

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



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN SITUATION OF TUNISIA 2009**

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

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**First part**  
**Child's situation in Tunisia 2009**

## **1. Demographic Data on Children**

According to the population projections for 2009, the number of children in Tunisia in 2009 was estimated to nearly 3.3 million children between 0 and 18 years old, accounting for about 31.56% of the population. Tunisia has known in recent decades a demographic shift marked by a decline in the population growth rate leading to the shrinking of the population pyramid base.

The projections show that the number of children in the population, which was about 3.8 million in 1990, will continue to decline up to the year 2014 when it would stabilize at about 3.2 million. This trend is highlighted through the decline in the population pyramid base which can be place, based on its form, between the developing and developed countries population pyramids.

## **2. Children's Right to health: Towards a Comprehensive Coverage and an Extensive Prevention**

Children's right to survival is one of the most fundamental principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child. Tunisia has sought to ensure this right through many health program designed for the benefit of mothers and children by providing the essential services and an integrated health care covering also the environment's health and protection.

### **a. Mothers Health Programs**

The indicators of health coverage for women have developed in recent years at the national level as the percentage of births under medical observation reached 94.5%, the proportion of clinic monitoring of pregnancy more than 96%, the proportion of clinic examination after birth 51.3% and the use of contraception means 60.2%.

The development of these indicators is due to the improvement of prenatal services quality thanks to better training of doctors and midwives and the provision of medical check- ups to detect the risk factors in pregnant women earlier in addition to the update of many training guides and instruction documents as well as the evaluation and follow-up of the application of the maternal mortality monitoring system. These efforts contributed to decreasing the infant mortality rate, expected to be in the range of 16 ‰ in 2009, to 16.6 ‰ in 2008.

### **b. Children's Health Programs**

#### **A) The National Vaccine Program**

During 2009, the national vaccine program was pursued to improve the level of children vaccine coverage with an emphasis on the areas that have not reached the required level of coverage. These efforts made it possible to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas.

The coverage rate of various vaccinations for children aged between one and two exceeded 97% in 2008, and the coverage percentage of various vaccines exceeded 90% of male and female targeted children in all the governorates. These rates are close to those attained by developed countries.

With regard to the elimination of target diseases, the observation system has detected, for 15 consecutive years, no cases of poliomyelitis, neonatal tetanus or diphtheria infections and based on the results of laboratory tests which included more than 97% of suspected cases, there has been no diagnosed cases of measles.

## **B) School Health Programs for Schooled Children**

The primary objective of school health services consists in promoting the health and well being of pupils and students and preventing any health problem from affecting pupils' health in addition to ensuring that the educational environment has no negative effects on pupils' health. These services are provided for free and directed to preschool children and students attending all the public and private educational institutions as well as professional and vocational training schools. 1547 doctors and 2162 members of the paramedic professional body are responsible for providing these services.

During the school year 2008 – 2009, the national rates of secured school health services were about 6.92 doctors and 4.95 nurses for every educational institution. The medical supervision rates are progressing continuously as they reached 1503 pupils per doctor and 1075 pupils for each paramedic.

In recent years, school health care indicators have revealed high levels throughout the educational stages in the public sector. However, there was a decline in the indicators of medical examination and vaccines coverage and in the number of inspections of safety and health protection in the private sector.

- **National Days of Schools Health Care**

The organization of these days falls within the framework of the dissemination of health education among young people to help them acquire the proper behavioral patterns that would enable them to prevent infectious diseases and risky behaviors. In this context and during the school year 2008-2009, the issue of “prevention of chronic diseases within children” was addressed during the fifteenth national health day in pre-school institutions and primary schools and the sixteenth Maghreb week for schools health care. The subject of “youth, health and environment” was discussed in junior high and high schools on the occasion of the nineteenth national day of health clubs.

- **Health Clubs**

During the school year 2008-2009, the number of health clubs in junior high and high schools reached 947 and was 2217 in primary schools. The total number of health clubs members in primary, junior high and high schools was estimated to have reached 18000 members. The

percentage of health clubs coverage was 47% in primary schools and 71.7% in junior high and high schools.

- **The National Program for Eyesight Problems Detection and Eyeglasses Distribution**

During 2009, the efforts exerted to detect eyesight deficiencies continued through the organization of periodic tests by school health teams. The percentages of detected cases were 1.3% in pre-schools, 1.2% in primary schools and 4% in junior high and high schools. A noteworthy fact is that since 2002, 5000 glasses are distributed annually to necessitous students.

- **The National Program for Oral and Dental Health**

About 200000 students and pupils were treated in dental clinics of public health institutions during 2009.

- **The National Program for Adolescent Health**

Approximately 600 students and pupils were examined during the 2008-2009 school year in the clinics specialized in adolescent health. 2226 children have also benefited from the services of the 105 listening hotlines, while 11 335 children received help through the services offered by 374 listening and guidance offices. Health clubs in junior high and high schools and the university community contribute to adolescent health activities by organizing awareness raising sessions.

- **The National Program to Integrate Children with Disabilities in Regular Schools**

During the school year 2008/2009 there were 291 schools (attended by 1378 pupils) integrated children with disabilities, 42% females and 58% are males distributed over 1063 classes. These children are followed up by a multidisciplinary team including all the parties involved in this field.

- **The Social Action Program in the School Environment**

This program aims to reducing early school drop-out and relies on schools social work units that have reached 2384 centers in the school year 2008/2009 compared to 2260 during 2007-2008.

- **Schools and universities Medical Centers**

School and universities medical centers are public structures providing health services for pupils and students. They are 10 centers distributed as follows: the National Center for school and university healthcare of Tunis and the Regional Centers of Gabes, Gafsa, Kasserine, Mahdia, Nabeul, Sfax, Sousse, Tataouine and Manouba.

### **C) Health Education outside the Educational Environment**

The “15-19” age group received 60% of the overall efforts exerted for youth-oriented (15-29 years old) awareness raising and education activities during the first semester of 2009. This is

a significant proportion reflecting the intensive integrated continuous work in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS prevention, with the support of the United Nations Fund for Population and the Global Fund to fight AIDS.

4.5% of the activities and efforts made in this context for the total target group were oriented to delinquent adolescents. This proportion is considered low, which calls for the concerned structures to intensify their educational activities within this segment of teenagers that has often specific needs in the area of health education in general and sex education in particular. The total number of beneficiary adolescents is estimated to 141 981: 59% females and 41% males.

#### **D) Healthcare and Environment Protection Programs**

Sanitary control of water: 47 644 samples were subjected to bacterial analysis, and 302 727 tests were made to evaluate the level of residual chlorine in water. The number of bacteriological tests conducted on drinking water in the border areas was 1310 analysis. Bottled water is also monitored regularly.

Health monitoring of swimming water: 6068 bacteriological analysis proved the safety of seawater in the beaches of Tunisia. The total number of tests conducted on swimming pools waters reached 1279 tests.

