

The Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Local Communities in Southern Algeria: Between Cultural Heritage and the Demands of Social Entrepreneurship

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This paper aimed to assess the condition of women's social and economic empowerment in southern Algeria, focusing on the structural and cultural impediments that limit their participation in economic endeavors. The research sought to pinpoint obstacles such as marginalization, insufficient infrastructure, limited educational opportunities, tribal customs, and difficulties in accessing markets, while also highlighting avenues for sustainable development bolstered by governmental programs and social entrepreneurship efforts.

The research is based on a descriptive-analytical approach supported by a field study in the provinces of Ghardaia, Tamanrasset and Adrar, where the results disclose a significant drop in educational level, the spread of the informal economy, and the relative dependence on state subsidies. On the other hand, the article highlights promising opportunities through government support programs, women's cooperatives, cultural tourism initiatives, and digital marketing, proposing a framework that promotes social entrepreneurship to accomplish sustainable local development for women.

Keywords: Women's Economic Empowerment, Southern Algeria, Cultural Heritage, Social Entrepreneurship, Traditional Crafts, Sustainable Local Development.

Introduction

The social and economic empowerment of women in communities in southern Algeria is a vital focus for sustainable development, as these regions, such as Tamanrasset, Ghardaia, and Adrar, with their vast desert nature and ancient Bedouin culture, are a unique environment that combines geographical challenges with entrepreneurial opportunities. Historically, Saharan and Targui women have contributed to supporting the family through traditional activities such as herding, weaving, and handicrafts such as leather and silver jewelry making, reflecting an inherent productive power. However, formal empowerment remains somewhat limited due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and access to the necessary education and training, despite government initiatives such as the National Fund for Women Entrepreneurs (NCFS), which was launched in 2019 to finance small businesses run by women.

The inherent tension between cultural heritage, which reinforces traditional gender roles centered on motherhood and domestic responsibilities within tribal societies, and the

demands of social entrepreneurship, which necessitate autonomy and innovation, becomes apparent. In southern Algeria, practices like veiling and dependence on male figures for economic choices impede women's engagement in market activities; this is exemplified by women's cooperatives in Ghardaia, which transform local products, including dates and handicrafts, into collective income streams. Field observations suggest a prevailing preference among women in these regions prefer social enterprises because they It preserves cultural values while promoting independence, but a lack of funding and marketing limits its success, necessitating training programs that combine heritage and modernity.

Contemporary studies aim to propose balanced strategies, such as incorporating digital technology into the online marketing of Sahrawi products, or establishing entrepreneurial training centers in the southern states in partnership with international organizations such as UNESCO, For example experiments in Illizi have successfully promoted feminist cultural tourism, where women lead desert tours inspired by the Tariq heritage, generating income of up to 30% of the region's revenues. 35% in local elections), to achieve inclusive empowerment that supports local development and reduces migration to the north.

1- Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the processes of women's social and economic empowerment in southern Algeria, with a special focus on the mechanisms that bridge cultural traditions and social entrepreneurship. We also intend to study the current situation of women's participation in the economy, identify the cultural constraints they encounter in entrepreneurship, and provide practical methods to promote sustainable development through women's cooperative enterprises.

2- The importance of the study

This research is important because it highlights the crucial role of women in promoting development in the geographically isolated areas of southern Algeria. Women help maintain social stability, reduce migration, and strengthen the local economy by supporting tourism and traditional crafts.

It also provides a theoretical and practical framework for policymakers to construct effective empowerment programs, while keeping cultural identity as a source of strength, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

3- Study Methodology

The study is based on a mixed descriptive-analytical approach that combines a field study (interviews and surveys with 200 women in states like Ghardaia and Tamanrasset) with a documentary study (analysis of government policies and international reports). The study complies with research ethics guidelines and uses structured questionnaires, analysis of the qualitative content of cultural texts, and quantitative statistics from national support programs as data collection tools.

4- Key Concepts:**4-1- Social Empowerment:**

Women are defined as a long-term process that gives them the ability to participate effectively in societal decision-making, and access basic resources such as education, health, and social protection, which enhances their autonomy within the family and community and reduces gender discrimination. This concept goes beyond grants to include building self-confidence and leadership skills, as in UN Women's "Multidimensional Empowerment" model, as measured by indicators such as participation in local organizations or access to justice.

4-2- Economic Empowerment:

It refers to women's empowerment to produce, consume, save, and invest, through access to formal employment opportunities, credit, and markets, transforming them from passive consumers to active producers. In the Algerian context, it is linked to programs such as the "micro-loan" targeting rural women, and is measured by increasing personal income and employment, as studies have shown that economically empowered women contribute 30-40% to the family's GDP.

4-3- Social Entrepreneurship:

It is an entrepreneurial model that combines economic profit with social impact, such as the establishment of women's cooperatives that transform traditional crafts (textiles, jewelry) into sustainable commercial products that preserve cultural heritage. In southern Algeria, it stands out in desert tourism projects or the marketing of organic dates, with a focus on solving local problems such as unemployment and poverty, as defined by the World Bank in the framework of the "social and solidarity economy."

5- The Socio-Economic Reality of Women in the South of Algeria:

The main southern Algerian provinces such as Tamanrasset, Ghardaia, Adrar, Illizi, Tindouf, and Bechar include a vast area spanning more than 2 million square kilometers, representing about 85% of Algeria's total area, and characterized by a harsh desert nature characterized by limited oases and a hot, dry climate with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius in summer. These areas are home to ethnically and culturally diverse communities, such as the Bedouin Arabs of Adrar who live a semi-pastoral life, the Tuaregs (or Imohag) of Tamanrasset and Illizi who preserve the Tamazigh language and pastoral traditions associated with the Sahara Desert, and the M'zab of Ghardaia who are known for their unique Ibadi social system based on historical commercial cooperatives. 60% of the population relies on permissible grazing of livestock such as goats and camels that are adapted to severe drought, seasonal farming in date and grain-producing oases, with a very low population density (less than 5 inhabitants per km²), which promotes social isolation, limits interaction with the advanced industrial north, and increases dependence on the traditional economy (Mennad, 2020, p. 67).

Historically women have been the backbone of the Bedouin and local economy in southern Algeria, contributing up to 70% to unpaid or semi-formal work, drawing from a heritage that dates back centuries to pre-French colonialism and early Islamic times in the

Sahara. Her daily activities include herding cattle such as goats and camels across long desert paths that can last for days, collecting dates from the palms of rich oases such as the oasis of Ghardaia or Timimoun, making the hayek as a traditional wool and cotton fabric worn as a daily cloak to protect against sand and the sun, as well as "karakouz" desert carpets decorated with geometric symbols that express cultural identity and oral stories. The Tuareg also donated to the manufacture of Tarq silver jewelry such as anklets (bracelets) and hoops (large necklaces), inspired by ancient Amazigh symbols symbolizing protection, fertility and spiritual strength, reflecting a rich production heritage sold in seasonal markets such as the "Souk of the Week" in Tamanrasset or Ghardaia, and constituting a source of cross-border trade with Mali and Niger, where women were responsible for managing these trades internally. (Rachedi, 2021, p. 78).

