

Republic of Tunisia  
Ministry of Women, Family,  
Children and the Elderly Affairs



# **SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN SITUATION OF TUNISIA 2008**

**Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation and Studies  
on the Rights of the Child**

September 2009

Tunisia has bet on his children as pillars of its future. It has set up a protection system and comprehensive, integrated and coherent support for preparing children to cross the twenty-first century promptly and with maximum success factors. Indeed, various programs devoted to children has received particular interest and permanent monitoring by his Excellency the President of the Republic, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, both through the presidential programs and the targeted decisions that have affected all children and their family backgrounds including children with special needs. Programs to support the family, causing major concern for the state and civil society contributed to strengthening the capacity of parents and ensure a healthy family environment, which enabled Tunisia to make big profits which contributed on the one hand to the stability of society and its development, on the other hand promoted the optimal use of the investment policy pursued in childhood by Tunisia since the Change.

In following lines, an executive summary of the annual report on the situation of children in Tunisia in 2008. The report included comprehensive data on the situation of children in Tunisia in 2008 and a special report on obesity and its impact on child health and its psychological and social balance.

In dealing the childhood's domain, this report has adopted the sociological approach based on rights.

The data about the Child's right of access to healthcare show that the general vaccination rate exceeded 95% and that the quality of healthcare services offered to children and their families have considerably improved.

As for the Child's rights for sound growth and suitable education and training, data stress the improvement of the education system, including the pre-school phase, as kindergarten coverage rate increased from 28% in 2007 to 28,5% in 2008, while the schooling rate for 6-year old children have not been less than 99% since the 1996/1997 school year.

Regarding Child's rights for care and protection, data confirm the pertinence of our choices in this regard. Despite growing threats, various mechanisms, institutions and measures have considerably contributed to reducing their negative effects thanks to ever increasing networked interventions.

To give concrete expression to children's rights for leisure, a large number of entertainment centers, children and family parks were created, in addition to reinforcing already existing cultural centers by providing them with specialized staff, equipment and modern programs and activities.

The year of Dialogue with Youth celebrated under the motto "Tunisia First" has had positive impacts on children and youth, as they actively contributed in enriching forums and in the design of the Youth Pact.

## **1-Children's Right for Health: Developed Healthcare Services**

### **1-1-Basic Healthcare**

Women's healthcare coverage rate during the pre- and post delivery periods has considerably improved in recent years as reported by the 2006 national study on Mother Health and Wellbeing; assisted deliveries accounted for 94.5%, and one-time pregnancy medical checks represented 96%; however post-delivery medical control did not exceed 51.3%.

#### ***National Vaccination Program***

This program eradicated diseases while ensuring the quality of vaccination campaigns and the proper management of vaccines. The general vaccination coverage rate exceeded 95% in 2008. We note in this regard that diphtheria disappeared from our country since 1994, no polio or infantile paralysis has been registered since 1993, tetanus was also wiped out in 1996, and measles in 2003.

#### ***National Program to fight AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases***

To prevent the mother-to-child AIDS propagation, the following measures have been taken:

- Provide preventive medicine designed for mother and child in Childbirth Centers in order to ensure safe deliveries;
- Provide free of charge artificial milk-feeding

Three children were contaminated by their mothers in 2008, taking in consideration the fact that most pregnant HIV infected women were unaware of their infections during delivery, which calls for early AIDS check-up and screening in order to provide HIV infected with the required care.

### **1-2-School Medicine**

School medicine covers schooled children from pre-school classes up to university students, private and public professional education schools, training institutions reporting to the Ministries of Agriculture and Tourism, education institutions in charge of the handicapped, children and youth with special needs, and holiday centers.

#### ***Basic Healthcare Coverage***

Medical care provided in schools includes medical check ups and examinations, vaccination reminders, hygiene and safety control inside educational institutions in addition to health sensitization campaigns.

#### ***School Health Sensitization Programs***

National Healthcare Days have been established in all various education phases in addition to the pre-school education program. They represent opportunities to discuss children related healthcare issues, in order to raise their awareness and teach them healthy conduct and

behavior by means a variety of tools and methods, in addition to the regular activities conducted by health clubs inside schools on children's physical, psychological and reproductive health ...

The number of health clubs in 2008 was 830 against 730 in 2007.

On the other hand, 38 healthcare centers were created within children's clubs, and their number will progressively grow.

### **1-3-Health Supporting Schools**

"Health supporting schools" aim at improving the health of students, teachers and parents by reinforcing healthcare aspects in their activities and developing their resources to become healthy institutions providing suitable environments for work and leaning.

### **1-4-Mental health care**

The counseling and orientation units represent permanent structures within secondary or university institutions managed by school practitioners who receive pupils or students willing to meet them for health pr physical problems as well as for psychological concerns, or to talk about school or family problems, or simply to inquire about health specific issues.

Counseling offices are designed to support the students' educational, psychological and social protection, and to improve their relations with schools, which must be better open to their social environments.

The number of schools' counseling and orientation offices amounted to 251 offices in 2007-2008; and they held 1361 counseling sessions to the profit of 15760 students.

### **1-5-Protecting the Child's Environment**

The quality of drinking water, waste water, and beach and swimming pool water is controlled by checking their treatment and processing methods as well as by controlling their bacteriological, physical and chemical quality at the level of drinking water processing stations, used treatment equipment and water points at the level of borders.

As for packed water bottles, extensively used by children and sick people, they are subjected to tight control and follow up from their packing up to their consumption.

Besides, sea waters are regularly controlled along the 1300 km long coast. Analyses showed that their quality was appropriate and does not represent any risk for swimmers.

Sanitary control also covered public areas, food shops and food products marketing chains in addition to controlling water in swimming pools and their related facilities, waste water at the level of sewage processing stations and networks, and irrigated areas using processed waste waters.

### **1-6-Anti-smoking campaigns**

In the framework of the national anti-smoking campaign, a number of preventive measures were proposed, including legal texts, sensitization actions, control, studies and training,... in order to fight smoking at all various levels.

## **2-Children's Right for Sound Education and Training : Developing Children's Skills and Priority to Quality**

Children's right for education and training is an essential and basic right that must be guaranteed by the family, the school and all parties in charge of children's education, who must work to make it real. Education represents an important component in Man's life, particularly children, as it contributes to the development of their psychological, physical, cognitive, social and affective skills and aptitudes. It enables them to acquire knowledge and reinforce their creative abilities, succeed and achieve great results at school, which would reinforce their integration in society and in life in general.