Health monitoring of wastewater: The number of bacteriological tests conducted was 7930 analysis. The users were provided with advices and the necessary measures have been taken in cases of violations.

Health surveillance of food products and public spaces: within the framework of the prevention of diseases resulting from food products, 487 145 supervision visits were carried out, and 49 198 bacteriological tests were conducted on food products.

Insects' surveillance and control: Insects control and surveillance operations were intensified by limiting the insects breeding spots throughout the country and proposing the appropriate control and intervention methods in coordination with the concerned ministries.

Hygiene in healthcare institutions: 5638 clean-up and insect control operations were carried out in addition to 895 laboratory analysis of surgery wings in healthcare institutions, 274 analysis of patients rooms, 1802 analysis of food products and 2130 analysis of drinking water.

### **3. Child's right to Education: Facing the Challenges of Quality**

Education is an absolute priority and a strategic choice within the national policy of Tunisia and the child's right to education is a fundamental right that has been stressed in the Tunisian legislation through the adoption of the principle of compulsory and free education from the age six to sixteen. This right is guaranteed to all Tunisians, without any discrimination between individuals and groups and it is guaranteed within families and in early childhood, primary and secondary education institutions.

### **3.1. Education in Early childhood Stage**

The early childhood stage is basic and foundational in building the child's personality and ensuring his integrated and balanced growth through the development of his psychomotor, mental, emotional and social abilities.

- **Early childhood: Kindergartens**

The number of kindergartens developed from 102 in 2004 to 200 in 2009, attended by 3751 children, including 959 under one and 2792 from one to two years old. This number is almost equally distributed between females and males (1854 males and 1877 females.) The largest number of kindergartens is located in Sousse (37) while there is only one kindergarten in Kef, and no similar institutions yet in Zaghouan, Siliana and Jendouba.

The number of employees working in kindergartens developed from 240 in 2004 to 509 in 2009 (including 193 qualified specialists and 316 non-qualified employees).

In the context of regulating the kindergartens sector and developing their services the following procedures were followed during 2009 :

- Revision of the specifications book for opening kindergartens;
- Preparation of the specifications book for the provision of family daycare services that specifies the terms of opening, organization, and control of these institutions. The individuals currently providing home daycare services could be helped to improve the level of their services, and assisted in taking care of children;
- Contribution in the development of the competencies of kindergartens governesses and teachers through the implementation of a 6 units training program targeting 400 professionals;
- Inclusion of a training unit within the specialty of caretaking for children under 3 within the basic training program for students of the Higher Institute of Child Care Professionals;
- Preparation of a training program in the specialty of "early childhood education assistant" launched at the beginning of the current academic year 2009-2010 in the 5 Nursing schools attached to the Ministry of Public Health. 180 students attended this training program in the first year;
- Publishing of a handbook on the most important behaviors and measures that must be adopted by parents to take care of children under 3 in order to strengthen their child caretaking abilities. In addition, 58 governesses working in this domain were trained.

- **Early Childhood**

#### **Kindergartens**

The number of these institutions rose from 2422 in 2004 to 3562 in 2009, 88% of which belong to the private sector. The number of children attending these institutions reached 142 601, including 72 833 females (51%) and 69 768 males and they are distributed by

age groups as follows: Three years old children: 39 037 (27%); Four years old children: 50 051 (35%) and five years old children: 53 513 (38%).

The percentage of coverage of kindergartens increased to reach 30% for the age group of 3 to 5 years old while it rose to about 29% for the age group 3-4 years old.

This ratio varies from one governorate to another. While it is relatively high in the north-eastern and middle-eastern governorates, it remains low in the governorates of the North West and Midwest.

During 2009, contracts for programs with the National Union of the Tunisian Woman, the Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity and other development organizations were prepared and implemented for the purpose of helping them establish kindergartens in rural areas and neighborhoods with high population density, in consecration of the principle of equal opportunities among the children of Tunisia in the urban and rural areas. These efforts contributed to increasing the number of establishments from 111 kindergartens in 2005 to 300 in 2009.

In order to develop the services provided in kindergartens the following actions have been taken:

- Initiating a revision of the pedagogical program for social and educational activities adopted in early childhood institutions and enriching it so that it becomes a reference for the professionals working in kindergartens;
- Reviewing the content of professionals training program in this domain and the programs of rehabilitation of kindergartens founders in order to ensure a better quality of the services provided in these institutions;
- Strengthening the training and retraining programs designed for non professional employees in these institutions in addition to rehabilitating and retraining 659 employees during 36 training sessions.

### **Koranic schools**

A program was designed to increase the number of Koranic schools and upgrade their services in order to make them able to carry out their educational mission. In this context, the number of Koranic schools increased from 378 in 1987 to 1186 in 2009; they are attended by 31 246 children, 14 950 males and 16 296 females (47.54%).

In view of raising the scientific and pedagogical levels of koranic schools teachers, inspection and guidance operations were intensified, and many training workshops were organized for the teachers currently practicing, and to prepare a new generation of koranic schools teachers among the graduates of the University of Al Zaytuna. The number of women involved in the trainings of koranic schools teachers increased, as they accounted for one third of total number while they were entirely absent in 1987.

### **The Pre-School Year: A more Comprehensive Coverage for 5 Years Old Children**

In the context of implementation of the presidential program on "the generalization of the pre-school year by the end of 2009", efforts and coordination with related parties have been intensified, and the proportion of new pupils registered in the first year of primary education who have received pre-school education developed from 67.7% in 2007-2008 to 72.2% in 2008-2009.

In the public sector, the total number of primary schools which have pre-school classes is 1937, i.e. 42.9% of the total number of primary schools, 1209 of which are in rural areas (62%). 37 130 children are registered in these classes, 48.1% of whom are females.

The Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity contributes to the pre-school year program through the kindergartens placed under its supervision (268 kindergartens). During the academic year 2008-2009, there were 116 pre-school classes attended by 2657 five years old children.

The National Union of the Tunisian Woman also contributes to the establishment of pre-school classes in kindergartens under its supervision. 623 children, including 314 girls, were enrolled in these classes during the academic year 2009-2010.

Further, many efforts are made by other involved parties to establish pre-school classes especially, mainly the Ministry of Religious Affairs (617 pre-school class in 2009) and the private sector institutions which efforts and initiatives in this regard are eminent.

### **3.2. Basic and Secondary Education**

- **Universal School Enrollment and Better Education Outcomes**

During 2009, intensified efforts were made to improve the conditions of work and study in the first stage of basic education through the new establishments and expansions completed annually on the level of infrastructure, in addition to the continuous improvement in the proportions of supervision to reach a good level of pedagogical well-being.

