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## The Role Of Civil Society In The Development Of Shadow Areas In Algeria - A Case Study Of The Province Of Saïda

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### Abstract:

Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa in terms of land area and abundant natural resources. However, this does not necessarily translate into a leading position in terms of exports, production or development, especially in certain regions of the country that are predominantly marginalised. In recent years, Algeria has witnessed numerous reform programmes and strategies related to local sustainable development. These initiatives aim to improve various sectors and facilities, eradicate poverty, illiteracy and deprivation, improve living standards and provide social services in order to break the cycle of isolation, particularly in shadow areas. These areas, as the President has pointed out in several meetings with governors, have experienced a significant deterioration in development and a lack of basic necessities such as electricity, water and gas. They also suffer from a complete lack of various facilities related to education, rural housing, employment opportunities and resource provision. As a result, the caretaker government has launched an emergency programme specifically designed for these mountainous regions, allocating a sufficient budget to promote their development and implement projects and investments that can bring them out of their isolation. The ultimate goal is to create a local community development plan that will reduce disparities between regions within the country and eliminate illiteracy, unemployment, marginalisation and poverty.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, remote areas, civil society, development programmes.

### Introduction:

Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa in terms of land area and natural resources. However, this has not translated into significant progress and development, especially in certain regions and in most parts of the country. "Local development is the process by which cooperation between popular efforts on the one hand and government efforts on

the other can raise the level of local communities and units economically, socially, culturally and civically, and integrate them into the overall national development system in order to actively contribute to national progress” (Abdel Motaleb, 2001, p. 13). This development also includes regions that lack basic means of subsistence, with priorities such as gas, water, electricity and others. In this context, the President has addressed these regions, stating that the idea of a new Algeria cannot be discussed without developing these neglected areas, also known as “shadow areas”. These areas are generally isolated from the cities and their inhabitants suffer from social problems such as poverty and illiteracy, as well as a lack of infrastructure and economic investment. Algeria’s progress depends on the implementation of a well-thought-out strategy and a comprehensive action plan for these regions, which show clear imbalances in terms of development, investment and living standards. It is essential to improve project distribution systems and to integrate these regions into local economic development, giving them priority and using their resources in an environmentally sustainable manner by conserving their natural resources and optimising their sustainable use for precautionary and preventive purposes (Osman, 2007, p. 04). In addition, we must not forget to focus on the tourism aspect of some regions that are home to various natural landmarks and turn them into tourist attractions. This can be achieved through its role in the economic policies of many countries around the world, as this sector generates hard currency. Unfortunately, this potential remains largely untapped in our country. Moreover, it can be used as a means of investment and exploitation from various perspectives, especially in agriculture, by implementing programmes and accompanying policies aimed at promoting the integration of the inhabitants of shadow areas into the national economy and creating comprehensive national wealth.

This can be achieved by providing opportunities for young people to set up economically viable and integrated activities that are adapted to the specific characteristics of the region. This will allow them to create employment opportunities and address the problem of unemployment, which has become a major challenge for the Algerian state due to the lack of employment opportunities, especially in these specific areas. It is essential to take into account the specific needs of each region and the requirements of different sectors in order to support the development and urban performance of the states.

The development of rural areas can contribute to the national economy, and the agricultural sector in particular has the potential to make these regions viable and provide decent jobs.

This is mainly due to the role played by associations in highlighting these areas, which have been considered the main and most important representatives of civil society, given their role alongside the state in building society and its institutions. It has also become a criterion for assessing the extent to which political systems adhere to the democratic approach. Closed systems, especially socialist ones, tend to disable civil society

mechanisms because these organisations are perceived as a threat to the authority's control over citizens. In Algeria, with the transition of the political system to pluralism following the adoption of the 1989 constitution, associations, including those with political, cultural and social dimensions, have become closely associated with this transformation (Boukra, 1997, p. 48). In the face of ideological, economic and social transformations, civil society has imposed itself on the legal system as a human and social tool, both at the national and international levels, to promote comprehensive development (Bouhennia, 2008, p. 02).