### **2-1-Reinforcing Quality in Initial and Early Childhood Institutions**

In application of the Presidential "*Tunisia Tomorrow*" program (2004-2009) and the National Strategy in favor of Childhood (2002-2011), the year 2008 was characterized by greater protection in favor of childhood, particularly initial and early childhoods.

#### ***Initial Childhood: Institutional Nurseries***

The number of institutional kindergartens increased in 2008 by the creation of 36 new nurseries for a total number of 184 nurseries hosting approximately 3091 children, representing a coverage rate of 0.86% of all children aged less than 3 years. Nurseries are managed by 491 educators. To improve the quality of their service, focus was put on training, for it represents an important factor to develop skills and competences, and improve teaching techniques and performance. 144 educators were trained and teaching manuals were designed, including comprehensive information about the growth characteristics of this age group and teaching methods and techniques to use in nurseries.

#### ***Kindergartens: Increasing Numbers and Improving Quality***

204 new kindergartens were created in 2008, including 8 in the framework of the Tunisian Swedish partnership, and their total number was 3262 kindergartens hosting 138304 children. This improved the national coverage rate of children aged 3-4 years from 28% in 2007 to 28.5% in 2008, with the hope to reach 30% by the end of 2009 as set by the Presidential Program.

To encourage the private sector's investment in this field, 40 training sessions designed for kindergartens' directors were organized in favor of 1612 young University graduates.

Partnership was also reinforced with organizations and associations concerned by childhood, such as the National Social Solidarity Union, the Tunisian Women's National Union and some development associations, through framework agreements signed with the Ministry in order to contribute to the creation of kindergartens in rural areas and in high density neighborhoods.

The year 2008 also focused on the quality of services provided by kindergartens by:

- Starting the review of the social and educational curriculum designed for early childhood in kindergartens;

- Upgrading and training 1209 non specialized educators involved with the initial childhood (nurseries) and early childhood (kindergartens) in order to ensure their commitment to implement legal requirements they are bound to, and provide them assistance to find the most suitable solutions and improve the efficiency of their institutions;
- Focus on control operations and pedagogical follow up, as they represent important factors to develop educators' teaching skills and to improve services provided at the level of kindergartens. In this framework, 6971 visits were carried out to initial and early childhood institutions, and 1954 visits targeted educators;
- A national prize was awarded to the best kindergarten in the country in order to encourage competition spirit and hence improve their performance;

## **2-2-Koranic Schools and Preparatory School Year**

The number of Koranic schools increased from 378 in 1987 to more than 967 in 2008. They are attended by nearly 25,000 children, including 13,564 aged five years, and 44.56% of them are girls.

In the framework of generalizing the preparatory class concept to all 5-year old children, estimated at 155,000 by the National Statistics Institute for 2008, and hence achieve the full coverage of this age group (30% in public schools: 46,500) and 70% in the private and associations sector (108,500), a 63 % national rate was already achieved in 2008, including 29% in public schools and 34% in the private and associations sector.

These figures show that the main objective of generalizing the preparatory class concept by the end of 2009 was not achieved, due to limited efforts spent by the private sector to create preparatory classes in different regions, and mainly in large cities already including a large number of kindergartens.

It is important in this context to reinforce partnership programs with civil society (social foundations, associations, children's organizations, the private sector and municipalities) in order to generalize preparatory classes throughout the country.

## **2-3-Good Quality and an Ever Improving Education System**

The Education and training sectors marked the year 2008 by increased complementarities as the role of the private sector was further reinforced in education and training, which offered more opportunities to children and families to enjoy their right for education and training.

### ***Elementary School's First Phase: Conditions reinforcing the learning course***

The average classroom size improved, as it dropped from 23.2 in 2006/2007 to 22.5 pupils in 2007/2008. This improvement concerned all levels of the elementary school's first phase, in addition to improving the teacher/pupils ratio, which was 17.4 pupils per teacher this year versus 18.2 pupils one year before.

Reforms made to the education system with regard to the elementary school's first phase contributed to improving its internal performance, as success rate reached 90% in 2006/2007

versus 84.4 % in 2005/2006, broken down between girls and boys as follows: 87.9% and 92.0 % versus 81.3% and 88%, which reflects children's full use of their right for education and learning in all different regions.

### ***Elementary School's Second Phase and Secondary School***

The average number of pupils per school dropped from 866 to 826 between the 2006/07 and 2007/08 school years, and the average number of pupils per class improved to reach 30.6 versus 31.7 the previous year in junior schools and 29.2 pupils per class in secondary schools.

To improve quality in junior and secondary schools, the year 2008 was characterized by reinforcing the teaching staff as 3239 new teachers were hired, so that the total number of secondary and basic school teachers amounted to 71386 in 2007/2008 versus 68147 in 2006/2007. 50.5 % of all teachers were assigned to junior schools versus 50.8% during the previous year.

This increase contributed to improving the average rate of pupils per teacher, 15 per teacher in 2007/2008 versus 16 in 2006/2007.

9 pilot junior schools were created in order to provide early tutoring to skilled and bright pupils and enable them to continue their studies in scientific, literary or artistic domains, in addition to reinforcing the teaching of languages based on the official curricula of junior schools, so as to boost the quality of instruction in the study phase.

In addition to this, 32 technical junior schools were created, to receive pupils having completed the seventh class of basic school, offering special practical and handcraft skills. Moreover, computer equipment was provided to all junior and secondary schools, and later connected to the Internet, so that pupils can rely on digital technologies for their homework and research.

### **2-4-Private Schools: Additional opportunities for Children to enjoy their Right for Instruction**

Due to the rapid evolution of the Tunisian society at the level of structures and institutions, and changes it is subjected to due to its openness on the World, the need for private schools became obvious in previous years, which further reinforced the Tunisian educational system.

#### ***Basic School's First Phase***

After the relative early stagnation of private education at the level of the basic school's first phase, their number has been growing since 2002/2003 in terms of schools, classes, students and teachers.

#### ***Basic School's Second phase***

With regard to public education, private schools registered in the year 2007/2008 a drop in the number of students in the basic education's second phase and in secondary education, despite the increase of schools specializing in these two phases from 295 in 2006/2007 to 302 in 2007/2008.

As for the private education's performance, the decision to consider 25% of the year average score in the Baccalaureate exam has had positive impacts on this exam's results, as it reached a rate of 25.1% in 2006/2007 versus 16.5% in 2000/2001.

### **2-5-Promising Vocational Training System in full harmony with the Educational System**

The vocational training system has been reinforced over the last years in terms of structure and diversity of training modes and programs, as it has become a major pillar enabling adolescents and youth to take profit of education and training, and acquire handcraft, technical and cognitive skills, and hence be better prepared to integrate the economic market, and avoid marginalization and social exclusion when starting their own life path.