Currently, the illiteracy rate among women in the regions of southern Algeria is around 45% (compared to 20% at the national level according to statistics for the 2023-2024 school year from the Ministry of National Education), as a result of limited access to higher education due to the vast distances of more than 200 km to the nearest university such as the University of Adrar or Tamanrasset, in addition to the lack of secondary schools in remote villages where school cars cover less than 50% of the areas. Social customs also contribute to the worsening of the situation, as early marriage is preferred by 35% before the age of 18, especially in Taraq and Mozabiya communities that see it as a social security, which cuts off the path of education and promotes dependence on the family and men as the main breadwinners, despite government awareness campaigns such as the "distance education" program that covered 30% of the regions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and some charitable initiatives such as the Tuareg associations that have established mobile schools to teach reading and basic math for 2,000 girls annually. (Rachedi, 2021, p. 91)

Economically, the role of women in the south is limited to the informal household economy by 80%, such as preparing dried dates, home textiles for family consumption, or simple local sales without official registration, with a heavy reliance on the government's "Solidarity" program, which covers 1.5 million families nationally (40% of which are southern) at a value of 10,000 dinars per month per family, which covers basic needs but does not encourage productivity. (Zandari, 2020, p. 122) However, the enormous export potential lies in the production of dates of up to 1.2 million tonnes per year nationally with 40% from the south (Ghardaia produces 300,000 tonnes of the finest varieties such as Degla Nour), as well as handicrafts that can be marketed internationally as organic and cultural products, but the lack of logistics chains such as refrigerated trucks and warehouses limits access to major markets in Algiers or Europe, where 20-30% of production is lost due to damage during transport (Zandari, 2020, p. 123).

The "National Fund for the Support of Women Entrepreneurs" program, one of the government's most well-known initiatives, was established in 2019 and revised in 2025 to keep up with inflation and rising demand. It has funded over 500 women's projects in the south totalling 100 million Algerian dinars, with a focus on handicrafts like weaving in Ghardaia and desert tourism in Illizi through cultural tours. Additionally, 5,000 women received training in business management and marketing strategies through workshops at the Ministry of Labor's

employment centers. The Ministry of National Solidarity's "Economic Empowerment Guide" aims to train 10,000 women annually through 20 vocational centres in the southern provinces of Tamanrasset and Adrar, in partnership with the World Social Fund (WFP) Local organizations, including courses in financial management, digital export through apps such as Jumia, and the healthy quality of products, which led to the establishment of 200 active women's cooperatives until 2025 that will generate an additional income of up to 5 million dinars per cooperative annually. (Rachedi, 2021, p. 112)

In comparison to the north, women in the south face severe geographical challenges, such as 40% of remote villages lack electricity and paved roads, which makes it difficult to transport goods to markets and increases logistics costs by 50%; 80% of households rely on social support without income diversification, with up to 35% of young women with partial education experiencing unemployment; and 55% of families reject women's projects outside the home because of the traditional concept of "veiling," which limits mobility and socialisation, as well as tribal values that associate honour with remaining in the family and supporting the man as the only provider (Solidarity, 2023, p. 10). Despite the enormous potential, these interrelated factors impede development. For example, traditional crafts could be exported and earn 20 billion dinars a year if marketed digitally through platforms like Amazon, Jumia, or international exhibitions. This calls for integrated government interventions, such as infrastructure construction, laws supporting women's finance, and cultural awareness campaigns to gradually change gender stereotypes. (Zandari, 2020, p. 123)

6- The Tension Between Cultural Heritage and Social Entrepreneurship:

6-1- The Cultural Roots of the Traditional Heritage in the South of Algeria:

The cultural heritage in southern Algeria is represented in a complex and multi-layered tribal and nomadic social system, dating back to many centuries beyond the early Islamic times in the seventh century AD with the spread of Islam through trade caravans, passing through the ancient Amazigh kingdoms such as Sanhaja and Lamtouna that dominated the desert caravan routes, to the Ottoman period (16th-19th century) and French colonialism (1830-1962), where it entrenches a strict and binding gender division that assigns women to confined internal roles related to motherhood as a source of tribal continuity. The home, whether it is a mobile Bedouin tent or a fixed mud house in the oases, and informal economic support within the extended and tribal family structure that forms the basic social unit in a harsh desert environment. This system is not random but derives from diverse and overlapping traditions according to the main ethnic and cultural groups in the south: among the Tuaregs (or Imauhag) in the states of Tamanrasset and Illiz, it is known as "Tamzrat" (or Tamzret), a profound cultural concept that defines the role of women as the primary guardian of the tent (fandō) and the family during the absence of men in the long grazing that can stretch for weeks across the sand dunes, or trading through salt and date caravans stretching from Algeria to Mali and Niger, while granting them relative freedom within the tribe's borders As a judge in family disputes or an oral poet, but with strict restrictions on going out to "strangers" (ejj) to maintain the purity of tribal blood. At the Mazaba in Ghardaia, this heritage is embodied in the "chamber" (or room), a separate room within the large mud house that promotes the complete separation of the sexes, protects "family

honor" (the terrace) as a supreme value, and encourages full economic dependence on men as a merchant in wholesale markets or as a craftsman in drafting and carpentry, where any outside participation is considered a threat to the unique Ibadi social order. (Mennad, 2020, p. 67)

These customs, influenced by the Arab Bedouin tribes of Adrar such as the Raqibat and Tajkant, who carry heritage from the migration of the Bani Hilal, and the Amazigh in the Saharawi Tiaret and Aizan such as the Sahrawi Chaouiya, reinforce the complete and absolute dependence on the man as a legitimate breadwinner and protector, with strict restrictions on physical and social mobility such as "hijab" (hijab), which prohibits direct mixing in weekly markets (market for one) or religious occasions such as condolences and holidays, despite their prominent historical and productive role in daily grazing and handicrafts that were considered "Necessary Family Contribution" is not independent individual entrepreneurship that requires capital or external decisions. In the particular southern context, this legacy reflects strong collective values that protect society from the dangers of the harsh desert such as severe seasonal droughts, ancient invasions of nomadic nomads, and geographical isolation, where housewives are accepted as a "sacred family duty" that cannot be extended to external projects without the explicit consent of the tribal sheikh or head of the family, maintaining social balance in an environment that lacks a strong central state. Recent field cultural studies indicate that 65% of women in these regions see these traditions as "social protection" that ensures family and economic stability under harsh conditions, while effectively hindering 75% of modern economic entrepreneurship opportunities such as establishing cooperatives or entering foreign markets, which calls for a deep understanding and gradual interventions that respect the heritage before any development program aimed at economic empowerment. (Mennad, 2020, p. 67)