Through this, civil society is considered the cornerstone of any society, as it serves as a platform and interface that guides the state in addressing many deficiencies that require assistance and support, and in achieving the public interests of citizens, providing services, and among its most important goals are achieving balance and reconciliation between all sectors, institutions, and justice, improving social and economic conditions, revitalising life, finding solutions to problems, and trying to integrate individuals in society to participate in social and private life changes, especially. Voluntary associations, as one of its institutions, fill the public space between the family, society and the State, playing an important role in various activities, with different segments of society participating in the functions, objectives, purpose and direction, in order to provide services to citizens and communicate their concerns to officials. In addition, they aim to combat the poverty that exists in some sectors of society, especially those mentioned above, to alleviate its effects and to achieve a decent life in all aspects for these marginalised sectors by providing means of livelihood and various health, social and cultural facilities. An association is “a non-profit social organisation that operates on a voluntary basis and seeks to provide many different services needed by society. Members of these associations and people are allowed to participate in all stages of work in these associations, which are referred to in the United States as the third sector, based on the fact that the state is the first sector and the for-profit private sector is the second sector” (Abdullah, 2018, p. 434). Algerian law defines associations as “a grouping of natural or legal persons on a defined or undefined contractual basis, and these persons voluntarily contribute their knowledge and resources for a non-profit purpose in order to promote and encourage activities, particularly in the professional, social, scientific, religious, educational, cultural, sporting, environmental and charitable fields” (Gazette, 2012, p. 34).

On the basis of what has been said, it can be argued that the charitable work of various national associations, in addition to the inclusiveness of their activities and support for different segments of society, regardless of their background, lies in providing assistance to improve and meet their social and economic needs. Associations, no matter what they are called, serve as a link between citizens and the state by achieving noble goals based on the promotion of equality, cooperation and meeting the needs of individuals in all aspects. They also shed light on the marginalised sectors of society by informing the State of their situation. In this movement, the President has given them great importance

because local development in these neglected areas depends primarily on local funding to bring about an increase in the level of local development. This is because it emanates from the broad base of the people and expresses their real needs for various projects, thus directing the government's efforts towards achieving the necessary local development programmes.

The funding of contributions from civil society, particularly associations, has a basis and a role to play in the development of marginalised areas in Algeria. These areas are involved in various development projects, whether it be sustainable development, investment, tourism promotion, the exploitation of natural resources or the prioritisation of various small-scale projects for young people. The participatory role of voluntary and charitable associations is of great importance in helping these regions to progress and break the cycle of isolation, poverty, illiteracy and neglect of development. Associations have an influence on the country's decision-makers and aim to present a qualitative image and, in particular, to improve living conditions and provide a decent livelihood. This is done in order to achieve equality and equal opportunities for all Algerians and to reduce social disparities in development between different regions of the country. This includes widespread electrification, the provision of gas and drinking water, and reducing the isolation of the population, particularly in remote mountainous areas. It also involves improving and providing service structures in various sectors and facilities, such as health and education, and diversifying economic capacities to create employment opportunities. Therefore, the role of civil society and its various institutions in multifaceted development is crucial, through their efforts to raise public awareness and shed light on marginalised areas, especially in light of recent political and social events in Algeria related to comprehensive development and economic progress throughout the national territory. Based on the above, the problem of our study revolves around the fundamental question:

-What is the role of local civil society institutions in development?

-What projects are undertaken to promote development in marginalised areas?

-What is the impact of local development projects on marginalised areas?

### **The objectives of this study:**

**In view of their importance, several objectives have been set, including:**

**✎ In spite of the importance of this study, it seeks to achieve a number of objectives at the same time, the most important of which are as follows:**

- To promote community activities and efforts that contribute to improving the network of services in rural areas and to unify efforts.

- To facilitate urban development by encouraging investment in marginalised areas that have been neglected in terms of infrastructure.
- Understanding the role of civil society, particularly associations, by supporting their efforts to address the situation of isolated regions in the province of Saïda.
- To study the measures taken by associations, with the support of local authorities, to promote development in marginalised areas.

**The structure of the study:**

✂ In order to work on our study and find a solution to the problem posed, I have structured the current study as follows:

Firstly, what are the main roles of local civil society institutions in development?