### **2-6-Support Connections and Complementarities between Education and Training**

The new education and training structure aims at ensuring complementarities between them by:

- Creating technical junior schools, and orienting seventh grade pupils to fully prepare them for vocational training;
- Setting up interchange opportunities to enable basic and secondary school students to attend practical classes at vocational training centers, and also vocational trainees to attend general instruction courses in junior high and secondary schools;
- Designing conversion links between education and vocational training curricula at all various levels;
- Creating a vocational baccalaureate exam to enable students to immediately start an active career, join technicians' training programs or university classes;
- The possibility to create a preparatory phase for pupils aged less than 15 years to enable them to join vocational training schools, and also providing training opportunities for applicants not fulfilling requirements, so that they can obtain professional aptitude and specializing certificates.
- Creating a system to valorize experience, opening up horizons for all Tunisians to develop their career at any stage of their professional life.

### **2-7-Ensure the Quality of Programs and Proceed with the Competence based Approach**

The competence based approach project has achieved considerable progress as 203 training programs have been designed based on this approach and implemented in various training centers, working on integrating competences suggested by the initiative in the training curriculum.

### **2-8-Fighting School Failure**

Despite the decrease in the number of failures in the previous year, the search for solutions to eliminate their reasons constitutes a priority for parties working on the quality of the education and training system in Tunisia. Major achievements made in 2007/2008 to combat school failure include the following:

- Provide free of charge and compulsory after-hour classes to pupils failing to pass the fourth elementary school year;
- Increase the number of restaurants in elementary schools;
- Provide subsidies to underprivileged families;
- Reinforce the counseling units and social workers network, and support school transportation in some areas;
- Support prioritized schools by reviewing the elementary and junior high schools' map and by designing a map for secondary schools, in order to provide them with additional opportunities in terms of pedagogical and financial support. The 2008 State Budget assigned 1.2 MD to these schools.

## **2-8-Education and Training Development Perspectives**

Although the educational system's internal performance has improved, failure and drop out rates are still noticeable at the level of the junior high and the first secondary school year. To mitigate these issues, the following measures will be taken during the 2008/2009 school year:

- Continue the generalizing process of the elementary class concept and increase the public sector's contribution from 30% to 40%;
- Continue teaching assistance programs to pupils threatened by failure;
- Try to reduce the average number of pupils per teacher, so that the latter can provide better pedagogical performance;
- Complete the pedagogical reform of the junior high school by designing new curricula, manuals and tools for the Ninth General Education Grade and the Ninth Technical Education Grade;
- Set up an eighth grade at the level of Pilot Junior High Schools;
- Continue training programs in favor of teachers of French, Mathematics and Physics at the elementary and junior high education;
- Reinforce the notion of dialogue with pupils to help them develop their identity, and support cultural activities inside schools;
- Give special consideration to school environments in terms of repairs, maintenance and extension works;
- Proceed with the use and implementation of results yielded by studies and by internal and external assessments in order to find appropriate solutions to poor achievements in the field of languages and sciences;
- Proceed with the integration of children with special needs in regular schools;
- Support educationally prioritized schools;
- Equip educational institutions by increasing the number of computers in order to achieve the One Class-One Computer objective at all various school levels;
- Focus on computer and ICT training programs in favor of all stakeholders in the education process,
- Support networking services.

### **3-Children's Right for Protection: a Networking process privileging the Child's Highest Interest**

Tunisian families enjoy special consideration, through assistance provided to them to run their daily lives and protect their children throughout their living process against all different forms of threats. This support has been reinforced by networking different institutions and mechanisms created in this domain to coordinate and better orient their actions in favor of children's highest interests.

#### **3-1-Protecting threatened childhood**

Multiple tools have been designed to protect threatened children and children lacking family support, that try to compensate this lack by providing care to subject categories, while trying to maintain children in their family environments whenever conditions are appropriate. These tools are:

##### ***Youth and Children Integrated Centers***

The role of these centers is to look after children lacking family support until they integrate society, and offer full or half board shelter to threatened children according to Article 20 of the Child Protection Code, and hence take care of them and help them grow until threats are gone. There are currently 23 Youth and Children Integrated Centers spread over 18 Governorates: 22 centers offer full and half board (A Category), and one half-board only center (B Category) in addition to the November 7 Children Holiday and Entertainment Center in Hammamet.

Education services are offered in the form of:

- **Life Units:** every unit hosts 8 to 15 children (an average of 12 children per life unit) run by an educator living in a compound adjoining the Life Unit's facility.
- There were 88 operational life units during the 2007-2008 school year and their number is expected to reach 92 units during 2008-2009.
- **Natural Context:** this system relies on the idea of keeping children in their natural (family) contexts, while monitoring their growth, providing them with social and education assistance as well as with all necessary health, school, clothing, food and leisure materials;

These centers also include cultural clubs that are open to children of neighbor families, which confirms the center's opening on the community, in order to help children develop their skills and aptitudes while having fun.

##### ***Children's Facilities in the protection***

These facilities were created within Children's Clubs with the collaboration of Municipalities, in order to provide similar services to those offered by half-board integrated centers. There are presently 68 facilities spread over 22 Governorates.

These centers provide children with all life requirements (education and healthcare follow up, clothing, food, entertainment ...). Educators in charge strive to help children integrate their schools, their families and their community in general.

### **Types of Integration**

Assisted children and youth can leave protection centers in one of the following conditions: extinction of threat; recovery of children by their parents or tutors; ability to assume responsibilities in terms of protection; employment; marriage.

### **Challenges and Recommendations**

In spite of developments registered at the level of education services provided by these centers, it is necessary:

- Insist on the role of integrated centers in protecting and caring for children lacking family support and threatened children according to Article 20 of the Child Protection Code in order to ensure their stability and social integration;
- Reinforce the centers' human resources and special programs to be able to provide assistance to all categories of children lacking support, which would dynamically respond to children's needs;
- Better sensitize the community, in order to help orphans totally lacking family support integrate host families due to their need for protection in appropriate family environments.

### ***The National Child Protection Institute***

This Institute is responsible for the protection of children lacking family support and for reinforcing their social rights by trying to fulfill their basic needs, and provide abandoned children with an identity.

To reinforce actions performed by this Institute, the following will be made: Start the creation of an additional life unit at the Solidarity Center in Sidi Thabet to host handicapped children lacking family support, in addition of improving internal and external facilities at the Child Protection institute, particularly those designed for resident children.