The number of pupils enrolled in primary education has been declining to nearly a million pupils. This is due to the shrinking number of new registrations in first year classes since 1999 and to the improving graduation rates at different levels of this phase following the introduction of pedagogical reforms. It is worth mentioning that the evolution of students' number tends to stabilize as it developed last year by only 1.3%, while this percentage was 3.7% during the first five years of the current decade.

The decrease in the number of students allowed improving the studies conditions in primary schools where the phenomenon of overcrowding in classes dwindled and the average size of classes improved from more than 28 in 2002 to about 22 in the academic year 2008/2009. The ratio of supervision also improved as each teacher has 17 pupils to attend to compared to 22 in 2002.

It is worth noting that the proportion of females in the total number of pupils enrolled in the first stage of basic education has reached 48%, indicating a gender balance at this stage.

The upgrading percentage in the first phase of basic education has reached 91.6% in 2007/2008, while the rate of failure was 6.8%. On the other hand, the dropout rate decreased to 1.6% and ranged from 0.2% in the first grade and 4.5% in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It's worth mentioning that girls have outperformed boys at all levels.

On the other hand, the enrollment ratio of six years old children has exceeded 99% since 1997 for both males and females and surpassed 99.2% in 2009, and amounted to 97.7% for the 6-11 years old age group (including 98% for females). However, the proportion of

schooling for the “6-16” and “12-18” years old categories has not yet reached the expected rate especially for males. It has been noted that the rate of school attendance among girls has surpassed the same rate among boys in all the education stages.

It should also be noted that the Millennium Development Goal concerning the elimination of gender disparity in the field of education provides to achieve 50% of girls enrollment in primary and secondary education of the overall number of students by 2005 and to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015. Tunisia has achieved this goal reaching 50.2% in 2005 and 50.5% in 2009. In addition, the percentage of girls in all the stages of education was 50.5% in 2009.

International comparisons show that primary education enrollment rates in Tunisia match the rates achieved by the most advanced countries on the one hand, and are equally distributed between girls and boys, with a slight advantage among young girls, on the other hand.

In 2009, the number of pupils registered in the second stage of basic education and in the secondary education continued to decline to reach 1.027 million, which corresponds to an annual decline rate of 1.4% compared to 2005. This decline was noted since 2006 due to the decreasing number of pupils upgrading from primary education starting from 1996.

On the other hand, the average number of students per classroom improved to reach 27.8 in 2008/2009 compared to 29.3 in 2007/2008. The number of pupils per teacher has also decreased from 14.6 in 2007/2008 to 13.7 in 2008/2009.

With regard to the internal outcomes of the basic education phase, the academic year 2007/2008 witnessed an improvement in the results recorded at all levels, as the percentage of upgrading reached 71.3% after stabilizing at 70% during the past two years. However, failure rates at this stage have dropped compared to the previous two years. With respect to dropouts, this stage has witnessed a quasi-stability in 2007/2008 compared to the two previous school years.

As for secondary education, there has been a slight improvement in the rates of upgrading and failure rates and a quasi-stability in dropouts in the academic year 2007/2008.

- **The Challenges: Quality of Education and Equal Opportunities**

**School failure:**

- Organization of support classes for students with special needs and those threatened to fail in addition to students of schools of educational priority;
- Intensification of the activities of social work centers in the educational environment;
- Expansion of the listening centers network;
- Strengthening of schools canteens network;
- Support of the school and university subsidies for pupils and students belonging to low-income families;

**To strengthen the pillars of quality:**

- Opening of 12 special junior high schools for gifted students;

- Dissemination of technological education teaching at the first stage of basic education;
- Gradual dissemination of languages laboratories at the National Center and the Regional Centers for Trainers Training and at the institutes of education professions in addition to providing 50 educational institutions with mobile laboratories;
- Creation of a network of institutions that have excelled at the level of quality and outcomes according to the international standards (involving 60 institutions in the first stage);

**To implement the principle of fairness and equal opportunities:**

- Providing pedagogical assistance for teachers in institutions of educational priority and training them;
- Providing all schools of educational priority with canteens;
- Continue to mainstream pre-school education for 5 years old children and focus the public sector's efforts on the schools located outside municipal areas;
- Continue to implement the national program to mainstream children with disabilities.

**To establish the information society school:**

- Increasing the number of computers at all levels of education, (there is now one computer for every 25 pupils at all levels of education);
- Increasing the number of the Regional Centers of the National Institute of Information Technology to cover all the governorates;
- Continue to link the educational institutions to Internet and improving the quality of high speed internet lines;
- Dissemination of information technology teaching at the elementary stage of education at the rate of one hour per week.

**To improve the quality of school life:**

- Raising the coverage rate for educational assistants to reach 124 pupils per educational assistant;
- Dissemination of cultural and sports clubs in the scope of partnership with organizations, associations and concerned bodies;
- Support the recreational activities such as visits to museums and archaeological sites;
- Support the coherence and complementarities between the education and training systems.

• **Day Nurseries**

The mission of day nurseries consists in taking care of children outside school hours and ensuring entertainment, educational and revision activities. The number of these institutions reached 627 in 2009, attended by 4747 children, including 2502 males (53%) and 2245 females (47%). The distribution of day nurseries by governorates highlights their concentration in the Greater Tunis area and Sfax and Sousse while they remain completely absent in ten governorates. The current situation has been evaluated and the proper solutions to ameliorate the services of these institutions and facilitate the follow-up of their activities have been proposed.

- **Vocational Training: The Path to Success and A Tributary of Development**

The human resources development system has witnessed a quantum leap in the five last years as the professional training had received a significant attention through the comprehensive reform that was introduced in this sector. This made it possible to improve the performance of this system and to concretize the interdependence between it and the sectors of education and higher education which helped realize the several quantity and quality achievements among the most important of which are:

- The evolution of the number of trained pupils from 100 919 109 in 2007/2008 to 109371 in 2008/2009, an increase estimated at about 8500. Girls account for 32.7% of the total number of trainees;
- The number of vocational training centers was 212 centers in 2008/2009, including 135 centers attached to the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training and 77 to other structures;
- The initiation of a vocational training system development through the creation of a skills certification delivered at the end of a training course that lasts 6 months at least, targeting the training of applicants who do not meet the minimum conditions of educational level for admission to the course of vocational training;
- The creation of a training instrument and the adoption of a pilot program the implementation of which should start in 2009, in the context of establishing a more effective funding system in the vocational training sector;
- The preparation of a 3 years (2009 - 2010 - 2011) training program for trainers in priority sectors. This program will enable in 2010 to give 430 trainers a technical and a pedagogical training including trainings in the production institutions and large workshops in Tunisia and abroad.

#### **4. Child's Right to Culture and Information**

The state has paid special attention to the cultural activities intended for children in particular by increasing the size of investments and improving the quality of equipment and ameliorating the performance of working professionals in the field. The five-years (2009-2014) Presidential Program "together to meet the challenges" adopted an increase in the budget allocated to culture and heritage preservation to reach 1.5% of the state budget in 2014, which will undoubtedly contribute to the development of culture in general and cultural activities targeting children in particular.