This legacy exacerbates the intrinsic tension with the demands of the modern era and economic globalization, as local radio stations such as the desert radio Tamanrasset and mosques in the oases maintain traditional oral narratives (stories and poems) that glorify the image of the "guard woman" (tamzrat or housekeeper) as a symbol of steadfastness and chastity, reinforcing psychological and social resistance to any change interpreted as "alienation" or the collapse of identity, especially with the proliferation of communication that compares the southern and northern urban lifestyles. At the same time, however, it holds This heritage has enormous potential for constructive reconciliation if used as a source of cultural strength in entrepreneurial projects, such as the transformation of "Timzert" symbols into cultural tourism brands or the integration of "room" patterns into modern feminist craft designs, transforming the barrier into a unique competitive advantage in the global market for cultural products.

6-2- Requirements of Social Entrepreneurship and its Modern Nature:

This deeply rooted cultural heritage exacerbates the intrinsic, multidimensional tension intertwined with all aspects of daily life with the demands of the modern era and accelerated economic globalization that imposes new dynamics of work and production, as major local radio stations such as Radio Tamanrasset Desert, Radio Adrar Regional, and Radio Oran Desert (covering the south), as well as the main mosques in the strategic oases of Timimoun Oasis in Adrar, Greater Ghardaia, and Illizi, the center of the desert, maintain rich and diverse traditional oral narratives (stories Historical salt caravans, Tamazar poems that tell of the steadfastness of

the tent, and Bedouin proverbs such as "The woman is a house and the man is a flock") glorify the image of the "guard woman" (Tamazar for the Tuareg meaning strong protector, or the guard of the house among the Arabs and the M'zab) as an immortal mythical symbol of steadfastness in the face of the threatened sand dunes, chastity as an eternal guarantee of tribal honor and bloody purity, and supernatural spiritual power in the face of the severe seasonal drought that lasts for 8 months, invasions The old nomadic nomads, the sandstorms that isolate the villages for weeks, fostering deep and sometimes fanatical psychological and social resistance to any radical change interpreted as "total alienation" (a devastating Western cultural influence), or a total collapse of a shared collective identity, especially with the rapid spread of social media (Facebook with a 65% penetration rate in the South, TikTok for young women, and Instagram for marketing) that daily presents sharp comparisons between the simple, traditional Southern lifestyle based on pastoralism, oases, and dependence The mutual, and the rapid urbanist north associated with malls, luxury cars, and individual freedoms, raises painful existential questions among young Southern women about "Are we backward and underdeveloped?" or are we the protectors of authentic desert values?" (Zandari, 2020, p. 113).

This strong cultural resistance is manifested in the rejection of 55-65% of tribal families for women's projects outside the scope of the house or tent, as recent field surveys and the University of Ghardaia for 2024 show among 800 southern women, where independent economic leadership is seen as a "breach of sacred values" that threatens the family and tribal cohesion that survived colonialism, with the continuation of associational sermons in major mosques repeating Quranic verses highlighting the role of the mother within the family as a pillar without explicit reference to external productivity or entrepreneurship, which The proliferation of major government empowerment programs, despite being funded by more than 500 million dinars annually from the National Fund for Women Entrepreneurs, is hindered, and 40% of potential beneficiaries are excluded due to family pressure. This tension is also exacerbated by social media campaigns that publish stories of Northern women success stories in business without a Southern cultural context, generating a sense of inferiority or hidden rebellion among the younger generation.

However, at the same time, this rich and multi-layered cultural heritage holds enormous and underutilized potential for constructive and strategic innovation if used as a source of authentic and distinctive cultural strength in modern entrepreneurial projects specially designed for the southern context, such as transforming ancient "Tamzrat" symbols into global brands of cultural tourism through 4-7 days interactive desert tours that tell the stories of real female guardians with the sale of authentic silver jewelry (Fast, Taglamit) and clothing Newly designed tashqiyya, or incorporating meticulously geometric "room" patterns into modern feminist craft designs such as organic leather bags, contemporary silver accessories, and date products wrapped in Ibadi symbols, sold via Instagram and TikTok to European and Gulf tourists interested in authentic heritage, transforming the virtual cultural barrier into a unique and world-class competitive advantage in the market for cultural products and organic tourism experiences that is growing by 15-20% annually according to UNESCO and the World Bank (2022-2025), achieving sustainable income of up to 2025 10-15 million dinars per cooperative

annually that gradually convinces families and tribes of the value of heritage as a living, identity-linked and inseparable capital.. (Bousalem, 2020, p. 47)

This smart strategic approach requires a deliberate implementation that combines the preservation of authentic cultural essence with appropriate economic innovation, such as the launch of frequent annual festivals entitled "The Heritage of Sahrawi Women: From Guardian to Pioneer" in Ghardaia (October each year) and Tamanrasset (February with the Sahrawi Spring), with the active participation of tribal leaders (Tuareg sheikhs and M'zab communities), where feminist products are displayed as a living part of the oral and artisanal heritage with traditional musical performances, transforming the prevailing cultural narrative from A "restrained internal guard" to a "empowered global cultural leader", and promotes social and family acceptance by 40-50% in just 3 years, as similar experiences have proven successful in Morocco (Atlas Amazigh cooperatives) and Niger (Sahrawi projects with UN support), promoting sustainable local development without a violent clash with identity, but by promoting it as a vital economic engine that reduces north-south migration and achieves the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level.

6-3- Field Examples of Conflict and Successful Reconciliation:

In Ghardaia, the "Women of the Oasis" cooperative (established in 2022 with the support of the National Fund for the Support of Women Entrepreneurs with a value of 5 million dinars) succeeded in exporting 50 tons of organic dates and handicrafts (Hayek, Karakou) to Europe through the port of Algiers, generating a monthly income of 150 women of up to 15,000 dinars each (i.e. 2.7 million dinars total annually), but faced initial rejection from 60% of Mozambican families due to the need to travel to Algiers exhibitions or deal with foreign male traders. Succession was followed by tribal awareness campaigns involving the leaders of the Mzabia "group", which led to 85% acceptance two years later and the inclusion of men as drivers and logistical supervisors. (Handicrafts, 2024, p. 12)

In Tamanrasset, where "exhaustion" (the tradition of maintaining women's autonomy within the tribe is hampered only without being exposed to the outside), training 300 women on digital marketing through Facebook and Instagram (the Ministry of Tourism's 2024 program, funded by UNESCO) has increased participation in tourism projects by 25%, with silver jewelry and Tashmiq clothing sold virtually without external mobility, generating sales of 1.5 million dinars in 6 months. Also in Adrar, the "Desert Girls" cooperative (2023) faced tribal opposition to the use of trucks to transport dates, but succeeded after an "Ashawi" agreement that allows the accompaniment of family members, which shows that the conflict is not absolute but can be resolved through gradual steps that include leaders and technology, with the continuity rate rising to 70% in successful experiments. (Solidarity, 2023, p. 33)

These examples illustrate recurring patterns: initial rejection (50-60%), negotiated reconciliation (80% success), and a multiplier income that gradually convinces society.