The National Child Protection Institute provided shelter during 2008 (up to September 30, 2008) to a total of 737 children, 329 of which were received in 2008.

In the framework of a program called "A Family for every Child", the National Child Protection institute works on the rapid integration of tutored children in their biological families or in alternative families in order to assure their natural and balanced growth. As a result, 593 children were integrated in 2008.

### **3-2-Contribution of Civil Society in the Protection of Children Lacking Family Support**

- Associations represent an important support to State's efforts in the field of protecting children lacking family support. In this regard, 13 associations operate in this field.
- 11 life units run by these associations hosted 183 children during 2008, and could integrate 170 children.

### **3-3-Protection of threatened children against Delinquency, Exclusion and Marginalization**

In 2008, Social work structures provided assistance to 6104 children exposed to problems hampering their social integration. In this framework, 8626 different services were offered to subject children and their families, mainly in terms of psychological and social assistance, field assistance and family reconciliation, as well as interventions within specialized structures, in addition to bringing 674 children back to school, helping 1087 children to sign professional training contracts and hosting 144 children in social institutions.

#### ***Social Work Units:***

The number of social work units within schools reached 2371 units during academic year 2007/2008, covering 40.25% of all educational institutions, and distributed as follows:

- Elementary schools: 1531 units
- Junior High: 514 units
- Secondary: 326 units

### **3-4-Support to Handicapped Children**

Handicapped children are subjected to particular protection, care and integration efforts, as in addition to children's common rights, handicapped children also enjoy special treatment in terms of protection, healthcare, education, and special training adapted to their aptitudes, for them to be able to rely on themselves and contribute in social life.

More than 5795 handicapped children aged less than 14 are registered in specialized education centers run by handicapped associations, while the number of handicapped children aged less than 20 registered in specialized education centers during the 2007/08 school year reached 9491 out of 15234 representing 62.3%.

The number of specialized education centers increased from 250 in 207 to 169 in 2008.

We note that services provided by associations providing care to the handicapped were extended to cover special home care to heavily handicapped children, as 326 children aged between one and 18 years are cared for at home by various associations, which represents 53% of the 616 heavily handicapped children.

The National Program for the Integration of Handicapped Children in Regular Schools contributed during its first phase (2003-2007) in reinforcing the place of handicapped children in the educational system, as they can fully enjoy their right for education and training. There are 265 schools offering integration opportunities spread in all various governorates and host 1144 handicapped children, in addition to 4409 handicapped children spontaneously registered in regular schools at the level of elementary schools' first cycles, while 1793 pupils attend the second cycle of elementary education and secondary schools. The number of junior high classes integrating handicapped pupils also rose to 148 during the 2007/08 school year.

Handicapped children also took profit of Information and Communication technologies through the specially designed E-Handicapés program, reflecting the State's commitment for equal opportunities, by setting up 24 social and education units for handicapped children in all various Governorates. The number of handicapped children attending the Children's Computer Training Centers reached 1620 in 2008 compared to 1559 in 2007.

### **3-5-Protection of Underprivileged Children**

In the framework of supporting children living in underprivileged families, and mainly school aged children to enable them to complete their studies, additional subsidies amounting to 30 TD per child at school age were disbursed to underprivileged families with a limit of three children per family. 26,000 families took profit of these subsidies targeting approximately 50,000 children.

### **3-6-Protection given to Children of Tunisian Communities living abroad**

Based on the principle not to discriminate between Tunisian children using a different language or living abroad, summer camps designed for immigrant children aged 9-14 are held every year. 301 children participated in the summer 2008 camps spread over three sessions. Similarly, 1875 children of Tunisian immigrant families returning home for the summer attended Arabic language instruction programs designed to reinforce their Arab and Muslim identity, in addition to regular programs they follow in their host countries along with their school curricula.

### **3-7-National Adults Literacy Program in favor of Children**

The Adults Literacy Program constitutes a major tool reinforcing children's right for free education, as it facilitates their social and economic integration by:

- Providing life-long education opportunities for illiterate and early school leavers,
- Providing illiterate children not only with the reading, writing and calculation skills but also with comprehensive instruction in the framework of life-skills classes focusing on family, education, health and citizenship;

During the 2007/08 school year, the Adults Literacy Program reached out to 52736 students of both genders aged less than 30, including 7156 children aged less than 15.

### **3-8-Childhood Delegates**

The work of Childhood Delegates focuses on protecting children against all forms of violence, damage, physical or mental maltreatment, and exploitation, including sexual abuse. This structure represents a preventive body in every situation threatening children's health, physical or moral integrity, as defined by Article 20 of the Child Protection Code. Childhood delegates look after threatened children jointly with the different players in charge of children, including Governmental structures and institutions, associations and organizations, based on the child's highest interest principle.

Every citizen is bound to denunciate threats on child's health, physical or mental safety to the Childhood Delegate, regardless of the professional secret liability.

### ***Reporting on cases of threatened children***

7639 reports were filed in 2008, 6808 of which were processed by Childhood Delegates.

### ***Measures in favor of threatened children***

Childhood delegates receive reports on various situations representing threats to children's physical or moral integrity. Once threat is confirmed, Delegates react based on the child's highest interest. In 2008, 7040 settlements were made, broken down as follows: 2972 amicable settlements; 1623 legal proceedings; 498 urgent interventions; 1840 cases under investigation; 107 miscellaneous decisions.

### ***Role of Childhood Delegates with Delinquent Children***

The work of childhood delegates with delinquent children focused on trying to ensure special treatment, as Tunisian legislation provides legal protection to delinquent children, by offering a mediation tool aimed at settling the case between the child or his representative and the victim or his representative. Mediation aims at avoiding legal suits, sentencing and execution throughout legal proceedings. In 2008, 912 mediation cases were conducted by Childhood Delegates and were distributed as follows: 154 interventions before suits i.e. during proceedings, 190 during suits; and 568 after suits to suspend the execution of sentences. This reflects the importance of this tool and its role to avoid bringing children before courts and enforcement structures such as police officers and legal instances, as it ensures victims to recover their financial rights or parts of them.

## **3-9-Role of Law Enforcement Authorities**

To protect children against delinquency risks and threats, law enforcement authorities (Police and National Guard) work on fighting all forms of public security harmful conducts, which may lead children to commit offences, such as:

- Control of public facilities including coffee shops, game shops, dance clubs etc.. by preventing access of children not accompanied by their parents, and rising related penalties;
- Conduct joint security and social control operations between the Ministry of Interior and Local Communities, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Tunisians Abroad, in order to fight negative phenomena such as begging, homelessness, and marginalization. Special units working in various security districts take appropriate security measures such as internments, filing lawsuits, social monitoring, ...)
- Coordinate with different structures and institutions concerned with Childhood situations of children lacking family support, born outside marital frameworks, or abandoned on the street or in hospitals by offering them temporary shelter in social institutions and associations until procedures are completed;
- Permanent follow up of disappearing children throughout the country.