##### **4.1. Libraries and Reading Services Provided for Children**

Based on the strong belief in the role of reading in developing children's mental and linguistic abilities, enriching their imagination, helping them acquire knowledge and refining and developing their talents, efforts were made to expand the children libraries network which number reached at the end of September 2009, 317 library of the total 378 public libraries, including 30 mobile libraries covering about 1800 books borrowing points.

The stock of books in the children's libraries network in Tunisia is estimated to be, by the end the month of July 2009, approximately 2 600 000 books in Arabic and foreign languages

which represents 40% of the total number of books in public libraries. These books are circulating at an annual average rate of 6 181 467 for both books borrowings, and readings in the libraries by female and male readers at a rate of 53.81% for females and 46.19% for males.

In the context of the national plan for encouraging reading, the number of beneficiaries from the children's libraries services reached approximately 3 million readers which represents 55% of the total number of people using the services of the national network of public libraries; the proportion of females being 54.3% and that of males 45.3%.

#### **4.2. Culture Houses and the Attraction of Children**

Culture houses play also an important role in attending to and guiding children as well as in educating them and developing their creative skills. The current number of culture houses has reached 209, including 42 institutions in rural areas and 10 cultural compounds covering 197 counties out of 264.

There are 1024 clubs in culture houses and the number of subscribers in these clubs exceeds 19.900. Computer coverage in culture houses reached 100% and Internet connectivity rate is estimated to be 92.5%.

#### **4.3. Cultural activities for Children**

The programs and activities designed for children in the cultural field are very important as they contribute to the education of children and the development of their abilities and the strengthening of their awareness of their identity. These programs and activities fall within the integrated educational system. The following actions have been undertaken in this domain:

- Support of children plays; The number of shows for children reached during 2009 about 700 professional and amateur shows in addition to theatrical productions and puppet play productions in various governorates of the Republic;
- Promotion of movie and video shows for children (1080 shows);
- Promotion of festivals and cultural days for children. Their number exceeded 70 events (cinema, theater, music, literature and fine arts) attended by 2,800,000 children;
- Support of the regional institutes of music. 4054 children and young people benefited from their services (2116 females and 1938 males).

#### **4.4. Digital Culture Dissemination among Children**

In consecration of the right of children to access to the information society so as to ensure equal digital opportunities to all Tunisian children and protect them from the negative impacts of these technologies, all the involved parties have strived to develop plans aimed at disseminating information technology equipment in education, culture childhood and youth institutions and bringing them closer to children in rural areas and popular neighborhoods as well as linking them to Internet. In this context, the following targets have been achieved:

- 100% coverage with information technology equipment in junior high schools and high schools and about 70% at the primary level and the inclusion of an information

technology course at the level of seventh, eighth and ninth grades of junior high schools;

- Facilitation of the acquisition of computers under the presidential program for the family computer targeting middle-income families, and in this context, more than 80000 sales were made since 2001;
- Development of the number of information technology clubs within children clubs to 270 in 2008, in addition to 23 clubs in the integrated childhood and youth centers. The number of children subscribed in these clubs reached more than 43000 children;
- The number of beneficiaries of the services of the National and Regional child-oriented information technology Centers increased to 21 052 users during 2009, the rate of females among them was 48%;
- 9 buses equipped with information technology equipment were allocated for the benefit of children living in high population density neighborhoods. About 24800 boys and girls benefited from their services during 2009;
- A space for parents and children was provided in order to raise their awareness of some of the risks involved in Internet surfing, in addition to a free hotline, an e-mail address. Brochures including relevant advises were also prepared and distributed.

#### **4.5. Promotion of Environment and Sustainable Development Culture: Preparing the Future Generation**

The environmental education is educational and recreational in nature and aims at rationalizing the behavior of children to preserve the natural resources and national environment heritage both in the present and future. Based on these principles:

- The implementation of the Presidential Program for the sustainable schools network was launched since 2005 in view of spreading the environment and sustainable development culture among youth in elementary education institutions. 140 schools throughout the country have been engaged in this program since its launch;
- The creation of 27 parks spread over 17 governorates and 26 municipalities in the context of the implementation of the Presidential Program encouraging the dissemination of urban parks throughout the governorates by the end of 2009;
- The establishment of the environmental caravan project in order to support the environment clubs network in educational institutions and the conclusion of partnership contracts with environmental groups in addition to the organization of training workshops to the benefit of clubs instructors in order to activate the role of this caravan. 144 educational institutions have been visited;
- The concentration of beach tents and ecological camps during the summer of 2009 which attracted about 4150 children in addition to the organization of a mobile environmental workshop village which visited 13 public beaches;
- The enrichment of environmental references with the publishing of a booklet entitled "Ben Ali: The Symbol of Reconciliation of Man and Nature" and the Encyclopedia "Atlas of the Protected Areas in Tunisia" in three languages in addition to the practical manual for the maintenance and of green spaces;

#### **4.6. Information: Child-care in the Audiovisual Media and the Written Press**

The various radio stations and television channels pay a special attention to children programs as they have focused on topics relevant to their needs and interests and have allocated a significant proportion of the broadcasting space to meet these needs and interests in their various programs.

- **Children programs on the channel “Tunis 7”:** The channel “Tunis 7” allocates a daily morning program for children from nine to half past ten and an afternoon program from four to five. The broadcasting hours reach on Sundays 3 hours in the morning and an hour in the evening, which is equivalent to 11% to 12% of the total broadcasting hours. As for the holidays such as the National Children Day and Mothers Day, the broadcasting time reaches 17%.
- **Children programs on the channel “Tunis 21”:** The percentage of programs for children reached 13% of the total daily broadcasting hours divided into a morning 30 minutes program and an evening 60 minutes program in addition to broadcasting special programs in national and international events and holidays.
- **Children programs on Tunisian radio stations:** The Tunisian radio stations, allocate important broadcasting spaces for regular children programs that reach up to about 23 broadcasting hours per week. They also broadcast a large part of their programs live through the coverage of all the events related to children and national and international events and holidays.
- **Children in the Written Press:** the subjects related to childhood represent a varied and rich material highly present in the written press. Many magazines (about 13) specialized in the field of childhood are published in Tunisia in addition to daily newspapers.
- **The presence of children in the activities of “Tunis-Afrique” Press Agency:** The Agency covers children activities as well as national, Maghreb, African and international children events. It also devotes special spaces on its website homepage for all the published articles on children related topics in Arabic, French and English languages.

### **5. Child’s Right to Sport and Entertainment: A Fundamental and Natural Right**

Child’s right to sport and entertainment is one of the fundamental rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that «the countries signatories of the convention recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, and to engage in plays and recreational activities appropriate to his age». Tunisia has worked on implementing this right through many programs in cooperation with various parties.