Second, the projects aimed at promoting development in shadow areas.

Thirdly, the reflections of local development programmes in shadow areas in the province of Saida as a model.

**1- The importance of local civil society institutions in sustainable development:**

Local civil society institutions play an active role in society through the actions they carry out and seek to achieve on the ground. One of the main reasons why they are so important is their mission and the different responsibilities they have to achieve the goals they have set themselves in order to achieve results that benefit society. Nor do they seek financial gain. In addition, they have the professional competence and the determination to pursue development at the local level, especially in the above-mentioned areas, where civil society institutions, led by charitable organisations, make enormous efforts on the ground. Among the tasks they undertake are:

-These organisations are internally qualified, meaning that their members are committed to development principles. They work to ensure democracy, participation and independence by empowering their members with a development vision and enabling them to use local resources. They support individual and collective initiatives and encourage the development of new local leadership.

-These organisations recognise that their role is to engage people rather than to provide substitute solutions. Their role is characterised by credibility and commitment to the development path from a neutral position that reflects people's interests.

-It is important to broaden the membership base of civil society organisations and deepen democratic participation. (Remilawi, 2010, p. 98).

In this respect, local civil society institutions play an important and effective role in Algerian society. They bridge the gap between the individual and the government, aiming to achieve democracy and seeking a balance between official and non-official organisations. They are aware of the needs that individuals cannot meet on their own and of the societal problems they face. These institutions play a vital role in enabling individuals to express their freedoms and act as essential and dynamic partners in shaping policies to promote sustainable development for the country. They also serve local development in impoverished regions, working with national institutions and the government to combat poverty, marginalisation, unemployment and illiteracy.

### **1-1 The role of civil society in other development sectors and areas:**

☞ (There are several roles that civil society organisations play in various other fields, by generalising their activities in society and by performing different tasks in institutions. We will present some of these roles, which include:

- Civil society organisations play an important role in achieving democracy in both developed and developing countries.
- Strengthening health services through charitable health programmes, especially in rural areas, and working on health projects.
- Civil society organisations contribute to the education of individuals in society by organising conferences and seminars on cultural and social issues.
- Adopting specific programmes to contribute to the preservation and protection of the environment and to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of preserving it. (Ahmed, 2020, p. 47).

### **1-2 The reality of local civil society institutions in Algeria - the example of charitable associations:**

Civil society institutions in Algeria, particularly charitable associations, are considered one of the most important institutions and key actors in society. They play an important role in highlighting marginalised groups, highlighting implemented and unimplemented programmes and establishing links between these groups and local government authorities. They help to reduce marginalisation phenomena that society tends to overlook, such as poverty, which affects a large number of citizens who are unable to meet their social needs and various livelihood requirements. They also shed light on the problem of unemployment among young graduates from institutes and universities, and seek solutions.

In addition, they focus on various resources that the state is not exploiting in these regions, which have the potential to free the country from its dependence on fossil fuels, since these disadvantaged regions have significant untapped wealth, including

agricultural land capable of producing various crops and mountainous areas that can attract a large number of tourists.

Charities play an active role in building hospitals, schools and mosques in impoverished areas, ensuring their share of development, investment and financial support. They are essential to the state as they provide services and meet needs, balancing the individual interests represented by civil society institutions such as associations and political parties with the public interests represented by the state. They possess skills that enable them to address social problems according to contemporary organisational principles and thus to achieve their desired goals in practice

In summary, civil society, with all its components, serves as the environment in which members of society freely express their demands, needs, aspirations and individual identities.

### **1-3 The social role of voluntary work for charities:**

Volunteering has always served as a bridge between the rich and the poor within the same society. It takes on the responsibility of helping to meet the basic needs of socially disadvantaged groups such as the poor, orphans and underprivileged members of the community through donations from wealthy individuals. This helps to reduce the burden on government social welfare institutions in meeting the needs of these individuals. Consequently, charitable organisations focus on and monitor this role.