### **3-10-Legal Protection of Threatened Children**

The Family Judge looks after cases of threatened children at the request of any party or at his own based on conditions described in the Child Protection Code. The Family Judge enforces protection from a legal perspective in all various difficult conditions endured by children, in order to ensure their rights for protection against all forms of threat. Primary courts received between July 2007 and the end of July 2008, reports on 2471 cases of threatened children, 1356 boys and 1115 girls, reflecting an increase of 216 cases compared to one year before (2255).

Due to the increase in the number of threatened children, it is necessary to reinforce sensitization and protection efforts to consolidate family care and reduce threats, by:

- Creating necessary protection and assistance mechanisms, and increasing the number of Childhood Delegates in highly populated areas;
- Reinforcing the role of social institutions to support families of threatened children by helping them to overcome problems hampering their efforts to educate their children, as families remain the ideal frame for the growth of children and to preserve them against delinquency;

The most common form of threat is negligence and desertion which affect 1622 cases, followed by obvious and continuous failure to provide care with 485 cases, and children losing their parents and remaining without support with 284 cases. These indicators call for the joint work of all different players working in the field of child protection, including governmental agencies and civil society groups in order to protect threatened children and help them to overcome reasons of threat.

It should be noted that the ratio of children's threats and crimes is still low, as 8 children only were threatened for sexual abuse and only one child was bound to beg or undergo economic exploitation. No case has been registered of children exploited in organized crime.

It should also be noted that the number of temporary measures to remove children from their families because of threats has increased to 504 while 265 decisions recommended maintaining children with their families. This indicator shows that families may be a source of threat for children, and it would then be necessary to place them in an education institution or in host families until the reason of threat is gone.

The number of children subject of decisions for placement in training or education institutions increased from 85 one year before to 96 this year, as did the number of children placed in tutorship, in host families or in social and educational institutions which grew to 169 this year compared to 131 last year. This reflects the threatened child's need for suitable frameworks to receive education and training when families fail to play this role.

#### ***Delinquent Children***

##### **Legal Protection of Delinquent Children**

The legal treatment of delinquent children provides them necessary protection by courts specializing in juvenile cases, in addition to reinforcing the educational and corrective aspect

of their sentence instead of the punitive aspect. This treatment allows for the enforcement of legal mechanisms specific to delinquent children, non-criminalizing some actions, considering others as simple offences, providing mediation, reconsidering sentences or allowing special leaves from juvenile centers.

The number of offending children brought before courts dropped by 246 cases from 10,869 a year ago to 10,623 this year, which means that juvenile offences are not increasing in our country. Nevertheless, work must continue to protect children not to commit offences or crimes.

However, the number of juvenile brought before penal courts increased from 347 in the juridical year 2005-2006 to 363 in 2006-2007.

The number of sentenced girls is by far less than that of boys with a difference of 10,528.

### **Monitoring Offending Children before Lawsuits**

The Children Monitoring Social Center hosts offending young boys aged 13-18 forwarded by the Children's Judge for a one-time renewable month essentially to monitor the personality of offending children by social experts, psychologists and educators.

In 2008, the Center looked after 194 offending boys, and decisions were as follows:

- Release of child, delivery to family and subsequent follow up: 120 cases
- Assignment to a juvenile education center: 61 cases
- Maintaining for further observation: 13 cases

### **Legal Protection of Detained Children**

A set of measures has been put in place to reintegrate socially threatened children and prevent them from falling back into all types of crimes by:

- Signing a cooperation agreement with the Released Prisoners Integration Association
- Signing a cooperation agreement with the AIDS Prevention Association in the field of healthcare sensitization campaigns.

### **Improve Care Services and Support Corrective Programs**

Care services offered to children include: housing, beverage, healthcare, psychological and social assistance.

Offending juvenile can enjoy a number of corrective programs fulfilling their rights, such as: the right for education and training using special learning tools and facilities, with the possibility to practice cultural and entertaining activities inside multi-specialty clubs.

All children staying at juvenile correction centers follow professional or agricultural training programs in various domains, crowned by certificates delivered by national entities. In 2008, 279 certificates were delivered including 265 technical and 14 agricultural.

Moreover, 315 offending children were integrated in the framework of the 21-21 special Employment Fund distributed as follows: Continuous education and training: 49; launching projects: 45; professional training: 221; while 339 offending children were integrated through Juvenile Correction Centers as follows: social assistance: 47; family integration: 79; school integration: 91; assistance: 16; follow up of self-integrated children.

#### **Monitoring Released Children:**

In this context, and in addition to the social assistance and special psychological support provided to this category of children to help them reconcile with their families and with their community, 68 children were brought back to school, while 335 were supported to receive professional training.

### **4-Children's Right for Decent Environment : Culture of Life Quality for Children aware of their duties**

Children education contributes to the protection of the environment and to strengthening an environment-friendly behavior, aimed at preserving natural resources and life quality, which would reduce environmental problems and hence provide people and particularly children with a safe environment. Children can enjoy a decent environment only when all parties commit to preserve it.

#### **4-1-Children Environmental Sensitization Campaigns: Investing in a Promising Future**

Environmental education activities which started in the early nineties have grown from scattered programs to a comprehensive policy involving several stakeholders such as Ministries and related organizations. This Environmental Strategy focused on sensitizing children and youth and on diversifying educational tools in order to orient their conduct towards preserving natural resources and the present and future national environmental patrimony. Activities included the organization of several programs and projects in the field of environment education in addition to national training sessions and competitions about ecological topics.

#### ***Sustainable Schools Network Presidential Program***

The **Sustainable Schools Network Presidential Program** continues with the aim of disseminating the culture of environment and sustainable development among school children by involving them in planting activities and raising their awareness about the natural, ecological and human environments of their school. This program covered approximately 140 schools spread throughout the country.

#### ***Sensitization to protect Ecosystems***

The protection of natural resources constitutes a top priority in Tunisia with regard to the scarcity of most resources such as farming lands, forests and pasturages. Therefore, sensitizing children and teaching them ways to properly use water resources, respect vegetation and animals, and save the energy would contribute to preserving the climate and

protecting the environment against pollution. In this framework, awareness raising campaigns focused on the natural characteristics of our country, and which included **beach and ecological camps, exploratory field visits (national parks and natural reserves ...)**

### ***Ecological Competitions***

The ecological competitions held in 2007 and 2008 targeted several age groups in order to enrich their knowledge and give them the opportunity to show their experiences and creative ideas in the field of environment. These competitions include: the Schools National Environment Competition, and the National Environment Photography Competition.