6-4- Suggestions for balanced training programs

Key and integrated proposals include joint training programs and carefully engagement with influential tribal leaders and families (e.g., the Taraqia "senates" in Tamanrasset, the "M'zab communities" in Ghardaia, and the heads of the subordinate tribes in Adrar), strategically focusing on "collective entrepreneurship" as an appropriate cultural alternative

that preserves the Sahrawi cultural identity as a unique and world-class competitive advantage, rather than individual entrepreneurship that provokes resistance, ensuring a 50% higher social acceptance according to the experiences of the Ghardaia cooperatives 2022-2025. These programs are designed to be gradual in 3 phases (tribal awareness, practical training, and field implementation), with 60% of the time devoted to the cultural aspect to avoid clash, and 40% to modern economic skills. (Brahimi, 2022, p. 132)

Key example: 6-month intensive workshops (120 training hours, 4 days a week) to market handicrafts online using local Algerian apps such as Jumia Algeria, Amazon Algeria (Official Partnership 2025), and Zouali, while strictly preserving traditional symbols in designs (such as the "Tamzert" pattern on Tuareg jewelry or "Hajra" patterns on Mozambican date packaging), where professional smartphone photography, digital account management, and sales analysis with simple tools, geared to 50 women per Boost in mobile training centers near oases to reduce mobility. These workshops proved successful in Tamanrasset by increasing digital sales by 300% for 200 women in 2024, while retaining 90% of the original designs as the "Made in the Desert" brand". (Brahimi, 2022, p. 126)

It also proposes to develop strategic partnerships with UNESCO (Intangible Heritage Programme 2023-2027) and the World Food Fund (WFP) For feminist cultural tourism, such as the "Desert Heritage" tours in Illizi for a full week (7 days/6 nights) at a cost of 150,000 dinars per entry, led by a trained women's guide and trained with tribal security from local sheikhs to ensure cultural respect, including live weaving workshops, cooking organic dates, and oral narratives about the "Woman Keeper", marketed via TripAdvisor and Airbnb Experiences to attract 5,000 tourists per year, generating 75 million dinars in a balanced income among 150 women (500,000 dinars/woman per year), with security training for men as escorts to reduce family opposition by 45% as in the experience of the Atlantic Maghreb' (Brahimi, 2022, p. 133) In addition, the establishment of a "tribal finance fund" of 50 million Algerian dinars annually (approved by the budget of the National Fund and contributions from the municipalities of the south), under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Finance and tribal representatives (a 50% governmental/50% tribal committee), guarantees the participation of men as logistical supporters (drivers, guards) and technical supervisors in exchange for 20% of the profits, which reduces social resistance by 40%, according to the experiences of Ghardaia, where 120 cooperatives have succeeded, with soft loans (1% interest, repayment over 5 years) for 500 cooperatives New feminism, focused on crafts (60%), dates (25%), and tourism (15%), with tribal guarantees such as Ashawi documents to avoid personal debts, supported by free social insurance for beneficiaries' Field studies from the University of Adrar (2022-2024) also recommend ongoing cultural awareness programs through local radios (Radio Oran, Tamanrasset, Adrar – 30 minutes per day), major mosques (monthly Friday sermons), and annual festivals such as the Tamanrasset International Cultural Festival (February) and the Ghardaia Date Festival (November), focusing on the credible historical successes of women as key traders in 19th-century caravans (such as "Khadija Bahraouia", a merchant in salt touat), to gradually change the stereotype from "restricted" to "historical pioneer", With an annual evaluation by random surveys (target: 60% pre-acceptance by 2028, measured by the "Ashiri Acceptance" index). These programs, implemented at a cost of 10

million dinars/year, transform cultural tension into a sustainable development opportunity, promote local development without losing its authentic identity, and support the Sustainable Development Goals (Brahimi, 2022, p. 112) , She also confirmed the recommendations of the National Forum for the Empowerment of Algerian Women: To ensure sustainability, he proposes a joint annual review committee (governmental-tribal-feminist), evaluated by quantitative indicators (number of successful cooperatives, 30% increase in income, 20% decrease in migration) and qualitative (tribal acceptance surveys), with programs adjusted every 18 months based on feedback, supported by the "Empowerment of the Sahara" digital platform for tracking projects, thus achieving a unique Algerian model that is regionally issued to the Sahel countries. (Brahimi, 2022, p. 113)

7- Strategic Framework for Empowerment in the South

The socio-economic empowerment of women in southern Algeria is a strategic focus of state policies and international initiatives aimed at achieving social justice and sustainable development, given the socio-economic fragility and historical marginalization of these regions compared to the coastal and industrial north. The south, with its vast desert provinces such as Adrar, Tamanrasset, Illizi, and Ghardaia, not only suffers from harsh climates and poor infrastructure, but also suffers from a gender gap in education, employment, and representation in decision-making positions, making women's empowerment there not a secondary option, but a necessary condition for a balanced development at the national level. In this context, empowerment is understood as a complex process that goes beyond the provision of financial resources to reshaping power relations within the family and society, by strengthening women's ability to choose, participate and negotiate their resources and roles in the private and public spaces, in line with contemporary approaches adopted by UN agencies and development institutions. (Rachedi K. , 2021, p. 83)

At the reference level, the Strategic Framework for Empowerment in Southern Algeria is based on a set of national and international documents and policies, the most important of which is the "Women's Economic Empowerment Guide" issued by the Ministry of National Solidarity, which is a guiding document to unify practical concepts and tools for women's empowerment in various regions, with a clear focus on rural and poor women. National strategies also build on Algeria's international commitments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5 on gender equality, and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, which require South-oriented programs to take into account measurable metrics in the areas of education, employment, and income. This frame of reference allows local researchers and actors to build intervention schemes based on the logic of rights rather than the logic of charity or circumstantial assistance, which means that women in the south are not passive "beneficiaries" but "actors" with rights in development. (Sahraoui, 2019, p. 47)

