or manufacturing (2000); Commerce, restaurants, hotels.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of Activity</th>
<th>Contribution by women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, stock farming, forestry</td>
<td>23.3 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food industry or manufacturing</td>
<td>23.3 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce, restaurant and hotel business</td>
<td>24 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.5 percent</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Aggregates of the national accounting and socio-economic indicators and RGPH

**Informal sector:**

In the informal sector women generally have the status of independent contractors; they are, for the most part, in the sectors of commerce, artisans and to a lesser degree in the service sector.

Several programs and projects have been initiated in this area to improve their methods and improve their productivity (artisans, commerce, etc.)

**Employment, micro-credit and micro-finance:**

The analysis of unemployment in Mauritania has revealed that the youth are the most affected by this scourge.

The marginalization of women results in particular from:

- In the case of salaried employment which in 2000 integrated 12.4 percent of the female population who were actively occupied or who had already worked, against 27.3 percent of men in the same category
- In the case of concentration of women in a sector of activity: women were mainly concentrated in agriculture in comparison to their presence in the administration or commerce.

---

6 It consists of calculating their rate of presence in a given sector of the national economy to the increased value to the sector, i.e. their contribution to the GDP
**Table 4:** Breakdown by sector of activity for salaried women in 2000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of Activity</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>48.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>14.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>13.5 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RGPH 2000

In the attribution of salaried revenue: for a comparable human asset (education and experience), the remuneration of women was generally 60 percent less than that of men.

In the framework of the creation of CSLP in particular focusing the economic growth in the sphere of the poor for the valorization of their growth potential and productivity, national strategies for micro-financing and micro-enterprises were elaborated and adopted in November 2003.

The development of micro-finance is a determining factor of the reform undertaken in 1985 by the government for the reinforcement and diversification of the national financial system with the goal to effectively fight against economic poverty, in particular among women.

This reform assumes a particular importance with respect to the role played by the institutions of Micro-Finance (IMFs) in the decrease of poverty in the urban, outlying urban areas, and rural population. It provides a framework for the work incentive, and insertion into active life for the youth from poor families, women who are head of households, the poor to the extremely poor which are normally excluded from the classical banking system.

The long term objective is to induce the population to take responsibility for themselves by creating income generating activities (IGA) or by creating micro and small businesses (SMI).

Created in March 1995, the National Strategy for the Promotion of Women has among its priority goals, the support for the institution of micro-credit for women. Micro-financing is considered to be one of the privileged means for the integration of women in national, regional and local development programmes. It is interactive with a participatory approach through the financing of socio-economic micro-projects.

It is true that women participate more actively, 52%, in the **formal micro-credit**. However, it is through the informal structures that they acquire the majority of their credit (around 70 percent and almost 90 percent in rural areas). The disproportion is mainly due to the fact that the tools are not adapted to them, as well as the women’s lack of information on the credit possibilities and the requisite procedures.

---

7 MEN/MAED, 2000, op.cit. pages 76 and 79.
8 Study by the Association of the Professionals and Operators of Micro-Credit (APROMI)
9 APROMI “The barriers to the access of women to credit”, 2002-2003
The intervention of SSCW is focused on this issue. To contribute to the reduction of poverty among women, and in conformity with the orientation of CSLP, and the SNPF, the SSCW instituted women’s savings and credit unions.

**CFEG (Women’s Groups for Savings and Credit)**

Three women’s groups for savings and credit (CFEG) were created, two are located in Hodh El Gharbi (Aioun and Tintane) and one in Nouakchott.

**BDFG (Women’s Bank of Gorgol)**

Five Women’s Bank of Gorgol exists. They are located in Kaedi, Mbout, Monguel, Maghama, in addition to the regional union of the banks.

**NISSA BANKS**

Nine Nissa Banks exist in the cities of Nouadhibou, Aleg, Boghe, Maghta Lahjar, Bababe, M’Bagne, Selibaby, Ould Yenge and Nouakchott (El Mina)

These institutions have as their general objective the improvement of the living conditions of women through the support for the development of income generating activities (IGA) through financing and support structures.

These 17 micro-financing institutions in disadvantaged rural and outlying urban areas serve approximately 90,000 women (individuals or members of cooperatives). Their financing capacity remains extremely limited, with only 223 million ouguiyas of credit extended.

The funding for these 17 savings and credit institutions originate from two sources: the indigenous resources mobilized from the women, and resources granted by the SSCW and its development partners, in particular, UNDP, UNICEF, OXFAM GB.

Despite the considerable advances observed, the activities of women’s micro-finance supported by the SSCW, and the micro-finance sector, are subject to a certain number of weaknesses:

With the exception of GFEC in Nouakchott, none of the credit unions under the auspices of the SSCW have been approved by the Central Bank. This is principally due to two reasons: (i) the non-conformity of the status of these credit unions with regard to relevant legislation, (ii) the inadequacy of the level of internal control and follow-up (limited number of visits, lack of resources, limited level of professionalism of the human resources etc.).

None of the credit unions of SSCW have access to bank financing. The lines of credit granted are insufficient and are granted for a determined period of time.

Insufficient collection of savings; with limited manpower, 1,129, and little incentive to mobilize by the NISSA Banks, even though savings and credit are the principal activities of all micro-financing institutions which guarantee their viability and everlastingness.
With regard to the management of the credit unions: (i) limited level of mastery of management tools, and lack of harmonization, (ii) illiteracy and lack of professionalism of human resources (iii) insufficient financial resources (iv) absence of equipment and material.

The absence of concentration and cooperation between the entities who intervene in the same areas, in particular the CAPECs, the CECA and the MICO.

The extreme disparity between rural and urban areas, but also in the interior of rural zones, will not contribute to achieve the harmonious development of women’s micro-financing.

Based on the preceding analysis, the expansion of the experience of Nissa Banks requires the definition of a strategic vision and a plan of action. The vision would entail the creation of structures of women’s micro finance that are viable and everlasting and are integrated into the national financial sector. They would be diversified from the standpoint of institutional form and the type of products and services they offer. They would ensure that the demand for women’s micro-finance services would be met throughout the country. They would operate within a legal institutional framework adapted to the SNMF and the SNPF.

The new installations would be in the most populated areas, in priority in rural areas and would offer the potential of viability and everlastingness. These areas are Hodh El Charghi, Traza, Assaba, Hodh El Gharbi, Nouakchott etc.

Among the partners supporting women’s micro-finance, is BAD, which intervenes through the Reduction of Poverty Project carried out by the CDEHLCPI. This intervention has two parts: One is focused on the emergence of CAPEC, of which more than 57 percent of their members are women; The other, the financing of the Credit Unions approved by the BCM, where the credit unions are only women, such as the GFEC, Women’s Group for Savings and Credit, the APME, Program for Support and Promotion of Micro-Enterprise and AFEC the Mutual Association of Women for Savings and Credit. This financing is done in the form of reimbursable loans at an interest rate of 3.65 percent. There is also a subsidy of 20 percent of the amount of the loan.

Additionally, the development project for fishing in the southern zone, which is in its phase II, has targeted the women involved in the activity of sale of fish, its treatment and fishing. This has resulted in the creation of a woman’s group that will be coordinated by the SSCW. This group was created in 2000, following a joint agreement between the SSCW, the Ministry of Fishing that oversees the project, and the BAD who financed the operation. It will benefit 500 women through training and techniques for transforming the fish. Subsequently training will be provided, with the GERME model, (Better Management for your Enterprise) for wise management of the loans that have been granted.

At the institutional level and with the objective to promote women’s economic status, the Direction of Promotion for Women (DPF) of the SSCW is developing, with the support of UNICEF and OXFAM GB, an ambitious and original approach to micro-financing in close proximity (Nissa Banks) with the goal to facilitate the access to financial resources for women
who are organized in groups which will permit them to develop income generating activities. However, the geographic coverage of this system remains limited.

**Rural areas:**

Women in rural areas are more underprivileged than women in urban areas.

- They are underprivileged with regard to access to schools and health services.
- They are considerably more delayed with regards to mastering the factors and resources of production, access to credit, land ownership and agricultural market exploitation.
- They have a lower rate of productivity, even though the agricultural sector employs close to half of the women who are working or who have worked.
- With regard to their access to land holdings, only 18.7 percent of women have land holdings in their name, and since 1989 only 124 perimeters, which have irrigation have been attributed to them\(^\text{10}\). Of this amount, in 2002, only 9 were a permanent attribution.\(^\text{11}\)
- This situation is essentially due to a combination of tradition and mentality which is not favorable to the access of women to land ownership in general, and real estate in particular. Inheritances are distributed in such a manner that the portions allocated to women are considered movable property and consumable assets.

1.2. **Objectives:**

- The improvement of women’s access to economic and financial resources through the extension of the system of micro-finance (type Nissa Bank) and through the development of women as entrepreneurs among the girls graduating from school;
- Reduce the unemployment of women, improve access to the factors of production and increase the profitability of production by women;
- Improve the real estate reform to promote women’s access to land ownership as a production factor;
- Promote women’s access to bank financing and micro-credits and create programs for financing to benefit large projects initiated by the women’s association movement;
- Orient women toward productive sectors with greater added value;
- Reinforce the productive capacity of women through training, IEC, functional literacy;
- Develop the mechanisms and tools to measure the contribution of women and the integration of their activities in national accounting;
- Create a fund for economic promotion of women (industry, fishing, commerce, and artisans);
- Revise the texts regulating work by women to ensure greater protection for them;
- Promote economic independence of women: employment and self-employment, working conditions, access to economic resources and development of commercialization networks for women’s production;

---

10 121 collective parcels of land of a total surface of 550 hectares, and 3 individual parcels of land of a total surface of 135. hectares (which goes a long way to demonstrate the inequality of resources within the group of women beneficiaries and the lack of capacity for the majority of them). (Note: 1 hectare equals 2.47 acres)

11 SECF/DPF, “Study on the scope of women’s access to real estate and land holdings in Mauritania”, 2002.
• Promote the access of women to new technology in conjunction with the Secretary of State of New Technology;
• Evaluate the forms of professional segregation and work toward their elimination;
• Permit women and men to reconcile professional and family responsibilities;
• Create awareness among men for the responsibility of sharing tasks within the family;
• Give value and responsibility to women through the development of micro-finance and micro-enterprise, in particular through: the willingness to offer to women in need rather than subsidies, but the means and the know-how to permit them to move from the situation of being assisted and dependent to one of autonomy and productive;
• Create and increase women’s revenues, supported through the process by an appropriate structure; the effective participation of women to their auto-development. Define a new value for those economic sectors that are under exploited or under developed;
• Create community structures where women assume all the responsibilities and functions that require efficient management.