#### **5.1. Physical Education and Sports Activities**

- **Physical Education in Basic and Secondary Education:**

The percentage of physical education coverage in 2009 reached about 49% for schools and 55% for classes. 377 sports grounds have been arranged in and near primary schools,

which contributed to developing the activities outcomes and improving the working conditions in particular, in addition to promoting a professional pedagogical framework through the assignment of 205 teachers in the first stage of basic education. The percentage of schools coverage with physical education activities in the second phase of basic and secondary education reached more than 95%.

- **Physical Education in Specialized Institutions and Vocational Training Institutions:**

The number of specialized institutions and associations beneficiaries of these services increased from 63 in 2007 to 80 institutions and organizations this year. As for the vocational training institutions, the physical education coverage reached 69.40% during 2008/2009.

- **Sports Development Centers in Schools**

There are 394 of sports promotion centers in primary schools, benefiting 39 668 students belonging to 305 sports associations offering 22 sports activities. However, the number of " sport and study classes ", both in junior high and high schools, decreased compared to last year from 471 to 267 classes due mainly to the modifications introduced into the education programs that resulted in a rise in the number of teaching hours at the expense of the time space allotted for sports activities, therefore, the number of students enrolled in these classes dropped to 6306 pupils. However, and in the context of generalizing the sports section in high schools, it has been included in 28 schools during the academic year 2008/2009, therefore, the number of pupils enrolled in this section increased from 1719 pupils last year to 2599 students during the academic year 2008/2009.

## **5.2. Social and Educational Activities and Entertainment**

The institutions of social and educational activities attract children and youths to practice educational, recreational, and cultural and sports activities that would contribute to their development and help building up their talents and educating them on the values of national identity, tolerance besides strengthening their attachment to their identity as well as protecting them from engaging in risky behaviors.

- **Attracting Children and Young People**

The number of beneficiaries from the services of child activities institutions increased from 57 800 beneficiaries in 2000 to more than 150000 in 2009, 44% of whom are females. Youth houses, which number reached 305, also attracted 124 842 62 subscribers, 62, 2 % of which are boys and 37.8% girls. The number of young boys and girls who benefited from the activities of the 231 youth clubs in rural areas was about 337 545 in 2008. This development reflects the efforts made in order to improve the quality of activities and programs proposed in these institutions and to manage the spaces provided for these activities, with special emphasis on the dissemination of the scientific and digital culture among children and young people and the development of their creativity through

the modernization of pedagogical methods and the development of activities techniques in the context of an integration and partnership with the organizations and associations.

- **Opening the Institutions on the Environment and Taking Activities to new Spaces**

In the context of providing equal opportunities and child-care without discrimination or exclusion this program is implemented through:

- Creating 4 mobile clubs in Kairouan (Haffouz) Jendouba, Gafsa (Ain Drahem) and Tataouine and 3 clubs in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration in each of Kasserine and Mahdia and Siliana;
- Bringing about activities in 150 neighborhoods near children's institutions by the children's clubs instructors;
- Organizing activities in 40 neighborhoods in rural areas and neighborhoods with high population density on a regular basis at the rate of one session per 15 days at least;
- Organizing open-access festivals in order to motivate creativity and attract the largest possible number of children. The number of these festivals increased from 14 in 2008 to 20 in 2009, and they included multiple domains such as music, theater, literature and sciences among many others.

- **Development of Human Resources and Infrastructure to Support Clubs Activities**

The number of educational instructors operating in childhood clubs and compounds reached in 2009, 928 instructors working in 276 institutions. In the context of strengthening the capacities of these instructors, 11 training sessions were organized for the benefit of 275 instructors.

Within the scope of the national plan for the development of children's clubs and the rehabilitation of the infrastructure of these institutions and the reorganization of the internal spaces and the establishment of spaces for specialized activities and furnishing them with modern equipment, 182 institutions were renovated in 2009 at a cost of approximately 5.3 m d.

## **6. Child Right to Care and Protection: For the child's Best Interest**

Tunisia established an integrated protective system designed to take care of children exposed to many threats and risks as well as delinquent children. This system is activated through many operating mechanisms, institutions and programs in the context of an approach based on networking work between all the involved parties in order to serve the principle of the child's best interest.

### **6.1. Taking Care of Children Exposed to Risks**

- **Taking Care of Children Under six and Deprived of Parental Care**

The National Institute for Child Welfare took under its responsibility 846 children in 2009 (462 children were admitted during 2009): 270 males and 192 females. During the same period, 736 children were integrated according to the following integration formulas:

Adoption 227; Foster homes 281 children; Reintegration within the original family 163 children; Sponsorship 40 children; and integration in S.O.S villages or other institutions 25 children. The 12 units of living attached to Associations are taking care of 410 children including 296 children admitted in 2009.

- **Taking Care of Children Between Six and Eighteen Years Old**

There are 23 youth and childhood integrated centers and childhood compounds spread over 18 governorates.

They include 86 units of life for residents (37 females and 49 males) and 64 units to provide half-board residence services or a "natural environment". There are 69 childhood compounds is 69 distributed all over the governorates of the Republic.

In 2009 the number of children benefiting from the integrated youth and childhood integrated centers and the childhood compounds reached 6438 children (2901 in integrated centers and 3537 in childhood compounds). 641 new admissions and the integration of 597 young men and women in one of the integration formulas (family, employment and marriage) were registered this year.

The integration in the family is the basic formula of integration in the integrated centers (300 children out of 442), while the integration by employment represents the basic formula for the integration in childhood compounds (99 children out of 141).

Orphan children (who lost their father or mother, or both) represent half of the sponsored children in the integrated centers and childhood compounds. The neglected children (belonging to broken families structures because of parents' separation or divorce or criminality) represent the fifth of fostered children. The quarter of all sponsored children have physically disabled or financially deprived parents. The children born outside marriage represent 4% of the total number of children hosted by integrated centers.

- **Care for Children with Disabilities**

Within the framework of providing the necessary care for children with disabilities the following actions were completed in 2009:

- Creation of 180 integrating preparatory classes by the academic year 2008-2009 which host 73 disabled children;
- Creation of 291 new integrating schools by the school year 2008-2009, which can host 1378 disabled children, in addition to the automatic integration of students with disabilities in regular schools. The number of these pupils is estimated to 4453 pupils, 2653 of whom are in the first stage of basic education, 1019 in the second phase and 781 in secondary education;
- Increasing the number of specialized centers for the education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities to 279 homes hosting 15 407 disabled children among whom 10169 are less than 20 years old (66%).

It should be noted that the services of specialized education has evolved to include rehabilitation and home care for the 326, 1 to 19 years old children with grave disabilities who are unable to move.