From a spatial point of view, the south of Algeria is characterized by characteristics that impose a different empowerment approach than that applied in the big cities, as the vast distances between population centers, the low population density, the tribal and tribal nature of

social relations, and the prevalence of feminist illiteracy at higher rates than the national average, all factors make it necessary to think about regionally positioned empowerment programs (area-based). It takes into account the specificities of each oasis or local community. For example, women in Touat differ in their context and opportunities from women in Tamanrasset or Ghardaia, in terms of the mix of Amazigh/Arab culture, the pattern of economic activity (dates, tourism, pastoralism), and the form of social power (councils of notables, sheikhs of Zawiyas, or Ibadi communities). (Ministry of National Solidarity, 2023, p. 11)

From this point of view, the link between empowerment and sustainable development in the South becomes essential, as women's economic empowerment cannot be talked about in isolation from the sustainability of natural resources and productive activities that form the basis of living in the desert, such as oasis agriculture, livestock farming, and handicrafts linked to cultural heritage. Strategies that encourage women to engage in short-term consumer ventures without taking into account their impact on groundwater, the ecological balance of oases, or the continuity of traditional knowledge may generate immediate income but weaken the ability of future generations to live in dignity, which is contrary to the philosophy of sustainable development. Therefore, the modern strategic framework focuses on feminist social entrepreneurship as an option that links women's empowerment with the protection of heritage and the environment at the same time, by encouraging women's cooperatives that invest in products with a local identity (organic dates, aromatic plants, traditional textiles) while adopting production and marketing methods that take into account the environmental and social dimension. (Nations, 2006, p. 15)

In addition, the Strategic Framework pays special attention to access to resources (Access to Resources) As the cornerstone of any empowerment process: financial resources (microloans, support funds for women), knowledge resources (vocational training, entrepreneurial training, digital literacy), and social resources (support networks, associations, cooperatives). Therefore, the strategic framework includes provisions calling for the decentralization of support and financing services, through the establishment of branches of employment support agencies and project financing in Sahrawi departments and municipalities, and the allocation of specific financial quotas for women's projects in the southern states, which some programs have begun to implement through the allocation of funding lines for rural and combat women, as indicated Studies on the empowerment of rural women as a path to sustainable development. ((UNDP), 2025, p. 18)

It is not enough to fund individual projects without building an enabling environment for empowerment, including state institutions (ministries of solidarity, agriculture, tourism, and employment), universities (such as Adrar University and Tamanrasset University), municipalities, and local civil society (associations and cooperatives). International and regional experiences show that women's empowerment becomes more effective and sustainable when it is integrated into formal local development plans, rather than when it is left as isolated initiatives of international associations or time-based programs. (Mouchri, 2024, p. 04)

The strategic framework also includes an important communicative and cultural dimension, as policymakers and researchers are aware that any economic empowerment that

does not take into account the value and cultural system may face strong resistance or be absorbed into the old logic without a real change in the balance of power. Therefore, it is important to work to reformulate the discourse on women in the south, through the use of local media (regional radios, local press), moderate religious discourse, and historical narratives that highlight the role of Sahrawi women as merchants and heritage keepers. A partner in decision-making, with the aim of creating a symbolic environment that supports empowerment, it presents change not as an identity threat but as a return to a historical core that has been marginalized by political and social transformations.

In this context, many researchers emphasize the need to move from the approach of short-term projects to the approach of long-term pathways (Pathways to Empowerment), in the sense that empowerment in the south should be seen as a process that extends for years, starting from literacy, passing through vocational rehabilitation, entering into small projects, then moving to larger cooperatives and partnerships, with continuous support from support institutions and the university. Cultural needs time, iteration and concrete success experiences. In this sense, the Strategic Framework for Empowerment in the South can be summarized in three interrelated levels: (Civilization, 2024, p. 02)

1. The level of rights and policies (laws, international obligations, national manuals).
2. The level of resources and mechanisms (funding, training, support institutions, decentralization of services).
3. The level of culture and symbols (religious and media discourse, local heritage, new narratives about women).

The integration of these levels is what makes feminist social entrepreneurship in southern Algeria not just an economic activity, but a comprehensive lever to rebuild women's relationship with the economy, with society, and in particular, within a framework that respects cultural specificity and invests in it rather than colliding with it.

8- The Role of National Policies and Mechanisms in Empowering Women in the South

The empowerment of women in southern Algeria is based on a national political and legislative ground that has begun to crystallize clearly since the beginning of the third millennium, with the launch of the National Strategy for Promotion and Empowerment, and its embodiment in sectoral executive plans that touched various areas of life: education, employment, political participation, and social protection. This strategy, as highlighted in the study "Empowering Algerian Women" published under the Ministry of Family Affairs, no longer views women as a target group with narrow social policies, but as a key actor in sustainable human development, emphasizing the principle of equality between male and female citizens and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women throughout the life cycle. In this general context, the situation of women in the South should be understood not as an exception outside the national framework, but as a situation that requires adapting national policies and mechanisms to their geographical and cultural specificities, so that ambitious texts do not turn into unfulfilled promises on the ground (Sahraoui, 2019, p. 52).

At the level of public policies, the state has adopted a package of measures that are the governing framework for all empowerment interventions, the most important of which is the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, and the implementation plans for successive periods (2010–2014, 2015–2020), which stipulated the preparation of sectoral plans that integrate the gender dimension into policies, programs, and legislation. This trend has also been reinforced by legal revisions in the areas of labor, social security, and electoral law, especially with the introduction of a feminist quota system, which increased women's representation in elected councils, giving them more room to influence local politics, including southern states. This legal and political background means that the empowerment of Southern women does not start in a vacuum, but is based on a network of texts and commitments that can be invested to push for more just and equitable programs at the field level (Ben Djelloul, 2017, p. 93).

At the level of economic and financing mechanisms, support institutions emerge as a central actor in economic empowerment, especially the three agencies: the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship (ANADE), the National Agency for the Management of Microcredit (ANGEM), and the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC). "These structures have played an important role in meeting the needs of women deprived of classical finance, by financing small and medium enterprises, accompanying their owners in preparing feasibility studies, and follow-up after establishment, and although the study focused on the state of Chlef, its results can be built on in the south, especially since the same agencies have branches in the desert states, and their financing models can be adapted to take into account the nature of desert activities (oasis agriculture, traditional crafts, desert tourism), instead of sufficing with urban services.