1.3 Strategy:

In 1997 Mauritania created a Declaration of Employment Policy. This policy contains a global and active approach to the treatment of the questions of employment and covers all the factors that determine the creation of employment, all the sectors which impact significantly on the improvement of employment and all the entities directly or indirectly involved whether they are from the public or private sector.

The National Strategy for Urban Development sets forth in all the regional capitals, the elaboration and institution of local programs to assist the micro-enterprise and the IGP targeting the most vulnerable groups, as well as the development of professional training and its adaptation to market needs.\(^\text{12}\)

The national strategy for micro-financing was instituted by the Commission of Human Rights Fight Against Poverty and Insertion. Its objective is to promote the mobilization of savings, to increase and improve the distribution of resources and to reinforce the capacity of the IMFs, with the goal to ensure the utilization of the services of micro-finance in a larger manner and more adapted to the needs of the population. The strategy focuses on the necessity to integrate women and to encourage gender equality by introducing gender equality in the system of financing small and mid-sized enterprises.

The SSCW has created women’s credit unions for savings and credit: GFEC, the Bank of Women of Gorgol, BDFG, and Nissa Bank, in the objective to contribute to reducing poverty among women.

Thus, with a concern for the promotion of women and improvement of general conditions, the administration has committed to support the expansion of micro-financing and the IGP to benefit women.

2. WOMEN, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Current situation:

Since 1985 the universality of basic education has become a priority for the government of Mauritania. Since this date, and in particular during the 1990 decade, a considerable effort has been undertaken in basic education. The efforts have been successful in increasing significantly access to education and to absorb the increase due to demographic growth.

The gross school enrollment ratio (TBS) in basic education has increased from 45.5 percent in 1989/90 to 91.7 percent in 2002-2003, and the rate of entry into first year of fundamental study has increased from 78 percent in 1991/92 to 110 percent in 2002-2003.

This effort undertaken, with focus on education for girls as of the end of the decade of the 90s, has resulted in progressively reducing the disparity between boys and girls. The gross school enrollment for girls has surpassed that of boys in the year 2001-2002.

Several factors contributed to the achievement of these remarkable results in quantitative terms. Firstly, there is a strong government commitment to support education and training. It has been constantly reaffirmed at the highest levels throughout the 1990s. This political commitment has been demonstrated by the institution of significant programmes for the development of the educational system, focused in particular on the construction of schools, including in remote areas to improve access to schools. In another area, the system of multi-grades in the rural areas and double flux in the urban areas, added to the double vacation has permitted the creation of schools in villages with a small population, and globally to unite a much larger proportion of school age children. Significant recruitment of teachers has also been achieved (600 in average per year).

Other initiatives also contributed to improve schooling, in particular the increase of the number of school cafeterias. They were increased four fold between 1990 and 1998. Another contributing factor was the periodic organization of IEC campaigns to promote girls schooling.

However, even though the gross school enrolment ratio was so significant, and contributed in large part to creating greater equity between boys and girls, problems remain at the level of access and retention as well as the quality of apprenticeships. Many children remain uneducated, the disparities between regions remain significant and the loss of girls continues to remain very high.

literacy:

Since 1988, due to a large programme of opening centers for literacy, campaigns for functional literacy targeting the affected population (women, rural population…) considerable progress has been achieved in the area of literacy in general, and that of women in particular. However, important disparities remain between men and women and according to the geographic zones.
Even though the rate of literacy of women of ten years or more has improved, increasing from 30 percent in 1988 to 45.3 percent in 2000, they remain at lower rates compared to men (rate of literacy approximately 60 percent). The disparity exists also in the regions, with the rate of literacy of women in the year 2000 reaching:

- 68.4 percent in Nouakchott (administrative capital);
- 69.5 percent in Nouadhibou (economic capital);
- 38.1% in the region Hodh Echargui (agricultural region located in southwest of country);
- 28 percent in the region of Guidimakha (agricultural region located in south of country);
- 20 percent in the region of Gorgol (agricultural region located in south of country).

These low rates of literacy are due in part to the reduced access to education until recently for the female population. An additional factor is the persistence globally of a small retention rate in attendance at primary school, which the girls suffer from more than boys.

This tendency is noticeable in rural areas. A study revealed that in rural areas with significant rainfall the majority of family domestic workers are feminine (58.8 percent) and among them 41.1 percent have never been to school, compared to 19.7% of male family domestic workers (Study on families and agricultural farmers, 2000-2001).

**Access to fundamental education:**

School attendance of small children has increased over the past fifteen years and this progress has largely benefited the female population of an age to be educated:

- The gross school enrolment ratio of girls has improved, even exceeding the gross school enrolment ratio of boys (88.9 percent against 88.5 percent in 2001-2002 and 92.7 percent against 90.7 percent in 2002-2003). Also, the rate of participation of girls (percentage of girls in comparison to that of boys at the fundamental level) has continued a positive evolution by increasing from 48.8 percent in 2001-2002 to 49.1 percent in 2002-2003. These performances are the result of large campaigns to create awareness, and efforts undertaken for the enlargement of the capacity to receive students (construction of class rooms, recruitment of teachers, availability of text books, creation of school libraries and public libraries etc.). It is also the result of institutional and legal measures taken, i.e. the reform of the educational system by law no. 2001/054 of July 19, 2001 creating an obligation for basic education and the creation of a National Programme for the Development of the Educational Sector (PNDSE).
- The retention rate of girls in school reached 46 percent in 2002/03. That figure is 1.3 points below the rate of all children in primary school.

**Access to secondary school:**

Secondary schools also show encouraging results:
Participation of girls increased in first cycle to 44 percent and in second cycle to 41 percent in 2001-2002. In 2002-2003, 44.9 percent attended first cycle and 43.8 percent second cycle.

With regard to entrance into schools, girls represent 45.9% of the new entrants in 2002-2003.

The improvement of the retention rate of girls in comparison to boys.

*University Education:*

With regard to university education, the progress is more modest. The participation rate of girls enrolled in university increased from 13.2 percent in 1990/91 to 21.3 percent in 2001/2002. However, the retention rate of girls is better: 38% of female students registered in first year in 1997 continued to the fourth year, compared to 26 percent of the male students.\(^\text{13}\)

Despite these improvements, it is necessary to point out the small amount of female students attending university and a limited diversification in their choices for professional training.

**Graph 1:** Evolution of the rate of participation by girls according to the level of education (1990-2000):

![Graph 1](image)

**Translation of chart:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fundamental</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional training:**

The strategic orientation of technical and professional training (FTP) was redefined in 2000 during the preparation of the PNDSE. Other than the creation of establishments for technical and professional training, a new stimulus was created which resulted in a marked progression of students enrolling in the various existing areas.

The System for Information on Employment in Mauritania (SIME) was created in 2001. It publishes statistics on the number of diplomas and students currently enrolled in professional and technical training (FTP). It revealed that women represent more than one third (36 percent) of students registered in the different areas of professional and technical training.

\(^{13}\) Ministry of National Education; Almanac of school statistics
While women are still not represented in certain sectors (BTP, welding, fishing...), women are very present in the sectors of secretarial/office administration, where women are the quasi totality of the graduates, but also in data processing. They have started to enter into areas which were until recently reserved for men, such as mechanics and electricity. However, certain areas remain women’s areas (dressmaking).

**Chart 5:** Proportion of women in various areas of professional and technical training in 2001 and 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2001 percentage of women who graduated</th>
<th>2002 percentage of women enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting/Management</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial/Office management</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data processing</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welding</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTP</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SIME, Information system on the employment market (MFPTJS, Ministry of Public Function for Employment, Youth and Sports/Direction of Employment.

It is important to note the role in this area by the Centers for Training for the Promotion of Women in the various outlets (fashion, embroidery, office management, data processing etc.) to benefit women and young girls, as well as that of the Center for Training for Small Children recently created.

**2.2 Goals:**
- Guarantee universal access to basic education;
- Ensure equal access to education for both girls and boys;
- Improve the school retention rates for girls;
- Reduce the rate of repeating a cycle and school failure of girls at all levels of the educational system;
- Improve the access for girls to scientific studies, professional training and university education;
- Promote the education process and permanent training for women and girls wasting educational opportunities;
- Reduce illiteracy among the female population.

**2.3 Strategies:**
The educational policies initiated by the government appear to take into account the principal challenges for education of girls:

- Work toward the enlargement of access to education, the improvement of rates of school retention and the quality of the teachers. Achieve this through the reinforcement of the infrastructures of schools, the retraining and the motivation of the teachers, improvement of teaching aids etc., with particular attention focused on girls in these areas.
- Work toward the reduction of regional disparities in the area of school attendance by girls through participatory approaches that permit the identification of intervention strategies adapted to the specifics of each zone.

With this objective, the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women developed two parts to the “Project for Education of Adolescents to support community development” which was financed by the organizations of the United Nations and the government of Mauritania.

However, the Ministry of National Education has the primary role to apply education policies which are built around the following points:

- Ensure the application of the provisions of the law that mandates obligatory primary education and improve the quality of basic education.
- Strengthen the educative capacities of teachers and provide them with the necessary motivation (stipends for long distances, housing, access to credit for housing, land distribution etc.);
- Increase the quota of scholarships granted to girls and multiply the housing for girls who have moved following their winning of a competition to enter the first year of college, or their entry in to the first year of secondary school, in particular for the girls from rural areas;
- Place greater value on the models of girls and women who have successfully undertaken academic and professional careers. Introduce as an alternative avenue of accelerated training the new technology of computers and communication (NTIC);
- Eliminate gender stereotypes from school textbooks and undertake IEC campaigns to fight against negative practices, causes of leaving school (early marriage, young mothers who are students, domestic work for young girls, late registration in school);
- Create secondary schools geographically accessible to benefit girls in rural areas, multiply and decentralize the centers for technical and professional training and multiply and strengthen the centers for professional training for the girls leaving the Mahadras;
- Multiply the laboratory equipment and school libraries and supply adequate and quality didactic support in scientific and technical areas;
- Render the schools more welcoming (construction of toilets, clean drinking water, gardens and tree planting) and adapt the schools to the needs of girls (differentiated education);
- Multiply the day nursery and pre-school facilities;
- Increase the centers to combat illiteracy, multiply and shorten the gaps between campaigns and evaluate their efficiency;
- Ensure a greater collaboration between the SSCW, -- MEN, the Secretary of State for Literacy and original education,, SEAE0, and the Minister of Communication and Relations with Parliament, MCRP.
**Professional Training:**

In February 2004, the government adopted the National Policy for Youth. It confirms the political will of the government in the area and this policy seeks to respond to the needs and aspirations of the youth, mobilize the younger generation (12-30) to have them participate in the social and economic development of the country.