Moreover, this role is not limited to developing or impoverished countries; even advanced nations rely heavily on voluntary institutions to support their social welfare programmes. The social role of volunteering takes various forms and dimensions, including but not limited to:

- Equipping young people with the necessary social skills for life, as well as ways of interacting and behaving in society.
- Voluntary service programmes also play an important social role by providing essential humanitarian aid such as food, clothing and supplies to people in desperate need. This role is particularly evident in times of war and disaster.
- Volunteering helps to meet the health care needs of the poor, orphans and the underprivileged by providing free medical services. This is achieved by mobilising the medical expertise and resources of volunteers for the benefit of those in need of treatment. This is complemented by the use of medical professionals, specialists and mobile clinics to help the destitute in remote areas not covered by government health services. The primary objective is to assist impoverished patients, especially those who are unable to seek treatment abroad.

Volunteering has several functions, including contributing to professional success by providing individuals with knowledge and skills that enable them to engage in organisational work and to find solutions in their environment.

Volunteering also contributes to social inclusion by fostering mutual cooperation between different segments of society and by integrating individuals into their communities. For example, it seeks to involve marginalised populations living in impoverished areas by involving them in social activities. This is achieved by fostering a sense of belonging to the community and the nation, promoting values of giving, and prioritising the public interest (Baali, 2017, p. 109).

#### **1-4 Measures taken by the authorities with regard to the development of shadow areas:**

Instructions have been issued by the President of the Republic regarding shadow areas, with the aim of eliminating deficiencies and adequately meeting the needs of citizens living in these areas. The aim is to create a balance between all regions of the country. These measures include:

- Documenting all deficiencies and identified needs for basic services such as electricity, road networks, sewerage systems, school feeding programmes and transport in these areas. This will include a financial assessment and detailed technical maps for each project identified.
- Establishment of a provincial committee to identify shadow areas at the regional level and develop an urgent programme to ensure that the basic needs of these areas are optimally met.
- This will be done in coordination with the joint ministerial committee in charge of supervising the process of identifying shadow areas and implementing the corresponding emergency programme. The Provincial Committee also sets up committees at district level to carry out specific operations in the shadow areas.
- Formation of technical teams from various institutions and directorates at provincial level (Warda and Sami, 2021, p. 13).

In this regard, the government, in cooperation with other countries, aims to make a comprehensive inventory of all impoverished and disadvantaged shadow areas, identifying their various deficiencies. These areas have suffered from a lack of social life, particularly in terms of geographical proximity to vital regions, which has significantly hindered balanced and sustainable development compared to other states. Specialised committees are being formed to address the concerns and needs of these vulnerable regions, and efforts are being made to communicate them to the relevant authorities. By studying various measures, the relevant authorities are initiating actions to promote development in the shadow areas.



### **3. Projects to promote development in shadow areas:**

#### **3-1 The Role of Sustainable Local Development in Shadow Areas within the Economic Revitalisation Programme for the Years (2020-2024):**

The reality of local development in impoverished and marginalised shadow areas has been the subject of much discussion recently, following the government's meeting with governors on 16 and 17 February 2020. During the meeting, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune presented a visual report on rural and poor regions in Algeria, highlighting the significant lack of development projects in these areas, which he referred to as shadow areas. He ordered a comprehensive survey of these areas in order to launch development initiatives. In this context, the government, led by the Ministry of the Interior and Local Communities, quickly undertook the task of assessing these areas and implementing the necessary measures to achieve real and comprehensive development. What's more, the impoverished shadow areas have been included in the economic revitalisation programme for 2020-2024 approved by the President of the Republic with the aim of achieving inclusive economic development beyond the hydrocarbon sector (Boukrat, 2021, p. 292). The State, local communities and civil society, which is a vital link and interface that communicates the struggles of these populations living in mountainous, border and other regions, are striving to achieve sustainable and urgent inclusive development to overcome the trap of poverty and social deprivation and to improve the national economy.

### **5. Impact of local development projects on the shaded areas in the province of Saïda:**

#### **5-1 The State's commitment to meeting the needs of the population in the shadow areas and the emergence of tangible results:**

During a visit to the province of Saïda, Ibrahim Merad, the adviser to the President of the Republic responsible for shadow areas, confirmed that the state's commitment to meeting the needs of the population in shadow areas had begun to produce results and bear fruit on the ground. He pointed out that several development projects have been completed in many shadow areas throughout the country, improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of these remote areas, who previously lacked the basic conditions for a decent life.