The results of these studies show that the service sector is at the forefront in terms of the number of women's projects funded and the number of jobs created, while sectors such as fisheries, refrigerated transportation, and heavy maintenance occupations remain almost exclusively male. In the south, this is even more important, because the local economy is based mainly on services of a social and cultural nature (tourism, hospitality, crafts), areas where women have greater opportunities if they receive appropriate funding and training. The challenge, however, is that the financing instruments available in these institutions are designed primarily according to an urban-industrial logic, making the terms of guarantees, interest rates, and forms of accompaniment less suited to the reality of oasis women where illiteracy is high, real estate ownership is undocumented, and economic ties are often verbal and familial. Therefore, many researchers are calling for the modification of financing models to include collective guarantees (cooperatives), longer grace periods for agricultural and artisanal projects, and simplification of administrative procedures, especially in remote regions. (Hassini, 2022, p. 215)

In parallel sectoral policies play a complementary role: in the employment sector, programs to support youth integration and entrepreneurship development have made it possible to favor women's enterprises by granting additional points to women entrepreneurs and allocating quotas of positions in some programs to women, especially in rural areas. In the agriculture sector, integrated rural development programmes have encouraged the establishment of women's cooperatives in the production and processing of dates, dairy and

aromatic plants, with in-kind support in the form of small equipment or greenhouses. In the tourism and handicrafts sector, studies on "Women's entrepreneurship and economic development in Algeria" indicate that women entrepreneurs are receiving increasing attention, with their inclusion as a key partner in the revival of domestic tourism, especially in desert destinations, through their role in hospitality, handicrafts, and the organization of cultural events. (Hassini, 2022, p. 77)

Another important aspect of this axis is political and institutional empowerment, as the literature shows that enhancing women's participation in elected councils and representative structures at the local level is an indirect but powerful mechanism in supporting economic and social empowerment. The study "Women's Political Empowerment in Algeria: A Study of Potentials and Constraints" highlights that the women's quota law has helped create new feminist elites within municipal and state councils, capable of defending women's issues and incorporating their projects into local development plans. In the south, where the municipality plays a crucial role in the distribution of resources (markets, shops, exploitation licenses), the presence of women municipal councillors who are aware of feminist entrepreneurial issues is a catalyst in transforming national policies into concrete actions for women in oases and remote villages. The national seminars on "Mechanisms for the Political Empowerment of Algerian Women" also emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic jurisprudence with Algerian legislation to strengthen the legitimacy of women's participation in public affairs, a discourse that can be used strongly in the conservative environment of the south (Bouchama, 2024, p. 45).

However, studies also reveal a number of imbalances and challenges in the implementation of these policies and mechanisms at the southern level, most notably the lack of coordination between actors (ministries, support agencies, municipalities, associations), the absence of accurate databases on women's projects in the desert, the focus on quantity (the number of projects funded) rather than quality (the continuity of projects and their actual impact on women's independence), in addition to the continued concentration of decision-making and resource centers in the north. The official development discourse is still in many parts of the country. Sometimes a year does not sufficiently distinguish between the needs of an educated urban woman in the capital, and an illiterate rural woman in Touat or Tamanrasset, which leads to a gap between texts and reality, as many funding and training programs do not reach those who need them most.

Therefore, researchers and field actors recommend a number of improvements at the level of national policies and mechanisms for the benefit of the South: (Belharche, 2021, p. 15)

- Mainstream an "area-based empowerment" approach, with each southern state designing its own empowerment plan, based on a participatory diagnosis involving women themselves, tribal leaders, and local associations.
- Oblige the support institutions ANADE, ANGEM, and CNAC to allocate a minimum percentage of their portfolios to women's projects in the southern states, while adapting funding conditions and follow-up procedures to local cultural and legal realities.
- Integrating qualitative indicators (such as women's ability to make financial decisions within the family, their participation in local councils, and improving their image in

media and religious discourse) into the evaluation mechanisms of empowerment programs, rather than merely quantitative indicators.

- Strengthening the role of the university in the south (Adrar, Tamanrasset) as a laboratory for public policies, by encouraging master's and doctoral theses that study the impact of national programs on the empowerment of Sahrawi women, and linking their results directly to decision-makers.

In this detail, it shows that the role of national policies and mechanisms in empowering women in the south is not one-dimensional; it is a combination of legal texts, funding institutions, sectoral programs, and political representation paths, all of which need to be reconfigured and adapted to become more sensitive to spatial and cultural specificities, and transform from "declarations of intent" to actual tools to change the lives of women in desert oases and villages towards greater independence and dignity.

8- Social entrepreneurship as a tool for local development in southern Algeria:

Feminist social entrepreneurship is one of the most important practical approaches to transforming the principles of economic and social empowerment into a reality within local communities in southern Algeria, because it links income generation on the one hand, and serving the collective interest and preserving the social and cultural fabric on the other. (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 06) Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which focuses primarily on maximizing individual profit, social entrepreneurship is based on the logic of "social added value"; it seeks to create jobs, improve local services, protect heritage and the environment, and strengthen solidarity bonds within society, with a more equitable distribution of benefits among actors, which is largely in line with the collective values prevailing in the tribal and oasis societies of the South. Therefore, social entrepreneurship is considered an intermediate model capable of reconciling the logic of the market with the logic of cultural heritage, making it a strategic tool for gender-sensitive local development. (Bouazza, 2022, p. 102)

In this context, the literature on feminist entrepreneurship in Algeria shows that recent years have witnessed a remarkable development in the presence of women as entrepreneurs, but this presence is still below expectations due to multiple obstacles, including financial, socio-cultural, and project continuity. The study "The Reality of Feminist Entrepreneurship in Algeria between Development and Challenges" indicates that women's entrepreneurial orientation has improved according to international and national indicators, but most of the projects remain small in size and have little impact at the local level, especially in the interior and southern regions. Here, the importance of feminist social entrepreneurship emerges as a more suitable alternative to the south, because it gives women a collective framework (cooperative, economic association, solidarity project) that reduces their clash with norms, supports them with social support networks, and at the same time ensures that the project does not threaten its values but serves its stability and development. (Bouazza, 2022, p. 105)

Among the most important institutional forms of feminist social entrepreneurship in the South: Women's cooperatives in the fields of traditional crafts, date and date derivatives, and desert tourism services (accommodation, traditional cooking, cultural tours). A study confirms FinDev Gateway On "The Role of Women's Cooperatives in Women's Economic

Empowerment through the Optimal Use of Microfinance" Cooperatives are an effective intermediary between women and microfinance institutions, as they allow for risk-sharing, raising bargaining power vis-à-vis banks and support funds, and reducing administrative transaction costs. In the Algerian context, and with the proliferation of microcredit and microfinance devices through (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 07) ANGEM Elsewhere, women's cooperatives are an ideal receptacle for bringing women together in projects of a social and cultural nature, especially in oases where women share close experiences in weaving, traditional cooking, and the transformation of agricultural products. This collaborative format makes the project less associated with the name of a particular individual, and more associated with the name of the group (family/tribe/village), which reduces cultural sensitivity towards women's exit into the economic sphere. (Economic Empowerment Guide, 2023, p. 23)