It also seeks to:

- Improve access to employment for youth, their professional insertion and the fight against unemployment;
- Increase the rate of accessibility of youth to education;
- Institute a climate of permanent education by the rational utilization of the third time and the opportunities offered by the new technology of computers and communication (NTIC);

Among the strategies proposed, are the professional training and work place training. Education, employment, professional insertion and the fight against unemployment are in the programme of action in the various sectors.

**3. WOMEN AND HEALTH**

**Current Status:**

Even though progress has been made, the health situation of women remains preoccupying.

- The rate of maternal mortality, 747 deaths for 100,000 living births, is one of the highest of the sub region; the rate of infant-juvenile death is at 135 percent, with a rate of infant death estimated to be at 87 percent and a rate of juvenile death at 58 percent;
- With regard to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, if it remains rather low at a national level (estimated to be 0.52 percent in 2001), it is slightly higher among pregnant women (0.57 percent in 2001) and, moreover it has increased among the female population in general (0.59 percent among girls between 15-24 in 2001, against 0.37 percent among the boys in the same age group).\(^\text{15}\)
- The government, thanks to the support of IDA, has recently instituted a significant programme to fight against AIDS. This programme covers the public sector, civil society and the private sector. The SSCW is executing a component destined to create awareness in women and girls of a reproductive age of the dangers of AIDS, methods of prevention, transmission and treatment.
- Additionally, the political engagement of our country has been solidified, on an African level, by the selection the First Lady of our country to be vice president of the African organization of the fight against AIDS. She also serves as the President of the zone of North Africa.

**Women’s health:**

\(^{14}\) Statistics obtained from the EDSM (Model ORC Macro and World Bank)

\(^{15}\) State of the World Population; UNFAP, 2001
Two factors influence in a determining manner women’s health:

- The environment: through limited access to sanitary structures in rural area: 59 percent of women in Mauritania have access to health care within a radius of less than 5 kilometers, however this global rate varies between 86 percent in urban areas and 35.9 percent in rural areas;¹⁶
- The education level of women; which influence their own health and that of their children. Thus the rate of infant-juvenile death is 1.34 times greater for children whose mother has no level of education, than for those whose mother has a primary education or more. Also, the rate of nutritional deficiency of infants is 38 percent among children whose mother has no education. The rate is 21 percent for children whose mother has secondary education or more.¹⁷
- An important factor for women’s health concerns the increase of the interval between childbirths (as an example 42 percent of children have nutritional deficiencies when this interval is less than 24 months, against 27 percent when the interval is 48 months or more). This interval can be prolonged with an important recourse, family planning. There again, the influence of environment, and mainly the levels of a woman’s education remain extremely important.¹⁸

1.2 Objectives:

The Objectives for Development of the Millennium (ODM) were adopted by Mauritania, as objectives to achieve at the horizon 2005-2015:

It is necessary, for the access to health care to:

- Reduce the rate of maternal mortality from 930 per 100,000 live births in 2010 and to 747 for 100,000 live births in 2015. And, in all the cases, to less than 500 for 100,000 live births before 2005;
- Stabilize the rate of cases testing positive for HIV/Aids to 1 percent between now and 2005;
- Reduce the rate of infant deaths from 70 per thousand in 2005 to 40 in 2015;
- For the nutrition:
- Reduce by half the rate of malnutrition of infants and pregnant women by 2015.

1.3 Strategies:

At the present time, the health policy takes into consideration the problems of concentration of health services in the large urban centers, the spatial inequalities between wilayas, the repartition of public expenditure and the impact of private expenditure on health on the revenues of the poorest families. The priority objectives of this policy are the concerns to improve the indicators of reproductive health, to control the advance of the AIDS epidemic and to improve nutrition. The measures advocated in the area of social protection, as well as the reinforcement of

---

¹⁶ EDSM: 246  
¹⁷ EDSM 155  
¹⁸ Survey PAPCHILD (1992) and EDSM: 95-96.
community participation (in particular, that of women) in the management of the services, should also contribute to opening the access to health care services to the most vulnerable groups.

The strategies initiated in this area are:

**In the area of access to health care:**

- Institution of a week for “Maternity without Risk” in the month of May each year, under the patronage of the First Lady.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the prevention programs of STD/HIV, and the institution of an awareness system and/or the encouragement for pre-nuptial medical exams;
- Information and awareness on responsible procreation, and in a general manner, on reproductive health (spacing intervals of births, hygiene and prevention of STD/HIV.
- Increase resources allocated to women’s health, in particular vaccination programmes, medical follow-up pre and post natal, and expansion of assisted childbirths;
- Fight against the socio-cultural obstacles in the area of spacing the intervals between child births and visiting health care service providers;
- Strengthening the quality and utilization of the SR services;
- Development of IEC campaigns on gender approach.
- Intensification of the fight against AIDS through the National Programme for the Fight against HIV/AIDS.

**In the area of nutrition:**

In March 2004, the Counsel of Ministers adopted a project of a decree rendering mandatory the inclusion of iodine in salt destined for human and animal consumption. This initiative is within the framework of the fight against goiters in Mauritania and the improvement of nutritional health of the population. The government, with the support of its partners, also intends to:

- Continue its efforts for awareness in the areas of breast feeding, utilization of iodized salt, and the abandonment of nutritional practices which are detrimental to one’s health (forcible feeding, usage of tobacco and drugs among others);
- Continue and intensify its programs in the area of nutrition (project Nutricom,…) and ensure its generalization in other Wilayas of the country;
- Fight against anemia in women, in particular among pregnant women;
- Reinforce surveillance activities in the area of nutrition;
- Train competent staff and motivate them;
- Re-energize and create new CNC and CREN;
- Intensify the activities of IEC for a positive change of eating habits.

2. **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

4.1 Current Status:

Mauritania has ratified numerous international Conventions concerning the protection of Human Rights, in particular:
a. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (ratified in 2000),

A National Plan of Action (NPA 1992/2001) for the follow-up and institution of the CRC was elaborated in 1992, and a National Counsel for Children was created.

The initial report on the creation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was finalized and validated in 2002 by the government. Civil society contributed significantly to the elaboration of this report, and produced in a parallel manner an alternative report.

Civil society carried out a survey in 2002 which cross references information on 8 sanitary structures based in Nouakchott and which gives the impression that violence between spouses is a widespread practice. The social context was not favorable to adequate assuming responsibility for the victims. There are several obstacles in this area:

- limited capacity of reception in the police stations and in health structures
- lack of, even absence of, registering the incidents
- lack of provision of psycho-social care
- among the professionals concerned, reticence and lack of experience
- difficulty to institute legal proceedings

UNFPA mobilized the fund AGFUND and elaborated a pilot project, extending over a two year period, for the fight against sexual violence in Mauritania.

Additionally, WHO and UNICEF co-financed a workshop for doctors on the psycho sanitary repercussions of rape on its victims to create awareness of their responsibility vis-à-vis the legal system.

If the year 2003 was marked by the government taking a strong position against all forms of violence against women, the year 2004 should prove to be determining in the fight against sexual violence which women are victims of in Mauritania.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)**

Excision is a widespread practice: more than two thirds of the women questioned (71 percent) stated that they had been excised. This prevalence varies considerably according to socio-demographic characteristics:

- The highest proportion is in rural areas (76.8 percent) compared to urban areas (64.8 percent);
- There is a significant variation with regard to the ethnicity, ranging from 28 percent among the Ouolofs to 71 percent among the Maures, 72 percent among the Pulars and 92 percent among the Soninkes:
• The rate of women excised is also extremely influenced by the level of education of the women concerned, ranging from 58.4 percent among women with secondary education or more to 69.1 percent among women with primary education and 79.7 percent among women with only instruction in the Koran.

Finally, it is important to note that the social weight of this practice remains very strong, which explains that 89 percent of women excised, even though they do not necessarily agree with this practice, have had their daughters excised, (85 percent), or intend to do so (4 percent). The factors that justify this practice, for men as with women, is the concern for social recognition. This is according to 34.6 percent of the women who responded and 29 percent of the men. Additionally they submit to religious requirements, according to 29 percent of the women who responded and 41 percent of the men.

However, a large majority of women (64 percent) were in favor of the abolition of excision, against only 22 percent who were against. The opinion of men is not different to the extent that 70 percent of them approve of the disappearance of excision, against 18 percent who think otherwise.

Forcible feeding:

Forcible feeding constitutes a detrimental traditional practice that is decreasing. Today 22 percent of women state that they were forcibly fed. This practice is essentially found in the maure community where its prevalence diminishes regularly with the age of the women, which is a sign it is progressively disappearing\textsuperscript{19}. Forcible feeding is carried out either with food products, or sometimes chemicals.

Even if the quasi-totality of men (95 percent) and women (94 percent) are aware of forcible feeding, this practice is much less current than excision, and contrary to the latter, tends to progressively disappear.

Education is once again a determining factor: 14 percent of women with secondary school education or more were forcibly fed, while 39 percent of women who only attended Koran school experienced it.

Marriage at a young age:

Marriage at a young age of girls had for a long time been encouraged by society in Mauritania, and was largely perceived with joint pride. It remains frequent today, even if the age of a first marriage is somewhat later.

The EDSM 2000-2001 provides the statistics concerning the age of a first marriage for women:

• It demonstrates, first of all, that women in Mauritania marry young: 28 percent of women between 15-19 are married and more than half of women between 20 and 24 are married (51 percent)

\textsuperscript{19} EDSM 2000/2001
• The EDSM demonstrates that the median age for the first marriage is receding; it went from 15.7 years for women in the older generations (ages 40 to 44 at the time of the survey) to 19 years for women of recent generations (ages 25 to 29 at the time of the survey).