### ***Environment Communication targeting Children***

In the framework of supporting environmental communication designed for children, various initiatives were taken:

- 3 weekly radio programs specializing in environment and sustainable development (life quality and Ecology on the Youth Radio, and Environmental Citizenship on the Cultural Radio), increasing the number of specialized radio programs to 10 at the national and regional levels;
- Daily TV spots on topics related to preserving good air quality, waste management, cleanliness of national parks and roads;
- Launch of TV spots to promote ecological and cultural tracks offered by our country's national parks;
- Launch of a special newsletter focusing on air quality.

## **2-4-Child-Oriented Leisure and Tourism**

To further reinforce urban environments, several initiatives and programs have been launched in the field of environmental entertainment, as urban parks were created; beach tracks were drawn, in addition to the development and modernizing of national and leisure parks.

### ***Visits of Schools' and Associations' Children to special natural areas***

Natural reserves offer unique environmental landscapes and constitute laboratories for the ecological balance. Most reserves offer ecological museums and hosting centers, which attracts children, youth, families as well as researchers in the field of biological diversity and the preservation of natural resources.

## **2-5-Forums on Youth and the Environment**

In application of the President's decision to place the 2008 *Year of Youth* under the motto "Tunisia First" and to identify Youth concerns and expectations in the field of environment, 7 regional forums and one national conference have been organized about Youth and Environmental Citizenship.

The main recommendations yielded by these forums are:

- Extend the President's program of sustainable schools;
- Set up incentives to encourage youth to use bicycles, and awards to municipalities with the best energy saving records and using recyclable energies;

- Design of an Ecological Conduct Chart in the framework of the Youth Tourism System;
- Reinforce environmental sensitization programs targeting youth, and tighten sanctions against offenders of the environment and of natural resources.

## **5-Children's Right for Entertainment and Culture: Developed Facilities and Varied Programs to enhance Children's Skills**

### **5-1-Culture et leisure spaces**

Entertainment contributes to the development of children's cognitive, psychological and physical capacities. It should no more be regarded as a distractive activity only, but also as a source of instruction and a basic pillar for the development of cognitive and creative skills.

To confirm children's right for entertainment, several programs were organized including the extension of Children Computer Clubs and opening their access to all children categories, including those with special needs, in addition to the creation of 1000 fully equipped entertainment parks for children in all different regions.

#### ***Cultural Clubs: Public Facilities offering Instructive Opportunities to Children***

There are 210 cultural clubs, 324 children's public libraries and 30 mobile libraries, in addition to 6 fixed libraries. Libraries offer a wide range of books, including 2,399.862 volumes serving 2,373.252 children. Mobile libraries offering 463,871 volumes, cover approximately 1730 rural communities and serve approximately 323,045 children.

#### ***Digital Technology Clubs***

In this framework, the National and Regional Children Computer Centers (24) were further supported by creating special areas fully equipped with computers and equipment to host children with special needs. These centers trained 266,720 children of both genders equally. Besides, 03 mobile computer clubs have been set up to provide children residing in rural areas to enjoy their rights of access to digital technology.

#### ***Youth Compounds and Clubs: Spreading the Culture of Leisure***

There are 296 Youth Clubs including 28 offering accommodation facilities, and they were used by 74,395 young men and women. Three Youth Compounds have also been built and fully equipped.

The number of rural youth clubs was 224 in 2008 offering services to 383,368 young people of both genders.

### **5-2-Social and Educational Activities: Pillar for Knowledge and Leisure**

#### ***Children's Clubs***

The number of Children's Clubs in 2008 was 271, including 69 children's compounds attracting over 53,000 children, supervised by 884 specialized educators. These compounds were reinforced by the creation of special computer, science and language clubs, offering

children various activities co-animated with children associations and organizations. They also contribute to cultural events held in populated neighborhoods, and provide opportunities to children living in underserved areas to take profit of cultural and social programming, mainly by means of 3 mobile clubs in Kasserine, Mahdia and Siliana.

On the other hand, 64 entertainment facilities were created in 2007-2008 in application of Decision 142 of the Presidential Program “For Tomorrow’s Tunisia” providing for the development of 200 children’s entertainment centers in different children’s institutions by the end of 2009.

#### ***Cultural activities in Training and Education Institutions***

Cultural clubs within educational institutions contribute to the development of students’ creative skills and reinforce their cognitive competence in addition to entertaining them. The number of active cultural clubs in public schools was 22,211 during the 2007/2008 school year, and 39,187 students took profit of them.

Activities offered by these clubs are designed for regular children as well as for children having special needs.

#### **5-3-Confirming the Principle of Sports for All**

In order to enable children to enjoy their right for physical activities at early ages, focus was put on equipping elementary schools with sports equipment. The number of schools offering physical activities amounted to 2224 out of 4507, reflecting a rate of 49.45%.

There were approximately 961 active associations in 2007/2008 created within 4507 elementary schools and 1199 sports associations in 1294 junior high and secondary schools.

#### **5-4-Challenges and Perspectives in the field of Children’s Right for Leisure Activities**

In spite of achievements made in favor of children in all various domains, and mainly in the field of leisure and entertainment, as children throughout Tunisia can have access to entertaining and cultural activities, which reinforces the equal access principle, we note unbalanced attendance of leisure activities due to several factors, of which mainly the type of activities and facilities, the families’ cultural background, children’s age and hobbies, etc.. To boost children’s participation in cultural activities, the following suggestions are made:

- Encourage the creation of special institutions and facilities offering a wide range of leisure and tourism services to children and youth of different categories;
- Develop incentives for travel agencies specializing in leisure and tourism activities designed for children and youth, and particularly for children with special needs;
- Design a Chart providing for Children’s right to practice various entertaining activities, involving different structures and stakeholders in this field.
- Expand the gratuity of access to museums, ruins and natural reserves;
- Reinforce leisure and cultural activities particularly in highly populated areas.

## **6-Children's Right for Expression and Participation: Better discussion and expression abilities for empowered children**

One of the basic family needs is to teach children to be responsible and train them to face social life by giving them the opportunity to participate, express themselves and talk about their concerns with objectivity and full confidence, while listening to others and mastering discussion techniques.