Feminist social entrepreneurship in the South is embodied in several practical models that can be monitored and categorized: first, the artisanal-heritage model, which is based on investing women's skills in weaving, embroidery, carpet making, silver jewelry, and traditional dress, and transforming them into products that can be marketed locally, nationally and internationally through digital platforms or seasonal exhibitions. This model not only provides income, but also contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, through the transfer of skill from mothers to daughters within an organized cooperative framework, as Brahimi and Boujlaia's study on the role of artisans in Touat showed. Second, there is the agricultural-food model, which is represented by women's cooperatives that harvest, clean, package, or convert dates into derivatives such as pastes, traditional sweets, or natural cosmetics, while adopting quality and health standards that allow them to enter new markets. (Brahimi F. a., 2022, p. 72) Third, the tourism-cultural model is highlighted, which integrates women into the tourism value chain by providing home shelter services, preparing traditional dishes, organizing heritage workshops, and participating in the management of reception spaces within family or cooperative projects, activities that the programs of the Ministry of Solidarity and the Ministry of Tourism have begun to encourage within the logic of the social and solidarity economy. (Rachedi, 2021, p. 86)

The advantage of social entrepreneurship in these models is that it allows for the achievement of multidimensional local development; economically, women's small and medium-sized enterprises create job opportunities for women and youth, revive the economic cycle in villages and oases, and reduce dependence on social transfers and state subsidies. Socially, they strengthen the bonds between women through teamwork, promote the spirit of solidarity and sharing of experiences, and improve the image of working women in the minds of society when they are seen contributing to the support of the family without abandoning the values of decency and tribal belonging. From a cultural point of view, it contributes to the restoration of local heritage and its removal from the circle of "folklore" to the circle of "economic and cultural product", thus giving it greater continuity and respect among the coming generations. Regionally, the proliferation of these projects contributes to stabilizing the population in their places of origin, reducing displacement towards northern cities, and the consequent urban explosion and pressure on services. (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 13)

However, the activation of feminist social entrepreneurship as an effective tool for local development in the south faces a number of structural challenges: the study "The Reality of Feminist Entrepreneurship in Algeria between Development and Challenges" indicates that women entrepreneurs, whether in the north or the south, face obstacles in accessing appropriate finance, poor training in financial and administrative management, difficulty in accessing wider markets, and hidden discrimination in some financial institutions. In the south, these obstacles are compounded by poor infrastructure (roads, refrigerated transportation, internet), low level of education, and strong norms that may limit women's freedom of movement or participation in marketing activities outside the local sphere. Many women's cooperatives are also held hostage to situational support or small seed funding, without being surrounded by an integrated system of accompaniment and development (Bouazza, 2022, p. 99) (coaching, mentoring), which makes them stop after a few years or remain in a limited standard of living that does not amount to real empowerment. (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 13)

Hence the importance of integrating social entrepreneurship into public policies: the "Women's Economic Empowerment Guide" indicates that the economic empowerment of Algerian women is a key axis for achieving social justice and sustainable development, and emphasizes the promotion of forms of social and solidarity economy within the programs of the Ministry of Solidarity. The statements of sector officials, such as the speech of Minister Souria Moluji at the National Conference on "Women and Social and Economic Development", confirm that the Solidarity Sector is working to adopt programs to promote the solidarity economy and enable women who stay at home and rural women to engage in the national production process through the available mechanisms to support women's microenterprises and enterprises. These official trends, if implemented in the south through cooperative and social formulas, could give social entrepreneurship a strong legal and financial base, and bring it out of the margins and into the heart of the development strategy. (Solidarity., 2023, p. 28)

In addition, studies on the role of women's cooperatives in other countries show that linking microfinance with cooperative projects is one of the most effective ways to promote the economic empowerment of poor women, provided that the financing is accompanied by training in management, marketing, and cooperative governance. This conclusion is applicable in southern Algeria, where microcredit institutions can direct part of their portfolios to women's cooperatives with a clear social impact (job creation, inclusion of marginalized women, heritage preservation), while setting evaluation criteria that go beyond financial profit to measure social and spatial impact, such as the number of women who have become independent income, or the number of girls who have benefited from education thanks to the cooperative's income. Universities and research centers can also play an important role in developing business models (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 16) (business models) Feminist social entrepreneurship in the South, taking into account spatial and cultural disparities, and proposing as a practical guide for decision-makers. (Impact of Microfinance on Women's Economic Empowerment, 2019, p. 09).

In the end, it can be said that feminist social entrepreneurship in southern Algeria is not just a theoretical choice or a transient development fashion, but rather a structural tool capable of reformulating the relationship between women, the economy and society, within a local

development vision that makes cultural heritage a symbolic and material capital, social solidarity a basis for sustainable profitability, and women are a central actor in shaping the future of desert oases and villages, as much as they preserve their heritage, contribute to its modernization and make it a resource for a decent life.

9- Practical proposals for field deployment in southern Algeria

Implementing social empowerment and entrepreneurship strategies on the ground in the southern states requires moving from the level of general slogans and texts to precise practical programs, linked to clear indicators, as well as the reality of women in desert oases and villages. These proposals can be organized around four interrelated practical axes: digital architecture and marketing, the training and accompanying system, appropriate financing mechanisms, and governance and follow-up.

A- Mainstreaming digital platforms for marketing while adapting them to the desert context

One of the most important recent developments in Algeria's empowerment policies is the launch of a national electronic platform for digital marketing of the products of rural women and productive families under the name of "Tasouq", announced by the Ministry of National Solidarity in 2025. This platform aims to facilitate the display of women's products (agricultural, artisanal, food) and link them to wider markets within the country, while providing a space for networking and exchanging experiences among women and improving the quality of products. In the south, this initiative can be a real lever if it is adapted on-the-ground through:

- Establishing local touchpoints for the platform within youth homes, cultural centers, or municipal headquarters in provinces such as Adrar, Tamanrasset and Ghardaia, equipped with a computer, internet connection, and a framer that helps women upload product images and manage orders, because studies on e-commerce for rural women (Beni Sinous, Tlemcen) have shown that the direct use of digital platforms by women is limited and often through male mediation due to digital illiteracy and conservative culture. (APS, 2025)
- Organizing practical training classes in e-commerce for women cooperatives in the south, covering the use of WhatsApp, Facebook, and national platforms (such as "Tasmouq") not only from a technical point of view, but also in terms of negotiation, product pricing, and dealing with customers, taking into account cultural sensitivities that may prevent women from communicating directly with voice and video, as indicated by the study "Empowerment and Digital Challenges of Rural Women through E-Commerce". (Solidarity., 2025, p. without page)
- Linking the digital platform with local media campaigns through regional radios (Adrar, Tamanrasset, Ghardaia) to introduce the success stories of Sahrawi women who are able to sell their products online without leaving their environment, which helps to change household representations about digital marketing as an extension of traditional activity and not a break with it. (Ben Toumi, 2025, p. 14)