• The analysis of the results of the EDSM demonstrates the extremely important impact of the level of education on the age of the first marriage; the higher the education level, the later the marriage;

• Women who have secondary education or more, marry three years later (median age is 21.6) than women having a primary education (18.5 years) and more than five years later than those with no education (15.9 years)

• Among women who married before age 15, more than three fourths (77 percent) are without education or with only education from the Koran. Only 20 percent have primary level education and 3 percent a secondary education or more. However, those who have secondary education or more represent 19 percent of the women who marry for the first time between ages 22 and 24.

4.2 Objectives:

• Eliminate all forms of discrimination toward women;
• Reduce considerably violence against women;
• Eradicate practices that are detrimental to the health of women and girls.

4.3 Strategies:

The ratification of the CRC and the CEDAW resulted on a national level in numerous advances over the past ten years, and particularly since the end of the 1990s. These are to be found on a legal and institutional level.

• The creation in 1997 of a Secretary of State for Civil Status, which has fostered the increase in the rate of registration of births and creation of an appropriate legal framework for the creation of a viable system of civil status (law on surnames, Code of Civil Status)

• The creation in 1998 of a Commissioner of Human Rights, for the Fight against Poverty and Insertion (CDHLCPI), This resulted in Mauritania being one of the first countries to adapt in institutional terms, an approach integrating the social and economic dimension into the promotion of human rights.

• The adoption in 2001 by Parliament of the Code of Personal Status (CSP). This filled the existing legal void resulting from the absence of a Family Code and enabled the reinforcement of the socio-legal status of women. This code integrates several provisions of CEDAW

• The enactment in 2001 of the law on mandatory education for children ages 6-14;

• The validation in September 2003 of a National Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in which categorical rights figure prominently.

• The finalization of studies for the adoption of a new Labor Code harmonized with the CRC, which specifically provides for a change in the age for employment from 14 to 16.

• The completion of a pre-project for a law for criminal protection for children, which substantially reinforces the protection of the rights of children. The Criminal Code for Children specifically disposes for the attenuation of the responsibilities of children and protects the child against all attacks on its physical and psychological integrity. In particular,
it prohibits female gender mutilation. It also protects the child against being placed in peril as well as any interference in its liberty, dignity, personality, and family. Excision is narrowly defined in a manner that no longer allows the practice.

**Popularization of CEDAW and respect of women’s rights**

Since 1999, the Secretary of State for the Condition of women put a new emphasis on the problematic situation of laws and in particular the socio-legal status of women. Therefore, an awareness campaign for women on the norms and principles defined by the CEDAW was organized following the elaboration of a strategy IEC to fight against detrimental practices. This strategy defined the communication problems, the target public, content of messages and the communication network and support for each practice (obtaining consensus from the oulemas) such as the Code of Personal Status and the norms and principles of treatment of women stipulated in the Convention.

Beginning in 2001, the year of the enactment of the Code of Personal Status, the accent was placed on the popularization of the Code and several campaigns were organized in 2002, covering mainly the socio-cultural preoccupations that have a strong influence on the statute of women and children in Mauritania.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM):**

If feminine genital mutilation (FGM) is not actually forbidden in Mauritania, advances have taken place in the area of limitation of this practice since the end of the 1990s, and more so since the publication of the results of the EDSM, which revealed a situation which to a large extent, had been under estimated.

In 1999 a national consensus united under the aegis of the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women was able to establish a list of prejudicial and detrimental practices. Six practices were identified and a clarification from the point of view of Islam was made on each one of them. The Ulemas, doctors, sociologists and representatives from civil society were involved in the elaboration of this list.

The Secretary of State for the Condition of Women, with the support of the World Bank and the institutions of the United Nations, (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP), then started a program to fight against FGM, which seeks to train and inform the population. 75 Imans were trained to lead an awareness campaign. They were then followed-up by local animators. The awareness campaigns were first held in the regions the most affected, which had a low rate of girl’s education, a high rate of excision and a large degree of illiteracy among women. In discussions subjects were allowed to emerge that had hitherto been considered taboo. This campaign was carried out in liaison with the Mauritania Association of Women Lawyers (AMAFEJ), created in 1999. Training for journalists of rural radio stations was also undertaken in 2003 in this framework.

The national NGOs and women’s association movements played an important role in the popularization of the CEDAW and CRC and the Code of Personal Status.
**Forcible Feeding:**

Forcible feeding is among the detrimental practices that were part of the national consensus in 1999. A campaign to create awareness took place at this time vis-à-vis the various sectors of society (doctors, ulemas, sociologists, representatives of civil society). The Secretary of the Condition of Women undertook specific awareness initiatives against this detrimental practice. Information for nursing personnel on the health consequences of forcible feeding was systemized so that they could create awareness of its dangers among pregnant women, or women of child bearing age. The EDSM demonstrated that one woman in five had the intention to forcibly feed their child, or they had already done so. This type of action could permit the acceleration of the process of diminishing the practice of forcible feeding.

Additionally, various social mobilization campaigns have been organized, and an annual march of women led by the Secretary of State against Forcible Feeding to draw women’s attention to the importance of sports and dangers of obesity.

3. **WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING**

5.1 **Current Status:**

**Socio-political participation:**

Contrary to their status in the family that grants them large decision making powers (which is perhaps a specific aspect of Mauritian women), their socio-political participation remains limited, despite certain advances listed below:

- Four women today are at the highest level of Ministerial departments (or the equivalent);
- 3.3 percent of women hold municipal elected positions (the rate is 19.1 percent in the capital of Nouakchott\(^\text{20}\)). However only one of them hold the position of Mayor, the others are municipal counselors.);
- 3.7 percent of women hold position of Deputy in government;
- 5 percent of women hold position of Senator in government;
- One of the political parties in Mauritania is led by a woman;
- Women are also present in positions of responsibility in the administration, (General Secretaries in Ministries, Central Directors and Directors of public establishments), cultural positions (university professors….) and positions in the economy (women entrepreneurs, Mauritania Union of Women Entrepreneurs and Merchants);
- Numerous NGOs and associations are directed by women;
- Newspapers are managed by women;
- It is also noteworthy that for the first time in Mauritania, there was a woman candidate in the most recent presidential elections in November 2003.

The analysis of the indications of political participation (such as the vote in the recent elections) according to age group, seems to indicate that the differences between gender are being reduced.

\(^{20}\) Compared to 11 percent in municipal counsels in the capital in 1994.
in the younger generation, which enables one to be optimistic in predictions for women in the future.

**Participation of Civil Society:**

Women, at the same time, are extremely dynamic in creating associations. A recent census by the SSCW calculated more than 4,000 women’s cooperatives.

However, these structures suffer seriously from a lack of:

- management capabilities, and know-how for marketing of their products;
- technical qualifications;
- capital.

These constraints weigh heavily on their economic productivity, and need to be taken more into consideration, under the impetus of the Secretary for the Condition of Women, in the framework of the creation of CSLP.

These organizations suffer also from the:

- Lack of management capabilities (of the 11 percent of women occupying positions of responsibility within the cooperatives that were part of the census, only 50 percent were literate);
- Lack of technical qualifications and training with regard to the production; this is particularly visible at the level of rural cooperatives, which explains their limited profitability and production rates which are several times less than that of men;
- Difficulties in marketing their production;
- Difficulties for access to credit in a form that is adapted to their needs, and
- Insufficient capital, as well as difficulty for access to resources required for production, which is land in rural areas.

Additionally, the EPCV 2000 demonstrates that the rural female heads of households participate twice as often in women’s organizations as do their counterparts in urban areas. This confirms the idea of the dynamic participation in local associations in rural areas, despite the lack of capacities and resources of these women.

**Change in mentality:**

Due to the intense campaigns for the change in mentality, a certain number of indicators enable us to foresee that significant changes are being undertaken within Mauritian society. This is demonstrated by the reduction in the average number of children, the increasing demand of women for family planning, and even the postponement of the average age for first marriages.

These advances should not however mask the existence of problems such as women’s lack of awareness of their rights, the persistence of detrimental traditional practices, such as FGM to
which 71.3 percent of the women are subjected. It is also necessary to take into consideration the fact that these transformations, are profoundly anchored in the social experience of the individuals, and are apprehended in a different manner by men than women.

1.1 Objectives:

**Participation in power structures and decision making:**

- At the level of elected officials: 10 percent in 2005. Political parties must however be encouraged, by means yet to be determined, to promote, if not parity, then at least significant representation of women candidates for elected positions (mayors, municipal counselors, deputy, senators or other);
- On a consultative level: 10 percent in 2005;
- Within the judiciary: a delay exists, but each objective cannot reasonably be maintained for the moment (even the profession of lawyers is today largely masculine, in 2004);
- At the administration and political level: 10 percent of positions of a higher level, or equal to that of General Secretary of Ministry;
- At the level of political parties: a women president of a political party;
- At the level of labor unions, this will depend on the strength of the relationships, and that is difficult to estimate.
- In government administration; 30 percent of the employees, with 15 percent in category A by 2005;
- In business, it is not possible to quantify an objective;
- In international organizations; support female candidates for positions in regional and international organizations and encourage women with requisite credentials to submit their candidacy.

5.3 Strategies:

- The creation of a gender approach to reduce the gap between the sexes with regard to access to education, legal and judiciary services and economic and financial resources;
- Strengthen the participation of women in decision making at all levels;
- Strengthen the participation of women in decision making through their presence in key sectors, such as diplomatic corps or even in the military or paramilitary sectors;
- Development of a program to advocate in favor of the reinforcement of the participation of women in decision making.

6 FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

6.1 Current status:

The fundamental law, the Constitution of July 20, 1991, guarantees women rights and liberties on the same level as men:

- “The Republic guarantees equality before the law to all of its citizens without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social condition” (Article 1, paragraph 2).
- “The State shall guarantee to all its citizens public and individual freedoms” (Article 10).
• “All citizens may accede to public office or employment without condition other than those
determined by the law” (Article 12).
• “The citizens shall be taxed equally” (Article 20).
• “Any citizens born a Mauritanian, in possession of his civil and political rights, and at least
forty years of age is eligible to be President of the Republic” (Article 26, paragraph 3).

Mauritania also adhered to a certain number of international and regional legal texts which
protect the fundamental rights of women: The Convention on the Political Rights of Women of
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, The International
of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the two additional protocols to the Convention on
the Rights of the Child concerning the interdiction of the enrollment of children in armed conflict
and their exploitation in child prostitution and child pornography, The Conventions of the ILO,
numbers (03), (04), (41), (89), (100), (118), (182), concerning maternity protection, Employment
of Women during the Night, Equality of Treatment, and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child
Labor.