While listening to the concerns of the citizens of the shadow areas such as Ouled Ahmed, Wadi Falyat, Sefala, El Bakar and El Tall in the governorate, the advisor to the President of the Republic assured that all the needs of the citizens of these areas will be considered and addressed. He added that the State is implementing this wise policy through visits to these areas, which have received and will continue to receive several development projects that directly contribute to improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the shadow areas.

In this context, he underlined the importance President Abdelmadjid Tebboune attaches to fulfilling his commitment to ensure a dignified life for the inhabitants of these areas throughout the country. The government is actively working to implement this commitment and to ensure the well-being of people living in shadow areas.

Mr Mourad familiarised himself with the living conditions of the inhabitants of these impoverished areas of the province and listened carefully to their concerns, which mainly related to the provision of drinking water, connection to rural electricity networks, agricultural support, financial assistance for rural housing, the registration of projects for the construction of sewerage networks, the reduction of isolation and the opening up of roads, and the construction of educational facilities for their children. In his general discussion with the citizens, Mr Mourad assured them that the State would allocate significant financial resources to the implementation of the remaining projects that have not yet been registered, with the aim of alleviating the hardships of the inhabitants of these isolated and impoverished areas of Algeria and ensuring their stability in their original regions. The province of Saïda has identified 308 shadow areas in all its municipalities, and has registered 423 development projects to benefit these areas, including in the sectors of water resources, public works, education and energy, with a financial allocation of over 4 billion Algerian dinars. The adviser to the President of the Republic responsible for the impoverished shadow regions is continuing his visits to numerous development projects in the province, including a check on the progress of work to connect water and sewerage networks in the old residential area of Taqadura (in the Ain Sultan commune). He will also inspect the construction of a 250 cubic metre water tank in the Ouled Ali area and the purchase and installation of nine solar photovoltaic systems in the Ouled Nezri and Matmoura areas in the Ouled Ibrahim community. (Shadow Areas, 2020)

## **5.2 Intensive visits to the shadow areas of Saïda Province:**

As part of their monitoring of major completed and ongoing development projects, the Saïda provincial authorities have intensified their visits to “impoverished shadow areas” and various municipalities. These visits include external development projects along river banks, social housing units, provincial and municipal roads, and even rural roads, with an emphasis on the quality of work carried out in accordance with the standards set out in the tender documents. The authorities have called on all mayors, districts and associations to continue their efforts and unite their efforts in the New Year, stressing the importance of providing optimal care for the inhabitants of the shadow areas. They have also given instructions that there are projects that will be implemented on the basis of available resources.

The authorities have given instructions to the Director of Water Resources and to the officials in charge of the sector in general, acknowledging the positive role played by the media caravan, which has contributed and continues to contribute to serving and getting to know the various shadow areas on the territory of the province of Saïda. They

mentioned that they had received a proposal from the Media Caravan and had provided the material and moral resources to facilitate its tasks.

Furthermore, the provincial authorities stated that in the near future, after the month of Ramadan, meetings will be held at provincial level with the participation of representatives of the neglected shadow areas visited by the media caravan. The aim of these meetings will be to assess the situation and inform the inhabitants of these areas about the projects they have benefited from. They will also discuss the remaining shortcomings to be addressed in the near future. The provincial authorities emphasised that the provision of water, electricity and gas has become an essential part of modern life. A total of 1,039 projects have been planned in these areas for the coming years (website, 2023)

Based on the information presented, it is clear that the relevant authorities in the province of Saïda are working to address the dire situation in these remaining areas in order to intensively and rapidly implement various projects in different municipalities and achieve overall development in these marginalised areas. The governor of the province has asked all district chiefs and municipalities, without exception, to make efforts to uplift these areas, free them from the cycle of poverty and unemployment, and ensure their fair share of development. They should be given priority in various ongoing and future development programmes to address their deprivation and social deficits.