With regard to the care provided for children with multiple disabilities, the Educational and Social Center of Sidi Thabet hosted in 2009, 103 children, including 39 admitted during the same period.

- **Care for Children of the Tunisian Diaspora**

Under the special program of summer camps for Tunisian 9 to 14 years old children residing abroad, 250 children took part in these camps during the summer of 2009. During the same summer, and in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Training, the sixteenth session of the Arabic language program was organized benefiting 1869 participants in 127 centers.

- **Care for Children Dropping out of School**

The national program for adult education contributed during the academic year 2008-2009 in educating 50 586 learners under 30 years old, 2911 of whom are children under 15. The program's efforts continue to include the largest possible number of illiterate children to contribute to the advancement of this category and to eliminate illiteracy completely by the end of 2009-2010.

## **6.2. Social Protection of Children at Risk**

### **Services of the Childhood Protection Officer**

- **Notifications of Cases of Children at Risk**

The number of notifications during 2009 reached 8272. Statistics show variations in the number of notifications between governorates. The governorate of Tunis is ranked first with 1182 notifications, followed by Zaghouan with 704 notifications and Bizerte by 582 notifications. The increase of notifications number in some governorates is not considered an indicator of the increase of risks, but rather an indicator a higher citizens' awareness of the duty to notify cases of children at risk and of the important role of child protection officer and the efficacy of his intervention and the confidence he gained within society. The high number of notifications in 2009 compared to 2008 is due to the strengthening of child protection officers body with assistant delegates through 7 new assignments in 2008: 2 in Mahdia and Sfax; Ariana, Beja, Tataouine, Kairouan and one to fill the vacancy in Siliana.

- **Interventions Made for Children at Risk**

Childhood protection officers considered in 2009 the cases of 7938 children under threat from the 8272 received notices, which represent 96% of the cases; Girls account for 44.2% of all the addressed cases. The distribution of this percentage varies by governorate. It is over 50% in each of Monastir and Mahdia, while it is less than one-third, especially in the southern governorates.

The neglect and homelessness are the most prevalent types of threats as they represent 32.78% of the cases. In the second position comes the failure to educate and give care (21.64%). The cases sexual and economic exploitation represent less than 1.81% of the

case and 1.1% respectively, and though these rates are not high, they require more attention especially that they are unrevealed and not reported most of the time.

The available statistical data show that children aged one or less are more exposed than others to the threat, which indicates that the threats associated with the abilities and environment of the families of the children are more common than those associated with the behavior or delinquency of the child. The cases of neglect, homelessness and obvious failure or inability to educate and give care account for nearly three quarters of the addressed cases.

- **The Measures Taken for the Benefit of Children at Risk**

Most measures taken by the childhood protection officer are convention measures (3740) followed by judicial measures (1886), and urgent measures (541) which is in line with the objectives of the legal journal and the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which aim at keeping the child in his family environment and involving both of them all the actions taken to the child's benefit.

### **6.3. Judicial Protection for Children at Risk**

The mediation applications received by the childhood protection officers during the three trimesters of 2009 were 948 applications, 855 of which were concluded. They are distributed as follows: 260 pre-trial applications with suspended prosecutions; 519 during the trial and 169 after the trial which means the suspension of the court ruling. This indicates the importance of this mechanism and its role in avoiding the appearance of the child before the criminal justice institutions such the police and other judicial authorities. It also enables the aggrieved to restore all or part of their financial rights.

The courts of first instance considered during the period between August 2008 and the end July 2009, 2277 cases of threatened children, including 1267 males and 1010 females, with a decrease equal to 194 cases compared with the total number of cases recorded in the past year (2471). The court of first instance in Bizerte is ranked first as it considered 325 cases of children at risk, followed by the Court of First Instance of Sousse with 280 cases, then Ariana with 195 cases and Tunis with 166 cases.

The cases of children at risk undertaken by the judges of family include all age groups. The number of children at risk in the 0 to two years old age group remained on the top with 920 cases, compared to the other age groups. 474 of children at risk are less than one year old, 305 are 1 year old, and 141 of the cases involve 2 years old children. These trends indicate that the threats emanating from the child family environment are ranked higher than the threats associated with the behavior or delinquency of the child.

The situation of children's exposure to neglect and homelessness is the most prominent among cases of threats to children, as they amounted to 1382 cases, followed by 466 cases of loss of one of the parents and absence of family support and 388 cases of manifest and ongoing lack of education and care. These indicators show that more support from all the parties involved in the field of childhood protection, such as governmental institutions and civil society, is required to support families of children at risk and help them overcome the causes of the threat.

The number of crime related cases of threatened children remains limited. There are only 7 cases of children at risk because of sexual exploitation, and only 1 case of child exposure to begging or economic exploitation; while there have been no registered cases of threat because of exploitation in organized crime.

On the other hand, the number of provisional measures of protection related to the separation of the threatened child from his family reached 353 compared to 284 provisional measures to keep the child in the family. The number of children involved in decisions of placement under foster care system decreased from 84 cases last year to 48 cases this year, which calls for creating social frameworks capable of providing alternative families for children.

#### **6.4. Judicial Protection of Delinquent Children**

- **The Judicial Commitment for Children in a Situation of Conflict with the Law**

The judicial commitment for delinquent children focuses on prevailing the education, reform and non criminalization aspects of punishment over the reprobating aspect.

The number of delinquent children who were referred to the judiciary structures has decreased markedly, reaching 12 455 last year compared to 11902 this year, i.e. a decrease of 553 children, which is generally indicative of the low level of juvenile delinquency in our country.

The number of delinquent children in Tunis reached (663), followed by Sfax (951) and Gabes (873) Grombalia (841), Monastir (766), Sousse (724) and Ben Arous (723), Ariana (608), Bizerte (527).

The number of children appearing before the criminal justice system has slightly decreased, from 440 cases during the judicial year 2007-2008 to 431 cases in 2008-2009. Some governorates such as Tunis, Sousse, Monastir and Grombalia are ranked at the top in terms of the number of children perpetrators of felonies.

There are 5876 children sentenced for crimes of assault on properties, 4104 children for crimes of violence against another person and 1495 children for crimes against morality.

- **Judicial Protection of Children Placed in Correctional Institutions**

In order to provide the best ways and means for reintegrating child offenders in the community and preventing them from returning to the various types of crime, the accommodation of children placed in correctional institutions is made under the best possible safe and comfortable circumstances with health and social care. They are also given the opportunity to continue their education and to be involved in programs of vocational training and cultural and sports activities in cooperation with the concerned parties.

- **Care for Delinquent Children**

- **Follow-up of Delinquent Children Released from Correctional Institutions**

The social promotion structures (departments of social promotion and centers for defense and social integration) received in 2009, 738 child offenders that have been released from correctional institutions of delinquent children and provided them with 934 services including psychological, social support, and reconciliation with the family in addition to

reintegration in schools or training and integration through employment or launching of a private project.