All of these Conventions are part of our legal arsenal and have supremacy to national legislation.
This is in compliance with the provision of Article 80 of the Constitution which disposes that
“All treaties and accords regularly ratified or approved, as soon as they are published, have an
authority superior to that of laws.”

With regard to the promotion and protection of women’s rights, starting in 1999 an emphasis was
placed on the problematic situation of legal rights, in particular the need to reinforce the socio-
legal status of women (awareness campaigns and popularization of the CRC and CEDAW and
the Code of Personal Status.

However, despite the remarkable progress achieved in a short period of time, numerous shadow
zones remain. As an example, additional attention is required to the situation of disabled
children, children in difficult situations whether it be work, begging, without parental protection
or street children, as well as the persistence of detrimental practices and the difficult situation in
which certain women find themselves.

The woman in public law:

The Constitution of Mauritania of July 12, 1991 considers the woman to be a full-fledged citizen
and provides for legal equality between men and women. Article 6 stipulates: “The citizens are
guaranteed equality before the law”, which implies that, as a citizen, a woman has the right to
full exercise of all the political, economic and social laws.

The woman is an elector and eligible to be elected in accordance with the constitutional
provisions. Article 32 of the Constitution stipulates: “All the citizens of the Republic, of both
sexes, who are adults and possess their civil and political rights, may vote.” A woman is also
eligible in virtue of Articles 26 and 47 of the Constitution and according to texts concerning
electoral systems. A woman can therefore be present and exercise an office in all areas and
structures of political and constitutional life: the President of the Republic, Parliament, Economic and Social Council, municipal councils, political parties and other structures and institutions of political life.

Article 16 of the Constitution disposes that the protection of the family, the nucleus that is the base of Islamic society is ensured jointly by the State and society: “The State and society shall protect the family.”

**The woman and family law and inheritance rights:**

The creation of the Code of Personal Status is, without a doubt, the most important social reform that Mauritania has known. The most important general principles are:

This has been an aspiration of the male and female citizens of the country, particularly since the country’s independence. The adoption of this Code opens a perspective for harmony within the family unit, and for social cohesion. The Code of Personal Status regulates all the aspects of family life, organizes administrative procedures to be followed, acts as a guide for the magistrates, a reference for the individual seeking legal recourse and guarantees an improved management of relationship within society.

Marriages, divorces, maintenance, guardianship, inheritances….all are defined with precision and clearly formulated. Therein resides the social dimension of this law, which ensures conditions of stability for the family and consequently, for society.

The text protects the rights of women and children (Nafaqa, or stipends for maintenance), defines conditions intended to limit the divorce rate and specifies custody, maintenance, education etc.

The Code of Personal Status is an efficient instrument dedicated to the edification of a modern and organized society on the basis of a reliable civil status. It is also based on respect of the law and the order that constitute social values on which the family is built and grows in harmony, the family of tomorrow.

**The woman and criminal law:**

Criminal law of Mauritania consecrates the principle of gender equality and provides a specific concern for protection of women from all sorts of abuse.

Article 17 of the Penal Code even grants a form of privilege to a pregnant woman sentenced to death, in this instance the sentence is not carried out until after the mother has given birth. It is however necessary to point out that since 1984 our country has not had any death penalties carried out, and there never has been in our history a woman sentenced to death.

Additionally, the penalty of banishment cannot be imposed on women. Also, the Penal Code of Mauritania contains protective provisions for women, and in particular for her honor.
Therefore, severe punishment exists for prostitution, rape, procurement of women for sexual acts, inciting unruly behavior, and slander to one’s reputation by falsely imputing acts of fornication. (Kadf).

Penal law, with its concern to ensure a greater equality between men and women vis-à-vis certain infractions, has provided sanctions for the non-representation of a child. Article 335 provides: “when a decision has been rendered by the judicial system on the temporary or permanent custody of a child, the parent or any other person who does not hand over the child to the individual who has been granted custody shall be liable to a prison term of one month to one year and a fine ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 UM. The same penalty shall be imposed for any one who kidnaps the child, has instructed that the child be removed from the custodial parent, even without fraud or violence. If the parents have had their parental authority legally terminated, the prison term imposable is three years maximum.”

It is necessary to stress the fact that the penal law of Mauritania does not recognize and does not justify honor crimes perpetuated against women, they are considered as other common law crimes.

**The woman and civil and commercial law:**

The codification initiatives undertaken in the past several years forbid all forms of discrimination toward women.

Thus, Article 15 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts provides for age eighteen as the legal age of majority.

A woman is entitled to exercise her civil rights, as does a man, provided she has reached majority, has her mental faculties intact and is not under judicial disability. She can enter into contracts, purchase, sell, and dispose of her moveable and immoveable property.

**The woman and the Code of Nationality:**

Under Mauritanian law, the original nationality is conferred on women in the same manner as men. The Code of Nationality does however contain certain inequalities between the female and male citizen, with regard to the transmission of nationality to their foreign born spouses and their children.

A marriage by a Mauritanian male to a foreign-born spouse allows the spouse to acquire Mauritanian nationality through marriage.

Following an explicit request on the part of the female foreign-born spouse, she acquires Mauritanian nationality after a period of five years, calculated from the date of the marriage.

The foreign-born spouse of a Mauritanian female may acquire Mauritanian nationality through naturalization, granted by decree. He can be naturalized if the couple has maintained their
domicile in Mauritania for at least five years, at the time the naturalization request is filed, and if he speaks one of the languages currently used in the country.

The code also contains an inequality with regard to the nationality of their children born of a Mauritanian mother residing abroad. A child born abroad to a Mauritanian mother does not automatically acquire Mauritanian nationality. It may, however, acquire the nationality if it complies with the conditions of paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the Code, or when he requests Mauritanian nationality by declaration within the period of one year preceding majority and in accordance with the conditions provided by the law (Article 13 of the Code of Mauritanian Nationality.

The woman and social rights:

The preamble of the Mauritanian Constitution proclais the intangible guarantee of social rights. The rights guaranteed to women in this area are, the right to education, the right to social protection and the right of employment.

The right to education:

Education is a human right and an essential means to achieve the objectives of equality and development. Mauritania has experienced remarkable progress in the area of access to basic education. This progress is, however, somewhat tarnished by the under schooling of girls.

In order to end this discrimination significant efforts have been undertaken for the development of the school enrollment of girls in all establishments.

Mauritania considers that investment in education and training for girls is one of the best ways to achieve sustainable development and economic growth. In this objective, the government has adopted a law making education mandatory from age six in order to achieve universal education.

A decade ago our country created a ministerial department responsible for the fight against illiteracy. This structure carries out priority actions to reduce illiteracy among women and to improve their access to professional training. Other ministerial departments support this objective.

The Declaration of Population Policy adopted by the Government in its June 21, 1995 session placed a particular emphasis on education and training. This Declaration established the following objectives:

- Work toward schooling for all children of school age;
- Attribute importance to girl’s education;
- Fight against school drop-outs and failure especially among girls;
- Ensure teaching support specific to girls in the last year of school to improve their chances for access to secondary school and university;
- Develop school infrastructures that meet the needs of the extension of the educational system;
• Provide adequate housing facilities to receive girls in secondary and superior cycles;
• Continue the efforts against illiteracy and supervise the development of functional aspects, especially among women;
• Revise the contents of school text books to promote through the symbolic and the texts, cooperation between boys and girls etc. …

The right to social protection:

The presence of women in the work force requires legislation to guarantee women’s working conditions are adapted to her other social obligations. In this area social legislation in Mauritania provides important measures to preserve women’s health and guaranteeing her social rights.

With regard to health, the labor code forbids work at night for women and subjecting them to difficult work. The government undertook a programme of family well being which is aimed at sensitizing women to the advantages of contraception and its impact on their health.

The social laws main areas provide:

• maternity protection by granting appropriate pre-natal health care, maternal leave, and rest for breast feeding:
• the guarantee of social coverage to the woman, as a salaried employee and as wife of
• a salaried employee.

Finally, the legal framework in relation to work also protects women by placing an obligation on the employer to respect morals and public decency.

The right to employment:

The right of women to work is guaranteed by the statute of public offices. The law applies, in theory, indistinctly and without any discrimination to gender, to men and women. The same situation exists in the private sector where the Labor Code and the collective bargaining agreements state that men and women have, without discrimination, the same rights to employment.

The government authorities of Mauritania with their awareness of the importance of employment, made provisions in the Declaration of Population Policy that promote employment, particularly women’s employment. These principles and actions have been reaffirmed and developed in the document setting forth the Employment Policy.

The improvement of women’s access to real estate ownership:

Despite the possibility of the equitable access to real estate ownership for all Mauritanians, without any distinction, as provided by Order No. 83-127 of June 5, 1983 regulating the reorganization of real estate and its texts of application, women remain largely excluded from ownership of real estate.
On this issue the cruel lack of information motivated the Direction of Promotion of Women to order a study in 2001 to define the extension of women’s access to real estate and land ownership and its constraints.

The results reached by the study reveal that 34 percent of the women interviewed have origins and links to the land, 18.7 percent own land in their name, 85.6 percent do not have any access to credit which explains the incapacity of utilization and conservation, and 67 percent believe that the acquisition of a parcel of land, in rural or urban areas, represent their real security in a relatively difficult economic environment.

This situation is essentially due to the accumulation of traditions and mentality that is not very favorable for the access of women to land in general, and real estate in particular. (Inheritances are distributed in a manner whereby the portions attributed to women are considered to be movable property and consumable).

Additionally, the nomadic life style, up until recently, of a large segment of the Mauritanian population, did not place a large importance on property ownership. Since the 1970’s the strong sedentary tendencies and urbanization was an advantage to men who had access to credit from public banks.

