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The vulnerability of old people in Tunisia

1- Salem stopped working many years ago. He used to work in a small workshop. He is now retired, but he receives a limited pension that does not cover his needs. His wife, Sarah, in addition to housework, used to work at home, sewing clothes for her customers, but she was not affiliated to the social security system, therefore, she doesn't receive any pension. Indeed, she had never thought of it, her priority, as she said, was to help her husband with their home expenses and to fund the education of their children.

2- Today, both Salem and Sarah are suffering from complex health problems and chronic diseases, and Salem's pension is no more sufficient to face the cost of life. Consequently, they decided to move to their son's home, to save the rent bill, as well as the bills of water, electricity, etc. Nevertheless, they try to contribute to the expenses of their son's family to the extent of their ability. Occasionally, the old couple receives some remittances from their son working abroad.

3- Salem and Sarah are among the group of Tunisian old people that represented 11.7 % in 2015, but that will represent one fifth of the population in 2036.

4 - Salem and Sarah live with their son's family, similarly to the other Tunisian old adults who rarely live alone. The homes in Tunisia are often formed around a family-based structure. In fact, 96.2% of men and 90.7% of women aged 65 years and older live with family. However, and despite satisfaction with family life, Salem and Sarah fear that one day they will have to be placed in one of the government nursing homes, if they come to represent a burden to their son, even though this is still not common in Tunisia. Presently, only 12 government-owned nursing homes for old people exist in the country. But Tunisian families face ever-increasing difficulties because of the deterioration of their purchase power. And nobody may predict the future.

5 - Family help remains the primary source of support for Tunisian old adults. In fact, family assistance is seen as important to the functioning of the society and comes in the form of financial (inter-generational financial help, remittance, transfer of funds from abroad, etc.) or material (sharing a common residence) support.

6 – Financial difficulties are detrimental to the social integration of some retired people into Tunisian society. Much of the social exclusion experienced by old Tunisian adults is tied to retirement and a limited pension. This ultimately results in feelings of estrangement, boredom, and loneliness. Due to the sociocultural changes in Tunisian society, some retired old adults have discovered a gap that separates them from the quality of life experienced by earlier generations. Some aging people in Tunisia are realizing that they cannot live their old age as their parents once did.

7 - Some old people decide to carry on working despite their old age and health vulnerability in order to supplement limited retirement benefits or when confronted with the absence of a pension. Working old adults are largely spread between the agricultural (65%) and commercial (14%) sectors. With continued employment, old adults benefit from income that promotes financial autonomy while preserving social status. This makes them feel self-reliant. But this is detrimental to their health.

8- Social and economic disparities between social categories and geographical areas have led to identify the old adults at higher risk. Differences in lifestyle and policy remain evident between old men and women. The percentage of men engaging in activities outside the home is higher, leading to a higher rate of men receiving pensions than women.

9- In addition, employment in agriculture and in the informal sector in rural areas will restrict access to pensions among the old rural population, particularly female population.

10 - Government aid is provided indirectly through the « « Program of Assistance to Needy Families » » called PNAFN. This programme aid is given indirectly to the old adult who lives with a supporting family member, as long as the family's financial conditions fall within the criteria of eligibility for PNAFN benefits.

11 - PNAFN is the only form of government financial help to the economically disadvantaged, and supplies only limited benefits to Tunisian old citizens. PNAFN provides aid for all ages living in extreme poverty, and does not specifically target old people.

12 - As the number of old people is increasing steadily, much pressure will be put on public finances as to face the increasing needs of this category, in terms of aid, public services, infrastructure, etc.

13 – The health sector has to reinforce its capacity by developing geriatrics services for the old.

14- Social security will have to face the heavy pension bill, as, at the same time, the rate of retirees will increase while the rate of active adult population will decrease, threatening seriously the demographic balance between the active population and the retired population. In addition, this will also lead to less labor for the economy.

15- These challenges, and many other ones, need a comprehensive prospective government policy about the old population.

(Adapted)

COMPREHENSION (7.5 points)

I – Propose a new title to the text (0.5 pt)

II- Old people will represent one fifth of the Tunisian population in 2036. Give two future consequences to this phenomenon that you think are of high importance: (1 pt)

a. An economic consequence:

.....

b. A social consequence:

.....

III – Do you think that the civil society has a role to play in taking care of the old people ? How ? (1 pt)

IV – Find two indications in the text that show that the contribution of women is significant. And then give one indication to show that this contribution is nevertheless not recognized once they are old. (1.5 pt)

V – Working old adults are largely spread between the agricultural (65%) and commercial sectors (14%). (Paragraph 7). Say in which other activities the rest of old people work, according to you. (1 pt)

VI - Old adults benefit from income that promotes financial autonomy while preserving social status (paragraph 7). How do you understand the expression « preserving social status » ? (0.5 pt)

VII – Rural women seem to be the most vulnerable category in their old age. Give 2 reasons from the text to confirm this. **(1 pt)**

VIII – Read the text, and then say whether the following statements are right or wrong and give arguments from the text: **(1 pt)**

- a) The only revenue of Salem and Sarah is Salem's pension. **(Right/Wrong)**
- b) Salem and Sarah think of moving to one of the government-owned nursing homes some time in the future. **(Right/Wrong)**
- c) The financial conditions of Tunisian families is expected to improve, and this will have a positive impact on old people in the future. **(Right/Wrong)**
- d) Financial exclusion results in psychological problems **(Right/Wrong)**

LANGUAGE: (7.5 points)

I. Choose the right alternative (2 pts ; 0.5 each)

- 1. A series of accidents has occurred at that/those crossroads.
- 2. What is the average price/cost of a car in your country?
- 3. Our service technicians receive the best/better training available.
- 4. We will not send the payment once/until the invoice is corrected.

II. Put the verbs in brackets in the right tense and form according to English usage (2 pts; 0.5 each)

- 1. We normally hold our sales conference in Spain, but this year we (hold) it in Poland.
- 2. I (talk) to him on the phone when I heard an explosion.
- 3. So far, we (capture) 30% of the market.
- 4. I have been thinking about it, I (change) jobs

III. Fill in each blank with the right preposition (1 pt; 0.25 each)

- 1. Every member of the club must abide _____ the rules?
- 2. He advised me to buy the cough medicine at the shop _____ the corner.
- 3. The advertisement says that the company wants people _____ experience.
- 4. The engineer adapted the machine _____ his needs.

IV. Put the following statements into indirect speech (1 pt)

1. She said, 'I can't give you a lower price.'
2. Addressing the staff members, the manager said, 'We won't know before tomorrow.'

V. Match the words in the list below to their definitions (1 pt; 0.25 each)

List: lifestyle; flextime, workload, deadline.

1. The amount of work a person is expected to do.
2. The way people choose to organize their lives.
3. A time or date by which one has to do something.
4. A system where employees choose the time they start and finish work each day.

VI. Fill in the blank with "ought not to" or "should not"; (0.5: 0.25 each)

1. The guests _____ have left without saying goodbye.
2. You _____ have told our secret to a stranger.

WRITING (5 points)

The Constitution of Tunisia indicates in its article 12 that « the family is the basic unit of society. It is the responsibility of the State to protect it ».

It also provides in its article 53 that "the State guarantees assistance to old people without support".

Suppose that you have to establish a policy to implement these constitutional provisions, what would be the axes of your policy? Suggest five axes for the support of families and five axes for the support of old people.