- **Hosting Children Offenders during the Pre-judgment Phase**

The social center for hosting delinquent children, received 229 children in 2009, 177 of whom were release and reintegrated within their families. 32 children were transferred to two correctional institutions, 2 children to social services centers, 2 others to prison and the remaining 16 children remained under observation in the center.

## **7. Child's Right to Expression and Participation: Training Children for Responsibility and Developing Their National Sentiment**

Tunisia established many mechanisms to enable children to exercise their right to expression and participation. A children's parliament and municipal councils were established in addition to parliamentary clubs and childhood lovers associations and councils representing the students in primary and high schools.

### **7.1. Children's Parliament**

Children's Parliament was created in 2002 as a space of dialogue in which children can express their opinions on matters that affect them, through dialogue with the officials responsible for economic and social development sectors in the country. In 2009 the theme "Children and vocational training" was discussed during the first parliament session in March and the "protection of children from risky behaviors" was discussed during the second session in December.

This space, which includes 189 children elected in 2009, 48 % of them are female, enabled its members to improve their abilities in discussing topics and expressing their ideas and communicating them to others. It was also an opportunity to train them in the exercise of democracy and responsible dialogue and the respect of different views in a democratic spirit away from chaos and intolerance. Parliamentarian children have become a source of inspiration for their peers contributing thus to entrenching the sense of citizenship and the principles of volunteerism and responsible behavior.

### **7.2. Parliamentarian Children's clubs**

24 parliamentarian children's clubs were created, one club per governorate, including 749 children working throughout the parliamentary year in their regions within the framework of cooperation and partnership with organization and guided by professional educators and supported by many members of the parliament. 4 recreational training courses for parliamentarian children belonging to these clubs were organized in the context of supporting their training and bringing them together.

A group of parliamentarian children participated in two international events: the Twenty-Ninth International Arab Conference for children in Jordan (July 2005) and the fourteenth session of the Parliament of Greek youth in Athens (September 2005).

### **7.3. Children municipal councils**

In the same context, the municipal councils for children were created and disseminated in 2006 so as to contribute to introducing children to democracy, responsibility and involvement. These 264 councils are now present in all the municipalities and they include 4366 children. The main activities of the children's municipal councils in 2009, were the organization of awareness-raising campaigns to maintain the cleanliness of educational institutions, their external environment and public squares and neighborhoods in addition to taking care of green areas and landscaping and participation in the celebrations of national and international events.

### **7.4. Representatives of Children in the Educational Institutions**

In order to support the active participation of students in decision making within the primary or high school and their participation in life in general, representatives of students were elected to be members of the boards of these institutions where issues are discussed using persuasion and consultation in dialogues between all parties of the educational family.

**Second part**  
**The Tunisian Girl in Beijing Platform for Action:**  
**Pioneer Policies and Promising Achievements**

## **Introduction**

The assessment of the accomplishments related to girl-children made over the past 15 years following the Beijing Platform for Action highlights quality major changes in the conditions of girls towards reducing the gaps with regard to their legislative rights. Thanks to the various amendments and additions made since August 13<sup>th</sup> 1992, the national legal system with its various components has been stressing the non-discrimination between girls and boys and the protection of girls from all forms of violence based on gender, and from various types of exclusion and marginalization, in addition to ensuring their social, cultural, economic and political rights. The conditions of children in general, and girl-child in particular, has witnessed a qualitative improvement in all areas of human development, particularly in health, education, entertainment and self-fulfillment through the integrated development approach pursued by our country, and which depends on the integration between social and economic development.

This report focuses on the follow-up action undertaken to accomplish the goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action Plan for the girl child since its adoption in 1995 until 2009 in the following areas:

### **1. Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Girl Child**

In order to further strengthen and develop the rights of women and girls and support equality and justice between males and females there were significant legislative reforms in the last fifteen years, among them in particular:

- Issue of the Child Protection Code in 1995;
- Withdrawal of restraint on Article 2 of the UN Convention for Child Rights concerning the non-discrimination between children and the need to take all the appropriate measures to ensure their right to protection from all forms of discrimination;
- Regularization of a same standard marriage age for both males and females at 18 years old;
- Issue of the directive legislation on 23 July 2002 which states in Chapter II that "children should be brought up to a life where there is no place for any form of discrimination or segregation on the basis of sex or social origin or race or religion.";
- Adoption in June 2009 of the Optional Protocol on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Withdrawal of the restraint against the Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the principle of the right of the child from birth to a name and to acquiring a nationality;
- Promulgation of the law on assigning a family name to children of unknown parentage since 1998 and its amendment in 2003;
- Promulgation of the guidance law number 85 of 2005 on the support of disabled people and their protection from all forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.

## **2. Stopping the Cultural Negative Practices and Attitudes Against Girls**

In the context of the reform of the educational system in 2002 it was decided that education should be compulsory and that the necessary means to ensure the continuity of learning for rural girls and protecting them from early school drop out should be provided. This goal was placed at the top of the priorities of the national plan for rural woman that was set up in 1998. In order to address stereotypes and protect the girl child from negative cultural practices against her, the contents of the educational documents and materials that contain situations and images that bring prejudice to the status of women and girls in the family and society since 1989 were revised and replaced by texts devoted to the principles of equality and equal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men.

Training courses for media professionals and professionals working in the childhood field have also been organized to promote a culture of child rights in urban and rural areas and to develop a media plan to support the potentials of families to educate their children on the values of equality and fair distribution of roles.

## **3. Enhancement of the Protection of Girl child Rights of and Increase of the Awareness of Her Needs and Potentials to Achieve Equality**

The amendments and additions brought to the various sections of the Tunisian legislation since 1991 allowed to promote the protection of the child civil, social, cultural and economic rights without any discrimination based on gender, and to support the rights required by the specific needs of girls in various stages of their life. In this context the following actions have been made:

- Adopting the requirement of parental (father and mother) consent to marry a girl;
- Ensuring alimony for children till the age of majority or the completion of their studies on condition that they are not older than 25; and ensuring alimony for the girl as long as she has no income or is not supported by a husband;
- Guiding the minor married girl with respect to her civil situation and her economic and commercial responsibilities;
- Preparing and completing two ten year national plans for the benefit of children for the periods 2001-1992 and 2002-2011 respectively. One of the most important principles of these plans is the reinforcement of the principle of non-discrimination among children;
- Issuing the Child Protection Code in 1995 which guarantees "the right of both boys and girls".

## **4. Elimination of Discrimination against Girls in Education, Skills Development and Teaching**

The Directive law of 23 July 2002 on education and school education provides that children should be brought up to a life where there is no place for any form of discrimination or

segregation on the basis of sex or social origin or race or religion." This law also provides for the compulsory education from the age of 6 to 16.