6.2 Objectives:

Future strategies in the area of promoting the socio-juridical status of women will be focused in particular on:

- The creation of a true family policy; even though a Code of Personal Status has recently been adopted, it is necessary to have the methods of its actual application and without concession;
- The reinforcement of the positive institutional mechanisms, such as the SSCW and The National Council on Children, and the NGOs working in this area for the protection of women’s rights;
- The reform of the legal framework for the promotion of the status of women;
- The popularization of the law and the fight against divorce and forced marriages;
- Access for women to legal services and the judiciary;
- Access for women to property and land ownership;
- With regard to the reform of the legal framework, the popularization of the law, and access for women to legal services and the judiciary, a coordinated plan of action was defined in the following areas:
  - The definition of a consultative framework between the government and civil society (including the imams), initiatives aiming to popularize the law, and access to the law for disadvantaged groups;
  - The reinforcement of the capacities of the structures concerned with the promotion of the socio-legal status of women with regard to: (a) training in the areas of ‘gender’ and ‘the law’; (b) adaptation of existing training models and drafting of manuals for training and popularization of the law; (c) the extension of the availability of mobile legal clinics; (d) the extension of legal aid services and judiciary to women prisoners and other disadvantaged segments of the population;
• Contribution to the critical revision and finalization of the project of law on legal assistance and judiciary, especially with regard to: (a) providing funding for court costs and lawyers’ fees; (b) subventions for indigent women;
• The organization of awareness campaigns in all regions on the principal laws and conventions by the legal community related to the promotion of the status of women;
• The organization, on a regional level (with focus on rural areas) of caravans specifically to sensitize women on the importance of their access to property ownership.
• The valorization of the Community Based Organizations, socio-professional organizations and the local NGOs in the popularization of the law;
• The production of popularization supports and material adapted to the various segments of the target population;
• The improvement of access to legal information through the utilization of computers (long distance training) and the distribution of popularization material and legal/judicial aid within the Documentation Centers;
• A beginning of a debate in the area of access by women to judiciary positions;
• The contribution to the revision of school courses (at the first and second cycle level) to integrate notions of gender;
• The strengthening of the capacities of all the entities involved through training of trainers at all levels (regional and central).

6.3 Strategies:

The Secretary for the Condition of Women has defined numerous strategic orientations to promote and protect the status of women through the creation of an area, “Women and Legal Rights: in the National Strategy for the Promotion of Women (NSPW), among the priorities are:

The improvement of the framework of the promotion of the legal status of women through the application of: the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination with regard to Women (CEDAW) and the laws in the Code of Personal Status (CPS).
• The institution of the provisions of CEDAW and the CPS through: the organization of numerous actions to advocate, sensitize and popularize the principles and norms of treatment of women. This will be carried out nation wide and will have contributions from opinion leaders, elected officials, religious personalities with a large following, men and women.
• The decongestion of the formal legal system by offering mediation services for amicable resolution for family disputes and initiatives for prevention of these conflicts primarily through radio broadcasts, in particular on rural stations.

7 WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

7.3 Current status:

Media constitutes a powerful vector for promotion of women. Access to the media plays an essential role for women to increase their awareness of their rights, and the avenues and means that can permit them to fully participate in development efforts.
Several difficulties continue to limit access by Mauritanian women to the media (high rate of illiteracy of women, limited number of community radio stations, inaccessible means of communication in rural areas etc…)

The results of the EDSM demonstrate a positive correlation between the level of education, the level of prosperity of the family, and their exposure to the media; 61 percent of men and 78 percent of women without education are not exposed to any form of media, compared to 22 percent and 18 percent of those who have a secondary education. In the poorest families, 78 percent of men and 90 percent of women are not exposed to any form of media. In affluent families these proportions are not higher than 17 percent and 20 percent.

At the level of the public media, women represent 33 percent of the employees. They are mainly employed as managers of services, responsible for important programmes with large audiences. (programmes concerning the family, women and society…).

National and rural radio stations focus a large part of their broadcasts on increasing social mutation, changes in mentality and promotion of women’s rights and children’s rights (CRC, CEDAW, CSP); education of girls, family planning….) An annual ceremony is organized by Radio Mauritania to present awards to male and female journalists who have distinguished themselves throughout the year.

Since the advent of democracy in 1992, women have started to create newspapers that they manage; the media is allocating more space for women. Several local radio stations have become interested specifically in women, with programming on: women and development, women population and development in the programmes on women and children.

At the level of private medias, i.e. the independent press, the presence of women is extensive with women directors of publication, editors, and professional associations (Association of Journalists Defenders of Women’s Rights, presided by a woman).

**Permit access to information for the most isolated segments of the population: solar radios or voices of the desert.**

A donation was made by UNFPA of 800 solar radios to the Ministry of Communication and the Relations with Parliament (MCRP). These radios do not require either electrical energy, or batteries to be able to operate. They are destined for the population residing in remote zones in the country. They would allow 800 families to listen to the radio, principal source of information in the country that has a strong oral tradition, and where the rate of illiteracy remains very high. Intensive campaigns of awareness on population and development questions were carried out through this media with the support of UNFPA.

These campaigns are on the popularization of the Code of Personal Status, Female Genital Mutilation and Civil Status. The five decentralized radios in the country and national radio are involved in these campaigns. In parallel and in coordination with the radio campaigns, other campaigns are being carried out on the same themes by fifty Community Based Organizations with the support of UNFPA in three regions of the country.
7.2 Objectives:

- Improve women’s access to the media with varied approaches according to their levels of education, their area of residence and economic levels;
- Promote a large involvement of women in the different media formats, (radio, journalism and television);
- Elaborate a global and integrated communication strategy for promotion of women to be utilized in various mediums (audio, written and audio-visual).

7.3 Strategies:

- Increase community radios in close proximity with the support of development partners;
- Mobilize the various medias to create public awareness on a national level regarding detrimental practices, the advantages of women’s emancipation and the respect of their fundamental rights.
- Promote the training of journalists to enable them to take into consideration gender dimension in programming and radio and television reporting, and in the press.
- Introduce an initiation to the law in school radio programmes and programming for children.

8 WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

8.1 Current Status:

Women have particularly suffered from the economic crisis. In rural areas they have assumed more responsibility (farming, cultivation, care for farm animals etc.) due not only to the exodus of men who have left to find employment, but also the difficult circumstances caused by their being stranded and the lack of resources.

They assume a significant role with regard to the management of domestic energy, from the offer and demand standpoint. Women’s cooperative associations could play a primary role in this area by creating awareness of the importance of preservation of the environment and promotion of alternative combustible energy.

One Mauritanian NGO (Network of Women of the Sahara) has launched innovative experiences and techniques for original types of floating reforestation, out of the ground that is very inexpensive, provides rational management of water, better utilization of the land particularly geared toward nomadic populations for food supply.

*Domestic energy in rural areas:*

In efforts to economize energy resources, a project for supply to families was established. Based on a study of the homes, that could reduce the quantities of combustible energy that were used by the consumers and the artisans, model homes were selected and distributed under the name of ‘improved homes’. This step was followed by the phase of massive distribution of these ‘improved homes’ in the neighborhoods of Nouakchott.
The manufacturing and marketing of the improved homes had a positive impact in the following areas:

- Reduction in time spent working by women and children due to the decrease in the consumption of firewood and the time spent gathering it; the time saved can then be invested in other income generating activities.
- Limitation in air pollution with the reduction of carbon monoxide emissions from traditional ovens inside homes;
- Securing of the surroundings of the homes, which reduces the risks of cuts and burns of the children;
- Improvement of the status of women, due to the income earned which constitutes supplementary income allowing her to cover family expenditure.

Women in agricultural services:

Following a 1995 study on the role of women in rural areas in the Sahel area A Women in Development component was created (WID) for the Project for Agricultural Services (PAS) and the Direction of Research, Training and Awareness of MDRE. Among the achievements are:

Technical themes:

- Awareness programmes on important technical themes for women’s production,
- Distribution of local soap in all the villages in Gorgol between 1987 and 1998,
- Sensitization of women on farming activities (licking stones, removal of parasites,) in all the villages of Gorgol from 1997 to 1998,
- Introduction of fruit trees in two women’ irrigated cooperatives in Taza and Gorgol;
- Introduction of market gardening in the two Hodhs,
- Introduction and distribution of presses for peanut oil in 1999 until 2003, this activity continued with the Project of Management of Natural Resources in the Rainfall Area in the Wilayas of Guidimagha, Assaba, Gorgol, Brokna, Trarza, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh El Chargui.
- Training of producers:
  - Training of 394 producers, of which 301 were women in the utilizations of Nem grains in protection of market gardening with the women’s cooperatives in 10 Wilayas of the country
  - Training of 650 women in farming organization in 1998,
  - Training of more than 7,000 women on the techniques of vegetable drying which affected 2,000 cooperatives in 10 wilayas of the Country in 1999-2000,
  - Training of 5 women as auxiliary veterinarians 1999-2000,
- Training for popularization devices:
  - Training for all involved in popularization and research (SONADER, DRFV, CNRADA, CNERF, UNFVA) on the Social Analysis and Gender in 1997 to improve the initiatives and tools used by the agricultural services for popularization of agriculture by taking into account to a greater extent the needs of women in disadvantaged groups;
• Training of 210 agents for popularization of which 19 women received multi-faceted training (Environment, agriculture, animal husbandry), in the National School for Training and Awareness of Agriculture
• Training of twenty six (26) agents for the popularization of local soap making in Gorgol in 1977.
• Training of 59 agents, among them 10 women, to popularize the utilization of Nem grains in the protection of market gardening.

8.2 Objectives:
• For the women to participate in the fight against the degrading of the environment;
• Create basic structures and train staff indispensable for the efficient creation of initiatives that will lead to the reduction of the consumption of firewood.
• Train artisans for improved housing in the areas of design, drafting, respect of technical standards to achieve the goal of supply of improved metal housing that is resistant.
• Identify viable economic options for production or supply to households that use wood, of either coal, kerosene or butane which are safe and efficient to enable a massive penetration of the market of domestic ovens in urban area on the basis of a viable strategy for economic distribution through an advertising campaign;
• Contribute to a realistic development of solutions for substitution in the framework of national programs for the reduction of the consumption of firewood.
• Create institutional measures that can reinforce the capacity of the government to coordinate and apply this program that should rely as much as possible on the private sector.
• Put technology at the disposal of the agricultural community that is appropriate for women’s needs;
• Promote the technical qualifications for women in rural areas in the areas of intervention.
• Carry out participatory studies on the role and specific needs of women in production and agro/pastoral management.
• In urban areas viable and ongoing management of solid waste.

8.3 Strategies:
The CSLP has developed strategies to improve the domestic responsibilities of rural women. The following initiatives were defined in the new strategy for promotion of women taking into account the importance of energy in the lives of rural women.