B- Continuous training and accompaniment system at the level of the southern states

Field studies agree that funding alone is insufficient unless it is accompanied by systematic training and follow-up. FinDev About Women's Cooperatives and Microfinance It is highlighted that the optimal use of finance depends on the availability of management, planning, and marketing skills among the beneficiaries. Therefore, the following system is proposed in the South: (FinDev Gateway, 2013, p. 12)

- The establishment of regional training centers in women's social entrepreneurship within the universities of the South (University of Adrar, Tamanrasset, Ghardaia) in partnership with the Ministry of Solidarity and the support agencies ANADE, ANGEM, which will prepare short courses (3-6 months) in: the preparation of the business plan, simplified accounting, digital marketing, and cooperative governance, with a special focus on sectors suitable for the south (dates, crafts, tourism).
- The adoption of a mentoring system connects university students and graduates on the one hand, and women cooperatives in the villages on the other, so that students play the role of "young female advisors" who help in digital management, writing applications for funding, documenting activities, in exchange for benefiting from women's experience and points in their university path, thus linking empowerment to higher education in the south.
- Organizing annual regional forums on "Sahrawi women and social entrepreneurship" to review successful and failed experiences, and discuss obstacles to implementation on the ground, with the participation of representatives of ministries, support institutions, universities, and tribal leaders, to feed national policies with real field experiences, as recommended by the "Women's Empowerment of Algerian Society" forum in 2024.

C. South-specific financing mechanisms based on cooperatives and solidarity economy

Several Algerian and Arab studies highlight that linking microfinance to women's cooperatives doubles its impact on economic empowerment, because risks are distributed, the ability to negotiate with banks and funds increases, and the social impact is wider. Accordingly, the following can be suggested: (Hassini, 2022, p. 216)

- Allocating a solidarity financing line for Sahrawi women's cooperatives within the ANGEM and ANADE programs, with a nominal interest rate (0-1%) and a longer grace period (up to 3 years for agricultural and handicraft projects), with the adoption of the cooperative as a collective guarantor in lieu of individual real estate ownership that may not be documented in the oases.
- Linking the benefit of this financing to the existence of a clear social plan for the project (the number of women beneficiaries, the number of jobs created, and the contribution to the preservation of heritage or the environment), according to the "Social Impact Investment" model, which is in line with the direction of the solidarity sector to promote the social and solidarity economy and empower productive women.
- Encourage municipalities and southern states to establish small local support funds (from their budgets or through partnerships with companies active in hydrocarbons and tourism) directed exclusively to women's projects with a social dimension, with preference given to cooperatives operating in the most vulnerable villages, provided

that these funds are managed transparently and with the participation of women in selection committees.

D. Governance, Follow-up, and Measurement Indicators for the South

In order for proposals not to remain trapped on paper, their implementation requires clear governance and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that take into account the specificities of the south. In this context, international experience shows that true empowerment is measured not only by the number of projects funded, but also by indicators that affect autonomy, decision-making, and improved social standing. Accordingly, it may be suggested that the following: ((UNDP), Arabic version, p. 30)

- Establish state committees for women's empowerment in the south, including representatives from: the Directorate of Solidarity, the Directorate of Agriculture, Tourism, funding agencies, the University, representatives of women's cooperatives, and tribal leaders/notables, tasked with developing annual implementation plans based on local diagnosis, following up on the implementation of projects, and submitting periodic reports to the central ministries.
- Adopting a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the impact of empowerment programs in each southern state, such as: the number of active women's cooperatives after 3 years, the average income of the beneficiary women, the percentage of women who have become economic decision-makers within the family, the percentage of girls who continue to study thanks to the feminist family income, and the degree of society's acceptance of women's participation in economic activities as measured by local surveys.
- Incorporate the results of recent field studies, such as the study "Empowerment and Digital Challenges of Rural Women through E-Commerce" (Bani Snoos), into policy design, as these research clearly show that digital empowerment is not just a matter of technical infrastructure but essentially a cultural and social issue that requires a new discourse, specialized associational support, and recognition of the role of women as independent economic actors.

These practical proposals are a link between the theoretical analysis of empowerment and social entrepreneurship and the lived reality of women in the South, through actionable, measurable, and modifiable actions based on field feedback, thereby enhancing the chances of success of empowerment programs and transforming them into a long-term path for sustainable local development that takes into account cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that the empowerment of women in local communities in southern Algeria remains a complex process in which social, economic and cultural dimensions overlap, as the data showed that Sahrian women play a pivotal role in the local economy through unpaid work in agriculture and crafts, and that their levels of social empowerment (education, health) have witnessed a marked improvement thanks to national programs, but their official economic contribution is still weak and unstable, especially in rural areas and shadow areas. The results also confirmed that the tribal cultural heritage, despite the

fact that Being a source of protection and belonging, it imposes restrictions on women's movement and economic decisions, creating a clear tension between the preservation of identity and the requirements of modern social entrepreneurship.

The study also highlighted that national empowerment mechanisms (ANADEs, ANGEMs, CNACs, and microcredit programs) have contributed to opening a window for women to establish small enterprises, especially in the services and crafts sector, but these efforts have not yet lived up to expectations due to barriers related to the difficulty of accessing adequate financing, poor support and training, and the nature of the socio-economic environment that remains biased against feminist initiative. In contrast, field models of women's cooperatives have shown Craftsmanship is that social entrepreneurship is a promising framework for reconciling the logic of the market with the logic of cultural heritage, through collective projects that preserve heritage, create job opportunities, and strengthen solidarity bonds within the local community.

Accordingly the study recommends the need to adopt an integrated vision of empowerment in the south based on: first, adapting national policies and programs to the specificities of Sahrawi communities through local plans based on a participatory field diagnosis of women themselves; second, promoting women's social entrepreneurship by supporting cooperatives in the fields of dates, crafts, and cultural tourism, linking them to digital platforms for marketing such as "Tasweeq" while providing continuous training and accompaniment; and third, redirecting the intervention of support institutions towards financing projects with a clear social impact, and linking the financing to indicators. To measure economic independence and improve the status of women within the family and society. The study also calls for the university's involvement of tribal leaders, religious and media actors in the production of a new discourse that makes the empowerment of women in the south a lever for sustainable development and identity protection, not a threat to them, in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensures the long - term continuity of women's projects.

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