#### **4.1. Evolution of the Status of Girls in Pre-school Educational Institutions**

- Between 1995 and 2009 the number of kindergartens increased from 1042 to 3562 and the number of kindergartens children went from 64 490 to 142 601 children, 51.1% of whom are girls;
- In 2008, there were 967 eligible Koranic schools frequented by approximately 25 thousand children 44.2% of whom are girls;
- The number of children in the preparatory classes of the public educational institutions went from 7667 children, 48.2% of whom are girls, in 2001/2002, to 31869 children, 48.1% of whom are girls, in 2008/2009.

#### **4.2. Evolution of the Status of Girls at all the Education Levels**

- The enrollment rates of girls and boys in the age of six in urban and rural areas alike are 99.2%;
- The percentage of enrollment of 6-16 years old girls reached 92.4% at the national level compared to 90.4% for boys, while the enrollment ratio of girls of this same age group did not exceed 86.5% in 1998;
- The proportion of the total school attendance of girls in the first stage of basic education in rural areas developed from 45.8% in 1997/1998 to 47.3% in 2007/2008;
- The proportion of female students in higher education increased to 59.5% in 2008-2009;
- The success rate of girls in the national baccalaureate exam reached 64.2%;
- The success rate of girls at the bachelor certificate university level reached 72.6% versus 67.4% for boys;
- As for the school dropout rate, the rate is 1.25% for girls in the first stage of basic education and 8.1% in the second stage, while this figure reaches for boys 1.84% and 14.51% respectively;
- In secondary education, school drop-out rates remain stable with an increase of 0.5 point between the academic years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 for girls and 0.3 point for boys.

#### **4.3. Vocational Training**

Girls are distributed in various specialties of the vocational training system as follows:

- Industrial specialties 30.4%
- Agricultural Training 19.5%
- Training in the tourism sector 21.8%
- Training in the health sector 72.5%

#### **4.4. Erasing Illiteracy within Girls**

The proportion of illiteracy among rural women decreased from 66% in 1989 to 42.8% in 2008. The illiteracy rate among women under 30 declined at the national level from 8% in 2004 to 5.3% in 2008, noting that the illiteracy rate among girls under the age of 14 does not exceed 1.7% at the national level.

#### **5. Elimination of Discrimination against Girls in the Health Sector**

- The percentage of coverage with all vaccinations in 2008 reached 95.8% in urban areas against 94.4% in rural areas. These rates are distributed by gender as follows: 96.9% for males and 93.5% for females;
- The proportion of child mortality declined from 32.6 per thousand in 1994 to 16 per thousand in 2009;
- Woman life expectancy at birth is 76.2 years, compared with 72.3 years for man;
- The rate of pregnancy monitoring exceeded 96%;
- Post-natal clinic visits are about 51.3%;
- The rate of births under medical care reached 94.5%;
- Maternal mortality rate decreased to 36.4 deaths per 100 thousand live births;
- The coverage of rural women and provision of perinatal health services improved to about 96% in 2008.

#### **6. Elimination of Economic Exploitation of Children and Protection of Girl Children from Working under the Legal Age**

The most important actions taken in this respect are:

- The addition of Chapter 5 (bis) of the Labor Code in 1993, which bans any distinction between women and men in the application of the requirements of the articles of the Journal.
- Setting the minimum age of work for housemaids at 16 and prohibiting the work of girls under that age (Law No. 32 of 2005);
- Housemaids should be able to enjoy the benefits of the social security system and have the right to social security coverage under law number 32 of 2002;
- Adoption of the principle of non-employment of women and girls at night with the exception of some cases identified by law;
- Inclusion of provisions within the articles of the Labor Code that prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace to ensure morality in the institutions and to preserve the dignity of workers of both sexes and prevent the harboring of junior girls and minors in the workplace;
- Prevent the employment of women and girls in underground mines and quarries to protect their health and ensure their safety (Labor Code);

- Including important provisions within the Criminal Code designed to protect girls from all forms of violence and providing for stiff penalties with respect to the indictment for prostitution;
- stipulating in Chapter IV of the decree number 72 of 2008 on the minimum wage increase, that " young workers, males and females aged between 16 and 18 can in no case receive a payment below 85% of that received by major workers".

## **7. Elimination of Violence against Girl Child**

- Adoption of a national strategy for the prevention of violent behavior in the family and society and the fighting of violence based on gender;
- Creation of a free hotline for victims of violence;
- Protecting women and girls from all forms of violence and sexual exploitation and sexual harassment as provided by chapters 212 to 250 of the Criminal Code;
- Tunisia's ratification of the Optional Protocols attached to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related to the use of children in prostitution activities and pornography on the one hand, and involving them in armed conflicts on the other hand;
- Issue of the Child Protection Code in 1995 which is an essential mechanism to protect children of both sexes from all forms of violence;
- Creation of a childhood protection delegates body pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 28 of the Child Protection Code;
- Preparation of a national program to combat violence against children and to promote the culture of nonviolence;
- Creation of the position of the family magistrate.

## **8. Strengthening of the Girl Child's Awareness of her Potentials and Abilities to Contribute to and Participate in the Social, Economic and Political Life**

- Adoption of a dialogue approach with young people by consulting with them in all the issues that concern them;
- Creation of the Children's Parliament in 2002 to familiarize 12 to 15 years old children with the participation in public life. Girl children are equally involved in the Parliament with boy children;
- Creation of the municipal councils of children which membership reached 4366 members, including 1935 girls (44.3%);
- Creation of 24 parliamentary clubs for children in addition to organizations of childhood lovers clubs and councils representing the students in primary and high schools. Girls presence in these various structures amounts to 50% of the total number of members.

It is worth noting that the participation rate of girls in cultural and recreational activities in rural areas, especially in youth clubs, do not exceed 7.9% which requires

an analysis of the causes of this gender gap and the taking of important decisions and measures that would lead to reducing this gap.

### **9. Strengthening of the Families Capacities to Care More for Girls and Achieving Equality between Girl and Boy Children**

- Empowering women by reinforcing the principle of shared responsibility within the family;
- Supporting the rights of mothers and children through the law of 1998 on the granting of the mother's family name to her child of unknown parentage;
- Establishing a system of joint estate between spouses, which is likely to support the foundations of partnership between them and enhance the family's cohesion and stability;
- Ensuring the right of the guarded child and the guarding mother within the custody framework to housing under law number 20 of 2008 on the revision of the amendment of the Personal Status Code;
- Creating a system that enables women to work half the working time for two-thirds of the wage in the public sector under the law number 58 of 2006 to allow mothers to reconcile their family and professional lives;
- Adopting the national plans for the advancement of the family which aim to develop the family role and strengthen its capacities to better perform its duties and roles so as to respond to the aspirations of its members and the obligations of its position as the basic cell of society that secures the upbringing of children without any discrimination based on gender.