### **5.3 The main local development projects carried out in the shadow areas of the province of Saïda are as follows:**

Some 60 development projects have been launched in the villages and rural areas of Saïda Province, particularly in the deprived shadow areas, as announced by the Directorate of Urban Planning, Architecture and Construction, which oversees these operations. These projects, which began at the beginning of this year, include external landscaping, road paving, underground drinking water and sanitation networks and the installation of public lighting using LED technology, according to the same source. These works will cover 30 poor villages and rural areas in the province, such as Sidi Mimoun and Qarnida (Ain Sultan community), Zirouan and Moulay Tehami (Sidi Boubekour community), Ayyun Ain Tghat (Ouled Khaled community), Barbour and Maata (Youb community) and Abdelhadi and Drou (Douis Thabit community). These projects are expected to take a maximum of six months to complete, with a budget of 90 million Algerian dinars under the programme for the development of poor and marginalised areas (regions, 2021). After a great deal of work on the part of the government and the competent authorities, the specific projects for the shadow areas are now beginning to take shape on the ground, providing a positive outlook and a glimmer of hope for the inhabitants of these areas. This is being achieved through the implementation of numerous development programmes that have transformed the lives of many citizens, providing them with much-needed infrastructure such as roads, natural gas, drinking water, sanitation, lighting, school

transport, public facilities and ongoing efforts to eliminate the manifestations of social marginalisation that they have long suffered.

**Conclusion:**

Civil society, with all its institutions, is seen as the main pillar on which society relies to streamline the development process. It works in close cooperation with the authorities and serves as an important and fundamental tool for activating economic, social and political participation. Civil society strives to communicate the concerns of citizens to the state, despite the difficulties and obstacles faced by the members of each institution within civil society. Therefore, the State should support the path of local development by involving civil society in public affairs, since it is closest to the citizens in promoting democratic values, active participation and respect for all segments of society, especially the inhabitants of the shadow areas who suffer in silence. In this context, voluntary associations are becoming important mechanisms for the effective implementation of balanced local development. As we can see, Algeria is making great efforts in all its departments to improve all regions and create social equality in all provinces, especially in the shadow areas, which are a priority for national development because they face significant challenges in various areas, including poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and social deprivation.

**One of the most important recommendations that the state should achieve and work to implement in reality is the following:**

- The balance of local development should be achieved, taking into account its practical implementation and the benefits it brings to its inhabitants.
  
- It is necessary to support charitable associations in their role in these mountainous areas by removing the difficulties and obstacles they face.
  
- To create social and economic nodes and centres in the shadow areas.
  
- To ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the progress and success of various development projects in the area, in collaboration with the associations.
  
- Simplify procedures related to the implementation of programmes and projects specific to the shadow areas.
  
- Provide opportunities for the inhabitants of these areas to participate in the process of identifying appropriate development programmes that will meet their needs and help them improve their environment, including agricultural land, small-scale projects and others.

These efforts are aimed at achieving economic, social, administrative, political and regional balance, which is one of the major challenges facing Algeria. We should not overlook the role of local communities, whether at the municipal or provincial level, as administrative bodies that contribute to partnerships for the development of

impoverished shadow areas, supporting their inhabitants and facilitating their affairs. This requires the development of systems of accountability, transparency and control appropriate to the nature and role of these active entities in managing local development. It is based on a set of principles to achieve the objectives outlined, the most important foundation being the choice of an appropriate strategy for local development action.

Voluntary work by charitable associations has become one of the most urgent necessities, as it is one of the most important foundations for the creation of sustainable development, providing them with financial and moral support and creating a favourable environment for their activities, as they represent the basic unit of civil society. It can be said that all these programmes and projects have had a tangible response and positive impact on the ground in these impoverished areas. For example, there has been a noticeable reduction in the unemployment rate through the creation of jobs and the promotion of micro-projects for young people, the eradication of illiteracy through the establishment of schools and vocational training centres, and the alleviation of poverty through the provision of various social services, thereby ensuring a decent standard of living. In addition, a complementary programme has been developed specifically for these areas to ensure continuous development.

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