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EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: INDEPENDENCE AND USE

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PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL OBSERVATORY FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The decree establishing the National Observatory for Human Development was published in the Official Bulletin of 11 September 2008. (Decree No. 2-08-394 of 23 October 2008). However, the National Observatory actually began its work in December 2006, following His Majesty the King's launch of the National Initiative for Human Development in May 2005. Its implementation, evaluation in particular, is defined in the guidelines of the Royal speech: "The implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development will, moreover, be an opportunity to emerge in our country, a true social engineering through innovation in the types of intervention, efficient ways and maximum impact, supported by qualified human resources and mechanisms for the vigilant and objective observation of the phenomena of poverty and social exclusion."

By its very nature cross-tracking implemented public policies in this area, the Observatory reports directly to the prime minister. It must, therefore, contribute to evaluation, funding and producing advice and recommendations on the progress and the constraints to human development in the Kingdom.

To accomplish its general mandate, the Observatory has, under the authority of a president nominated by His Majesty the King, a slight administration and a council of

24 members chosen *intuitu personae*, among the high responsibility for public administration, civil society actors, academics and private-sector operators. As part of its core business, the council submits annually to the appreciation of His Majesty the King an annual report on human development.

CONTENT OF THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The National Initiative for Human Development for 2005–2010 was composed of four key programmes:

1. The programme to fight against poverty in rural areas, which extends to the poorest 403 rural communities, representing 3.8 million people;
2. The programme to fight against social exclusion in urban areas, which encompasses 264 of the most disadvantaged districts, representing 2.5 million people;
3. The programme to fight against precariousness, which comprises eligible projects that support 50,000 people living in extreme precarity throughout the country; and
4. The transversal programme that is flexible to answer the needs not initially planned, which comprises eligible projects with high impacts on human development, such as income-generating activities and the strengthening of social engineering and stakeholder capacities.

Two evaluations have been done since the National Observatory for Human Development's official establishment in 2006. The first, a mid-term evaluation, was conducted in 2008. The second evaluation was conducted in 2011 and focused on the socio-economic impacts of the initiative.

EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: WHAT INDEPENDENCE?

The mid-term evaluation focused on:

- **The population's perception of this initiative:** The referential of this initiative has served in this study as a starting point to examine perceptions. This referential includes a development philosophy and a mechanism for the mobilization and participation of the population, enabling analysis of how this referential is perceived by the population and by stakeholders.
- **The development of a protocol for conducting participatory assessments as part of the Initiative:** To address this area, we chose an approach of analytical restitution of field measurements in two stages. First, we analysed the legal and institutional framework of the initiative (texts and circular, the structures established). Second, we analysed how processes actually took place, targeting implementation, and possibly its sustainability, in order to document, *in situ* and on a daily basis, the ways of doing things.

- **Convergence of the initiative's programmes with those conducted by different departments:** This evaluation consisted of a comprehensive diagnosis of the convergence of the programmes of the initiative and those conducted by the public sector and in the proposition of recommendations for greater convergence at the institutional and territorial levels in programmatic and operational aspects.
- **The role of associations in the Initiative:** With the advent of the Initiative, the vital role of civil society is now explicitly recognized in human development programmes. To this end, the study objectives were to observe and assess the situation of human development activities carried out by civil society and assess their strengths and weaknesses in order to strengthen them and support their dynamics.
- **The analysis of physical and financial achievements:** Analysing the data of nearly 20,000 projects and activities carried out under the initiative.

The first four qualitative studies were performed by private consultants and academic researchers. The results analysis was conducted by a private consultancy. The results of these studies were synthesized by an international consultant hired for this purpose by the Observatory.

THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

After conducting a feasibility study of the impact assessment in 2007, the Observatory has decided to conduct a study (with the assistance of an international expert) to evaluate the impacts on the socio-economic conditions of rural and urban populations targeted by the initiative.

The methodology proposed by the expert involves, in particular, comparing selected outcome indicators in targeted areas and not targeted areas, between a start date and an end date. That requires indicators on both dates for each area.

As there had been no survey at the start date of the initiative (i.e. there is no baseline data), the Observatory found itself compelled to conduct a two-passage survey as quickly as possible. The first passage was made in 2008 and the second, marking the end of Phase I of the initiative, was made in 2011. The total sample size of the survey was 3,570 households visited in 2008 and subsequently revisited in 2011.

A questionnaire was designed for households and their members, as well as a 'rural town' and an 'urban area' designation. The questionnaires were designed to meet the needs of the evaluation, after consultation with national and international experts and all relevant departments (e.g. National Coordination Initiative, ministries of education, employment, health, social development, housing).

In rural areas, 403 rural municipalities with a 2004 poverty rate of at least 30 percent were selected for the fight against poverty initiative. The rural sample was composed of 124 rural communes with similar poverty levels (between 27 percent and 32 percent), half of which were among the targeted communes of the initiative. The impact evaluation of the initiative for rural areas was made on the basis of regression discontinuity design.

For the urban sample, the methodology benefited from the existence of a panel survey in two periods, making it possible to measure the various outcome variables twice for the same households. Assuming that the evolution of different outcome variables before the implementation of the programme was the same for the treated areas and non-target areas, the change of the outcome variables between the two types of areas between 2008 and 2011 will measure the impact of treatment by the initiative.

The criteria for selecting the districts included inadequate housing, the lack of employment opportunities and limited access to infrastructure and basic social services. Focusing on cities with a population of more than 100,000, 264 areas were selected for the initiative programme on the fight against social exclusion in urban areas.

The urban sample consisted of 114 neighbourhoods with characteristics close to the available indicators and criteria used; 75 are among the areas targeted by the initiative. (For more information on methodological aspects, see the full report, available on National Observatory for Human Development website.⁸⁷)

The two phases of the survey were carried out by a private consultancy firm under the supervision of the international expert and a university professor at the National Institute of Statistics. In addition, both experts conducted the survey processing and estimation of the impacts.

EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: WHAT DOES IT DO?

On the mid-term evaluation, the National Observatory for Human Development sent in for the first time a report of the evaluation to His Majesty the King and Head of Government. Two presentations of the evaluation's main conclusions were then made, the first one to the head of government in the presence of ministers, and the second to the media and representatives of the departments and agencies concerned.

After that, the Observatory transmitted the report of the mid-term evaluation to all government departments and local authorities, and published it on the Observatory website.

On 31 July 2009, His Majesty the King, in his speech to the nation on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the celebration of the throne, highlighted the need to submit this initiative to evaluation, and to ensure the recommendations of the National Observatory are followed.

To translate these recommendations into action, the government established three committees made up of representatives from the government, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and elected officials. The first commission is responsible for the convergence projects. The second commission should produce guidelines in order to ensure the sustainability of projects. The third commission was mandated to develop M&E tools.

87 See ondh.ma.

On the evaluation of the impact of the initiative, the Observatory sent the report incorporating the findings of this evaluation to His Majesty the King and Head of Government on 18 May 2013.

The Observatory intends to follow the same approach that was developed for sharing and using the findings of this evaluation.

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