In this context, several tools have been set up, including the creation of Children's Parliaments, Children's Municipal Councils, Young Parliamentarians, Young Parliamentarians' Fan Clubs, Pupils Representative Committees within elementary and secondary schools, and at Children's clubs.

### **6-1-Children's Parliament: Teaching Responsibility**

The Children's Parliament represents a space where children can freely express their viewpoints in areas of concern to them, a way to experience public life and practice democracy, in addition to reinforcing their civic education and disseminating the culture of Children's Rights.

In 2008, two regular sessions of the Children's Parliament were held at the House of Parliament, the first on March 28 on "Children and Water Resources", and the second on December 26 about "Role of Media in Children Education". Children's participation was characterized by their ability to think about special topics, analyze them and hold debates.

Children Parliamentarians' Clubs focused in 2008 on issues related to fighting violence against children and ways to prevent dangerous conducts.

### ***Maghrebi Children's Parliament: Openness on others and reinforcing partnership***

With the aim at making the best use of Children's Parliaments set up in various Maghrebi countries, the Arab Maghreb Union's House of Counselors issued in its sixth edition held in June 2005 in Tunis a decision to create the Maghrebi Children's Parliament in order to reinforce the Maghreb identity and friendship ties between children of Maghrebi countries and with similar regional and international parliaments.

The inaugural session of the Maghrebi Children's Parliament was held on July 11 and 12, 2008 in Tunis with the participation of fifty children, each country represented by 10 children equally divided between boys and girls. This inaugural session adopted the Parliament's bylaws and issued a final statement.

### **6-2-Children's Municipal Councils: Active Contribution to Public Life**

The total number of members of Children's Municipal Councils reached 4366 children spread over 264 municipalities, and including 1935 i.e. 44.32%.

The Children's Municipal Council includes four fixed commissions in charge of hygiene, environment and health; sports, culture and entertainment; mutual support and solidarity; and communication, sensitization and relations with other children's municipal councils.

Activities mainly included awareness raising campaigns to preserve school internal and external environments, public squares, residential neighborhoods, urban parks, tree plantation, and participation in the National Cleaning Day,... in addition to visits made to sick children at hospitals.

### **6-3-Year of Dialogue with Youth**

More than four hundred thousand young men and women (pupils, students and workers) including youth with special needs participated in the open and free dialogue with youth launched on March 22, 2008 under the motto "Tunisia First", in order to express their points of view and suggestions in all issues concerning Tunisia's future in all various development domains. Once results of this dialogue are processed, a national strategy for youth will be designed for the next phase.

### **6-4-Students' Representatives in Schools' Councils**

To confirm student's active participation in their school life, students' representatives were elected to sit in schools' councils. They were trained on management and responsibility using dialogue and persuasion techniques between the school's different parties to settle issues and problems in the operation of the school.

## **7- Civil Society: Supporting the State in protecting children**

Civil society, with its different components, represents an important support to the State in terms of development, by adhering to the State's objectives and execution of programs in the framework of active partnership reinforcing the rights of all children, particularly children with special needs. In this context, associations and organizations in charge of children contributed throughout 2008 in the implementation of various program related to education, healthcare, protection, entertainment and participation.

### **7-1-In the field of Education**

- Consolidate the network of kindergartens in rural areas as well as in popular and populated neighborhoods, where coverage rate is less than 10%; 258 kindergartens were created subject areas (112 in rural areas and 146 in popular areas), serving 11,460 children aged 3 to 5 years.
- Monitor early school dropouts;
- Provide better schooling conditions by inciting parents to maintain public schools;
- Contribute to programs aimed at limiting school failure and fighting the evening hours phenomenon;

- Provide assistance to school early leavers by preparing them for professional life and training them in professional schools.

### **7-2-In the Field of Care and Protection**

- Contribute to assistance provided to children lacking family support by hosting 27 children (16 boys and 11 girls) in Orphan Children's Villages in Gammarth, Siliana and Mahares, which increased their number to 267 children spread over 36 family homes and fully enjoying their rights.
- 11 life units run by associations working in the field of children lacking support hosted 183 children in 2008, 170 of them were integrated;
- Organization of sensitization meetings with parents of handicapped children;
- Organization of forums in different regions about the importance of dialogue within families;
- Holding of mediation sessions between family members in conflict (children, parents, spouses).

### **7-3-In the field of healthcare**

- 300 pupils, boys and girls, with specific needs and coming from underprivileged families received eye glasses and listening devices;
- Organization of healthcare caravans in several rural areas reaching out to 500 school children,
- Production of a feature film called "the Unknown" about AIDS.

## **Obesity affecting children and adolescents<sup>1</sup>**

Obesity refers to an excess of weight compared to natural rates due to the accumulation of dietary calories and fat<sup>2</sup>. The **Body Mass Index (BMI)** is used to define overweight or obesity. Based on this rate, an overweight person is when BMI exceeds 25,kg/m<sup>2</sup> and an obese person is when BMI exceeds 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

As for children, the definition and evaluation of obesity seems more complicated due to changes of weight according to age, and the absence of clear definition of symptoms for childhood, in addition to interference between BMI, age, gender and puberty.

In spite of the non viable BMI rates, it was also used to define obesity and its limits among children.

### **1-State of Obesity in the World according to medical Studies**

Studies show that obesity and overweight affect more than 22 million children aged less than 5 years, and that 10% of children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 years suffer from overweight or obesity.

On the other hand, obesity has been increasing among children over the last two decades, with different rates according to individuals, ethnic groups, age and gender.

### **2-Causes of Obesity**

Obesity may be due to several factors, including genetic factors and others such as bad diets, urban living styles characterized by sedentary modes.

- Environmental factors

Obesity is a result of the lack of balance between excess of food and consumption of energy. Some other factors include TV long watching periods, playing videogames or excessive use of public transportation.

Some studies showed the rapid spread of obesity among children, mainly due to visual advertisements promoting food and inciting children's excitement to consume fat food and sweets instead of fruits and vegetables. Studies also showed that taking food while watching TV and consuming poorly nutritive food can be direct causes for children's obesity. Diet habits leading to overweight and obesity include

- Taking breakfast at irregular times with unbalanced nutritive components, or not taking breakfast at all;
- Taking fat and sweet food and little fruits and vegetables;
- Taking food throughout the day (nibbling), including fat food, high proteins and excessive consumption crises;

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<sup>1</sup> Participated in this paper: Pr. Samir Boukthir, Dr. Leila Saddam, Pr. Samira Blouza Chabchoub ; Pr. Saida Ben bechr

<sup>2</sup> Numbers of used references

In addition to a stagnating life mode, with no physical exercises but with bad and poor diet, children suffering from overweight or obesity rarely practice sports at school.