• The definition and installation of energy micro-projects to rural women;
• The development of women’s capacities in the area of rural energy;
• The support for income generating projects for women in rural areas
• To this should be added,
• The creation of awareness among women on household waste management, the toxic aspects of certain women’s activities tanning of hides and paint, and the problems of the environment and desertification;
• Training of agents for basic awareness who are responsible for the continued training of the women farmers;
• Periodic training on innovative techniques
9 THE GIRL CHILD

9.1. Current Status

The girl child (0-8 years of age) concerns the family, preschool and primary school. Modern preschool education was neglected for a long time – only nine preschools existed in 1990. The National Social Security played a pioneering role for the installation of preschool buildings in Nouakchott. A large increase was noted beginning the mid 1990s. The number of preschool bindings went from 18 in 1996 to 139 in 2000 and 214 in 2001. Each of them provides schooling for approximately 80 children. At the same time the rate of pre schooling that was estimated to be 0.3 percent in 1996 reached 3.6 percent in 2000 and exceeded 4 percent in 2001. The ESDM 2000-2001 indicated an average rate of schooling for 3-5 year olds to be 8 percent, i.e. 15 percent in urban areas and 4 percent in rural areas. This rate however remains low.

- The extension of primary health care and immunization programs constitute the essential actions undertaken by the government for the benefit of young children and health protection. Traditional society grants little importance to health care for young children. Education animation in waiting rooms of health training centers and Community Nutrition Centers and the Center of Recuperation and Nutritional Education are essential and should be expanded.

- The gross rate of schooling for girls has improved and now exceeds the rate of boys (88.9 percent compared to 88.5 percent in 2001-2002, and 92.7 percent compared to 90.7 percent in 2002-2003). Also, the participation rate of girls (percentage of girls compared to boys in fundamental school) has continued its positive evolution by increasing from 48.8 percent in 2001-2002 to 49.1 percent in 2002-2003.

- A National Plan of Action (NPA 1992/2001) for the follow-up on the implementation of the CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child – was elaborated in 1992 and the National Council on Children was established. The Council prepared three reports on the follow up and implementation of the CRC. The initial report of Mauritania contained a detailed account of actions undertaken in the framework of the National Plan of Action and was presented to the Committee on Children’s Rights in Geneva in 2001. The recommendations of the Committee, presented during its session of October 12, 2001 were debated and approved by the government, and then widely distributed during Parliamentary sessions in August and October 2002, and during the annual session of the Council on Children.

Thereafter, the SSCW published in 2001 its second report, with a specific theme of the analysis of the situation of the disabled and in 2003 a report was issued on street children in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

Additionally, in 2002 Mauritania adhered to the additional protocol of the CRC, which prohibits the sale, child prostitution and pornography depicting children, as well as the additional protocol forbidding the utilization of children in armed conflict. The procedures of ratification are currently in process.
The ratification of these two Conventions has resulted on a national level in numerous advances over the past decade, and in particular since the end of the 1990’s. From an institutional and legal perspective, these are:

- The adoption in 2001 by Parliament of the Code of Personal Status (CPS), It filled the legal void which existed due to the non-existence of a Family Code and it reinforced the socio-legal status of women. The Code integrates several provisions of CEDAW,
- The enactment of a law in July 2003 prohibits human trafficking. It is classified as a crime and penalties are defined. More excessive penalties are stipulated for the crime when the victims are children.
- The enactment in 2001 of a law on mandatory education for children 6-14 years of age.
- The finalization of studies for the adoption of the new Labor Code harmonized with the CRC that modifies the legal age of employment from age 14 to age 16;
- The completion of a draft project of law for special protection of the children which reinforces considerably the protection of children’s rights;

The CRC was widely popularized and was the subject of several awareness campaigns in the second half of the 1990s. An awareness seminar on the CRC was organized in March 1997 for the decision makers in government and agents of civil society (lawyers, journalists, female members of parliament, teachers of the mahadras, etc.). A seminar, “Children in Development” familiarized 70 representatives of civil society with the culture of children’s rights. In 1999 the SSCW organized a seminar on awareness and information on the CRC for the NGOs working in the area of children. In May 1999 the Ministry of Justice organized days with the theme “justice for minors and children in conflict with the law”. A month later, the SSCW organized, with the support of UNICEF, sensitization days for the members of Parliament.

Additionally, the annual commemoration of days of the Arab and African child also offer opportunities to create awareness around themes concerning children’s rights.

It is necessary to note the creation of the association “Initiative of the Mayors of Mauritania Defenders of Children (IMMDE), following two general assemblies uniting 33 Mayors. Additionally, a Parliamentary Group for Children and the Association of Imans for the defense of Children’s Rights were created.

Finally, several surveys and studies were undertaken at the end of the last decade and early 2000 on the theme “children and their rights. Only recently has an opening been noted in a willingness to explore subjects that had hitherto been considered taboo, such as employment of children or prostitution and facilitate the initiatives of public structures and civil society for the segment of children concerned.

9.2 Objectives:

- Guarantee universal education to education and improve the retention rate;
- Ensure equal access to education for girls and boys;
Promote the educational process and permanent training for women and girls and reduce the rate of repeating a school year and school failure of girls at all levels for the educational system;

Promote the rights of the girl child;

Combat degrading practices of the girl child

9.3 Strategies:

A national policy for the development of small children, taking into account the global and integrated approach of the development of young children, is currently being elaborated and should be finalized in 2004. It was preceded by studies on the framework and methods for the care of young children. A multi sector committee was created, uniting all the Ministry departments concerned, civil society and development partners. Regional and national workshops on integral development of the young child were organized to enrich the project of national policy on young children.

The global objective of this national policy is to provide the young child with a good departure in life, which will permit them to be in good health, acquire knowledge and to have access to the necessary resources to facilitate their enjoyment of a peaceful and acceptable standard of living, stability and all necessary protection. This will constitute the reference point of coordination between all the entities involved in the development of young children in Mauritania.
PART THREE

OTHER AREAS OF INTERVENTION

1. **Women and disabled girls**

The National Union for Physically and Mentally Disabled (UNPHPM) refers to the statistics of WHO on the disabled population and estimates the disabled population to be 5 percent of the total population, i.e. approximately 125,000 people.

However, due to the existence of certain diseases resulting in invalidity in Mauritania, it is possible that the actual rate of disabled persons is between 3 and 5 percent, representing between 75,000 and 120,000 persons. 15,000 to 25,000 would be disabled. However, due to the absence of statistics, it is not possible to have an estimate of the disabled female population.

The most common causes of invalidity and deficiencies are, according to the pediatric services, genetic and infectious pathology, intrauterine asphyxia (lack of oxygen to the brain), blood diseases from inbreeding of first-degree relatives and circulatory accidents. The National Orthopedic and Re-adaptation Center have surveyed hemophiliacs, paraplegics and cases of encephalitis, cases of polio, fractures, lung dilation, clubfoot (talipes equinovarious) and burn victims.

That National Council of Children in 2001 launched an appeal for the respect of the rights of disabled children. This is important since their living conditions are difficult and their rights are rarely respected. Disabled children rarely attend school, they are often misunderstood or rejected by their peers, even the family and neighbors. They are often kept inside to escape ridicule and are left alone for long hours, being isolated, they receive less health care than other children. Additionally, they suffer from a lack of autonomy that is difficult to bear.

For women in poverty, the presence of a disabled child is an additional responsibility that adds to the family’s vulnerability. The National Council on Children has stated that “in a family with a disabled child, there are two disabled people, since either he mother or the father are obliged to leave work or any activity outside of the home to remain with their dependent child.

In the area of health, the children and their families are confronted by the difficulty that medical specialists are located in the capital (CNORF and CNP), both are in Nouakchott), lack of qualified personnel at all levels, as well as the limited local capacity for the manufacturing of orthopedic equipment. Few have had the opportunity to benefit from appropriate treatment, and where possible, orthopedic equipment.

In the area of education, disabled children are confronted by the absence of school facilities and support for small children who are disabled. Later they are confronted by a limited number of existing specialized schools (mainly located in Nouakchott), as well as lack of knowledge by their parents to teach them.
With regard to preparation for professional life, no legislation exists to provide disabled youth with professional training and employment.

**Objectives:**

- Locate disabled girls and register them in schools;
- Provide teachers with seminars on psychology for girls and disabled girls;
- Sensitize the population to the learning capacities of disabled girls, and their ability to be productive and be integrated into social life;

**Strategy:**

In the beginning of this millennium, an awareness has grown on a national level, which is supported by the first Annual Report of the National Council on Children, published in 2001. The main theme was disabled children.

The National Council on Children readdressed this subject in its next Report in 2003. It was noted that disabled did not, as yet, benefit from services correlated to their needs, in particular in the area of treatment, re-education, orthopedic equipment, specialized education, training and access to employment. It called for the elaboration and creation of a national strategy for the rights of the disabled.

The national plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights is also taking into account the expansion of specific rights of the disabled.

Several organizations in civil society are involved in the situation of the disabled. They are generally organized according to the type of disability. The most active are:

- Mauritian Association for the Promotion of the disabled lepers
- Mauritanian Association of the mentally disabled
- National Association of the Blind in Mauritania
- Mauritanian Association for the motor capacity disabled
- Mauritanian Union of the Deaf and Mute
- National Union of the Disabled of Riad

On an international level, other than the ratification of the CRC, Mauritania ratified two important accords having an implication for the prevention of the disabled and access to treatment for functional re-adaptation. These are, the Treaty of Ottawa on the total interdiction of land mines and the accord creating the African Institute of Re-adaptation (IAR).

**2. Knowledge based on research with facts delineated by gender**

In the area of promotion of women, no structure exists at the present time in Mauritania for the collection, centralization, and analysis of information. This is unlike the existing situation in other sectors, education, health, and agriculture. However, several structures for statistics
collection exist and interesting information is available in this area. The principal sources of information that could be used for the analysis of the situation of women are:

- General census and surveys: The questionnaires of the last three general census of the population and housing and all the surveys on families carried out by the National Statistics System provide large possibilities to disaggregate the information by gender. The variable, sex or gender is systematically asked, which offers the possibility to cross-reference with other variables in sections of the questionnaire. In fact all the information on the individuals that resulted from the census and studies (population number, matrimonial status, education, health, migration, birth, death...) are in principle available by gender. Also, the questionnaires of the surveys of companies/employers (survey of the informal sector, survey of companies, the EMEA...) provide gender of the employer and employees. Additionally, certain statistical operations integrate, in varying degrees, questions related to specific aspects of women/girls (EDSM, EPCV...) However, it was revealed at the time of analysis that the integration of the results of these operations by gender was insufficient. Additionally, the analysis of certain important aspects of the problem of promotion of women necessitates more detailed and more targeted information that does not exist in the census and surveys.