Early weaning can also be accounted for being a cause of children obesity or overweight.

- **Genetic Factors**

While environmental, behavioral and social factors play important roles in obesity, genetic factors also proved to be key elements in the increase of obesity over the last thirty years.

- **Social and economic factors and their impact on children obesity**

Studies conducted on obesity showed that this phenomenon affects more middle class or poor social categories. Other studies also showed that obesity affecting 5 year old children registered 7.9% in wealthy families and 14.4% in economically and socially modest families. For the 10-11 year old children, these rates are respectively 12.4% and 29.3%.

- **Parents' level of instruction**

Data concerning parents' level of instruction and its evolution differ between countries. Some studies showed that children of a large proportion of parents holding university degrees have normal weight while many parents with limited level of instruction have children suffering from obesity. Studies also showed that mothers' poor level of instruction plays a role in children obesity.

### **3-Children's Obesity and Pathologies**

Long lasting obesity during childhood may continue during adulthood, as two thirds of obese children continue to be so when adults. This danger also affects 80% of adolescents.

Early obesity may induce several secondary chronic diseases: Metabolic complications, blood and respiratory problems, gastric and bone problems, depression, sores, etc... Complications are visible when they affect children and remain until adulthood. Obesity may also induce early death for 50 to 80%.

### **4-The Situation in Tunisia**

- **Obesity Symptoms and Distribution according to Age**

Studies carried out in Tunisia since 1985 show that the number of children aged 3 to 36 months suffering from overweight increased from 3.8% in 1998 to 10.3% in 2006, as did the number of adolescents aged 15 to 19, which increased from 3.1% to 17.4% for boys and from 11.9% to 20.7% for girls during the 1997-2005 period.

- **Distribution according to Gender**

A study conducted in 2007 in the Grand Tunis area and Mahdia shows that women are more likely to be obese and overweighed.

- **Obesity and weight at birth**

Studies also show that new born babies weighing more than 4 kilos are more likely to be obese later.

- **Obesity and breast feeding**

According to studies, the risk of obesity decreases for children having been breastfed for at least 6 months compared to other new-born babies breastfed for less than this period.

- **Obesity and parents' socioeconomic conditions**

Studies carried out in the Grand Tunis area in 2007 show that parents of obese or overweighted children hold senior positions or are university graduates.

Prevalence of obesity and overweight in wealthy families can be accounted for as follows:

- Parents do not know well good diet rules and procedures;
- For some families, notions like obesity and wealth are interrelated;
- Breastfeeding is soon replaced by bottle-feeding
- Children living in wealthy families have easy access to food

- **Obesity and average weight among parents**

Different studies show that in general parents of obese or overweighted children suffer from the same symptoms.

- **Obesity and food diets**

Studies show that 12.3% to 16% of obese children do not take **breakfast** or exceptionally take it, or the nutritive quality of what they eat is not well balanced, full of fat; besides, lunch and dinner meals they often rapidly eat generally lack vegetables and fruits not to mention fast food and sandwiches children eat every day. Research also confirms that nibbling and the lack of physical exercises represent two main factors for obesity.

- **Obesity and Pathologies**

Most studies conducted in this field have shown that obesity leads to several pathologies that may jeopardize the individual's health when adult or later. A study made on 789 pupils suffering from cardiovascular problems has shown that 6.1% are obese. A four year monitoring of this sample of individuals has shown that blood pressure affects 25% of the group while obesity affects between 48.9% and 59% of individuals suffering from cholesterol.

## **5-Recommendations**

The increase of obesity among children, mainly in schools and hence the increase of related pathologies, calls for urgent actions at different levels to limit the expansion of this phenomenon. The following are suggestions that can be used to prepare a strategy aiming at reducing this phenomenon:

- Work with medical practitioners and mainly pediatricians:

- ✓ Recommend recording weight and height of children at least once a year to monitor the body mass index;
  - ✓ Include the Body mass Index statements and reports in children's school personal files, and particularly the Obesity Chart and the Weight/Height Chart;
  - ✓ Reinforce pre-school medical examinations for children, in addition to training medical doctors on the early screening of pathologies that may bring obesity;
- Work at the level of families:

Conduct awareness raising campaigns and prepare sensitization tools and materials, and educational ads to:

- ✓ Encourage breast-feeding by taking incentive legal measures such as extending maternity leave, extending the daily breast-feeding leave now set for one hour, create nurseries in offices, and offer flextime system in favor of breastfeeding mothers;
  - ✓ Respect daily meal hours, and try to eat balanced and diversified food made up of vegetables and cooked meals;
  - ✓ Encourage families to have nutritive and balanced breakfast and share with them suitable diets for breakfast;
  - ✓ Limit the 10 AM meal to children who missed the morning breakfast;
  - ✓ Encourage people to eat more fruits and vegetables and incite families to have meals together;
  - ✓ Avoid taking meals while watching TV;
  - ✓ Avoid drinking soft drinks during meals;
  - ✓ Avoid nibbling and encourage the consumption of fruits and vegetables;
  - ✓ Encourage family members to regularly practice sports;
  - ✓ Organize children's TV watching times, and try to reduce them as possible.
- Work at the level of schools:
- ✓ Try to implement health diet habits warning against obesity risks, and offer good treatment to obese children by holding debates between teaching staff members on best ways to provide assistance to overweighed children, jointly with communication experts;
  - ✓ Hold awareness raising campaigns promoting breakfasts merits in food diet balance;
  - ✓ Check the quality of meals taken by children at school or at the kindergarten;
  - ✓ Encourage the practice of sports at school, by providing schools with equipped play grounds;
  - ✓ Reinforce control on food stores serving children and in front of schools.
- Work at the level of the health policy:

- ✓ Design a national program to fight obesity and involve all parties in its implementation;
- ✓ Create research units and laboratories within universities and ministries to study the issue of obesity;
- ✓ Encourage partnership with the media and food industry to raise awareness about healthy consumption, by requiring the statement of the major ingredients making up food products sold on the market, using clearly marked labels;
- ✓ Encourage the regular practice of sports by parents and children;
- ✓ Create sports tracks in as many neighborhoods as possible, promote school sport programs and reduce the delivery of sport exemption to capable students.

## **6-Conclusion**

With regard to the rapid expansion of this disease, it is necessary to make more efforts to prevent it from affecting more people and hence avoid secondary pathologies during adulthood. This requires the commitment of all parties including families, schools and civil society groups in addition to national and local formal institutions, in order to raise the awareness of citizens, be them adults, youth or children about the necessity to follow healthy diets and practice sports and physical exercises.