- The source of administrative information: the principal sources of administrative information that could be used for the analysis of the situation of women are the statistics of education, health, government employment and social security. The format of the data collection permits the isolation by gender of this information. This information has the advantage of being compiled often, on an annual basis, which will enable a permanent follow up of evolution.

The studies and specialized research: several studies and research projects on the various aspects of the situation of women were carried out during the past few years. Even though these studies often utilize empiric methods of data collection, thus limiting the representation, they do offer qualitative information that is important to enrich the quantitative information acquired through traditional sources (census, surveys, and administrative sources). In his area one can refer to: the study on the gender indicators in Mauritania (elaborated by the Group for follow up gender on the basis of the results of the EDS study), the study on causes of divorce in Mauritania, several studies on education of girls (costs of opportunities, success factors…)

- The CEDIFFE: Center of Documentation and Information on Women, the Family and Children in Mauritania, was created by the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women in 1995. This initiative was based on the awareness of the role of information and documentation in the process of national development and the importance of participation of women as well as the necessity of their presence in all areas of active life. The Center has two objectives: to collect publications on women, the family and children; to popularize and distribute this information; to identify the organizations and institutions that produce information on the area covered by the Center; sensitize and inform them on the situation of women, children and families. The Center has been able to accumulate 2,308 documents.

- The diagnostic of the situation of the information on gender through the various components of SNS permitted the following information to emerge:
The limited capacities of the structures of the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women in the area of collection, treatment and analysis of the information on gender. The SSCW does not have operational structures specialized in the area of information and follow-up evaluation. The service of Studies and Statistics, under the aegis of the Direction of Cooperation and Planning (DPC), is not operational due to lack of materials and manpower. Also, the follow up group on gender created to reinforce the follow up and analysis of the gender indicators, despite the importance of the work that it has done with the EDS survey, does not have the necessary means to accomplish its missions. It is also important to note the existence of structural problems at the level of circulation of information between various central Directions and their regional offices. The weak capacity of regional structures compounds this issue.

The absence of the gender dimension as a major target in the production of statistics and information through the SNS. Therefore, data segmented by gender is rarely sought and that even when it is collected, it is rarely utilized. The last study on the status of the situation of women (CMAP) demonstrated that despite the extent of possibilities for the sources of information available, it is insufficiently utilized. It also demonstrated the scope of the needs of information on gender that are not fulfilled by present sources of data.

Uncertainties of methodology and conceptual approaches: In a general manner, the methods utilized by the various institutional entities of SNS are not cohesive. The concepts interested in gender, are often utilized differently from one institution to another, or even from one survey to another, often rendering a comparison of the information impossible.

Elapse of time for utilization of data: This is due either for reasons of resources, or lack of interest. It was noted that there is a lengthy lapse of time between the moment of the survey or the event and the time when the information is accessible or published.

1. Follow-up mechanisms to evaluate the progress achieved:

In Mauritania the utilization of the tool “follow-up evaluation” as a key instrument for elaboration, planning and creation of strategies and development programmes is relatively recent. However, certain initiatives exist for the definition and creation of systems of follow up evaluation in several areas. Even though these systems are at their beginning, they enrich the national experience in the area and provide a relatively clear idea of the nature of potential problems. A short list of the principal experiences follows:

Follow up and analysis on poverty:

The CSLP 2001-2004 provided for the implementation of a system of follow up of the creation and impact of programmes initiated during this period. The mission defined and creation of this system was granted to one of the groups of CSLP, i.e. Group 12 “Follow up and analysis of poverty, Group thematic of Analysis and Follow up on Poverty (GTAFP):
In this framework several studies were carried out to define appropriate indicators, the informational needs, the system of investigation and the sharing of responsibilities between the various institutions concerned. This work led to the identification of a first exhaustive list of indicators, on the basis of which a battery of 50 indicators was retained. The indicators of this battery were allocated according to the fundamental objectives of the CSLP:

i. reduce poverty,
ii. accelerate growth,
iii. preserve macro-economic stability,
iv. improve the global level of education
v. improve the state of global health,
vi. increase access to clean water,
vii. increase revenues and improve living conditions in rural areas,
viii. improve living conditions in precarious areas of cities.

Four principal elements determined the choice of the indicators; their relation with the fundamental objectives of CSLP (priority action) their pertinence, their sensitivity and the ability to observe them.

During the last two years, significant progress has been achieved, even though the system still faces several difficulties that influence the quality and the availability of its products.

In terms of achievements, one can note in particular, (i) the elaboration of reports on the creation of CSLP in 2001, 2002 and 2003 within the time frame and with the adaptation of most of the indicators retained, (ii) the participatory process in the elaboration of the reports for the creation and which enabled the sensitization to the importance of follow up and evaluation, of all the entities involved in the fight against poverty, (iii) the lobbying of the producers of statistics to improve the quality of their products, as well as the entities funding them i.e. the government and, development partners to mobilize the necessary resources to reinforce the SNS to respond to the needs of information. In terms of weaknesses, the small amount of separation of indicators by gender should be noted.

The follow up evaluation of the principal strategies and sector programs:

These are the programmes of CDHLCPI, the national program of development of the Education Sector (PNDSE), the strategic development plan in the health sector, the National Strategy in the Fight against AIDS and Urban Development Programmes (PDU). To improve the implementation of these strategies/programmes systems are currently being created for the follow up and evaluation. In this framework,: (i) an information system for the follow up and evaluation of the programmes of CDHLCPI is currently being defined, (ii) a battery of indicators for the follow up of the creation of PNDSE was defined and reforms are taking place for regular follow up (reforms of the statistical system of education through the creation of a SIG), (iii) a system of follow up evaluation of the national strategy for the fight against AIDS has been defined, (iv) a list of indicators was defined for the follow-up evaluation of PDU and a study, for the definition of the situation of reference in the areas covered by the programme in Nouakchott, is currently being created.
The follow up of progress toward the OMD:

The United Nations system in Mauritania instituted a device for the follow up of progress achieved in our country toward the eight development objectives for the millennium. A total of forty-two indicators have been retained. In this framework initiatives have been undertaken to reinforce the SNS so that it can fulfill the requirements for information to respond to these indicators.

Therefore, an annual report was to be prepared on the follow up and analysis of progress toward the OMD. In 2002 the first version was published. The gender dimension was present in the formulation of the documents for the programmes of the agencies of the United Nations for the period 2003-2008.

The analysis of the principal initiatives of follow up and evaluation developed until now demonstrates that the gender dimension was not integrated as an objective and determining element at the time of the selection of the indicators, the data collection, the calculations and the analysis of the indicators. However specific indicators of women appear in various systems. In this framework (i) among the 50 indicators retained for the follow up by the CSLP, eight indicators concern aspects directly related to the promotion of the condition of women and/or children, (ii) 12 among the 42 indicators retained for the follow up of the objectives of the ODM measure questions concerning women, (iii) 2 among the 26 indicators retained for the follow up of the creation of the PNDSE are related to specific aspects of the girl child, (iv) the questionnaire of the survey of PDU offers significant possibilities to segregate the results according to gender.. Unfortunately, the principal ideas advanced up until now for the definition of the system of follow up and evaluation of the programmes of CDHLCP do not sufficiently take into account the gender dimension.
ANNEXES

Indicators

The population of Mauritania in numbers
Total population 2,508,163
Sedentary population 95 percent
Nomadic population 0.5 percent
Average annual rate of growth of the population 2.4 percent
Birth rate (per thousand) 42.6
Death Rate (per thousand) 13
Rate of infant mortality (per thousand) 74
Rate of child death (per thousand) 46
Rate of maternal death (per 100,000 births) 747
Indicator of fertility 4.7 children per mother
Life expectancy at birth:
Men in years 53.8
Women in years 55.8
Structure by age in percentile:
0-4 17
5-14 26.6
5-59 51
60 years plus 5.4
Average age of first marriage (rather than median age)
Men: 28.4
Women 21.4
Relationship to masculinity
At birth: 104
Global: 98
Marriage rate:
Proportion of married men 43.1 percent
Of married women 47.1 percent
Rate of contraceptive use (%): 5
Rate of prevalence of female genital mutilation % 71
Rate of prevalence of forcible feeding (%): 22
Prevalence of HIV/AIDS percentage of pregnant women 0.52
Rate of primary education (%)
Girls 92.7
Boys 90.7
Rate of secondary education (%)
Girls 19.8
Boys 23
Rate of illiteracy (10 years or more)
Men 40.8 percent
Women 56.7 percent
Total 46.9 percent
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment of women (% of the total actively occupied)</td>
<td>28.3 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women head of households</td>
<td>29.4 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size of families</td>
<td>6 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families having access to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity networks:</td>
<td>18.8 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean water</td>
<td>43.7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitary facilities (septic tank)</td>
<td>33.3 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of country in kilometers (2)</td>
<td>1,030,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of km (2)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of tillable land (%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Association of Professionals and Operators of Micro-credit (APOM), “The barriers to access to credit by women”, documents of the workshop held in Nouakchott on March 9, 2003 presenting results of the study.


RIM/SSCW Direction for the Promotion of Women, “Study to Define the Scope of access for women to property ownership and the constraints”, 2001, prepared by Mohamed Lemine Ould Abdel Hamid, Attorney.

RIM/SSCW, Direction for the Promotion of Women, “Study on the scope of access for women to property ownership in Mauritania” (prepared by Bouahna O. Marakchi.), August 2002, 23p.
RIM/WHO, Study on the informal sector in urban areas (2\textsuperscript{nd} phase) Results – Volume 5: Employment in the sectors of Commerce, Services and Artisans, January 1997.

RIM/WHO, Study on the informal sector in urban areas (2\textsuperscript{nd} phase) Results – Volume 6: Added value of informal establishments, July 1999.

RIM/SSCW, Direction for the Promotion of Women, “study on divorce in Mauritania” in 2001, prepared by Mr. Mohamed Lemine Ould Mouchtaba.


RIM/CMap (Mauritian Center for Policy Analysis) “System of follow-up evaluation of the situation of women in Mauritania”, December 2003, prepared by Amal Daddah.

RIM/SSCW, Group gender follow-up, “Indicators of Gender in Mauritania”, March 2003, Prepared and financed by UNFPA.