



Working Paper No. 524

Promotion Nationale: Forty-Five Years of Experience of Public Works in Morocco

by

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December 2007

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ABSTRACT

Created in 1961, Promotion Nationale (PN) is an autonomous public entity in charge of mobilizing an underemployed or unemployed workforce for the implementation of labor-intensive projects, calling upon a simple technology likely to provide employment to unskilled workers. It is one of the major programs of social protection in Morocco—the oldest, most important, and best-targeted social program in the country.

Vis-à-vis the importance of rural underemployment, especially during dry years, estimated per million working days, PN aims to improve employment opportunities by developing collective working methods, and by generating large-scale investment for the realization of public infrastructure projects and rural equipment. This institution aims at limiting rural migration through the permanent improvement of local incomes and living conditions. It thus constitutes a safety net for a large part of the population, especially in rural areas. Forty-five years after its creation, PN has at its credit an important and single assessment regarding the fight against unemployment with minimal management costs, in spite of certain difficulties and limitations that hinder the organization, particularly in terms of the geographical targeting of rural poverty zones.

Keywords: Public Works, Employer of Last Resort, Country Experiences

JEL Classifications: J18, J23, O1, O15

INTRODUCTION

Created in 1961 under the supervision of the Ministry for Interior, *Promotion Nationale* (PN) is a public entity in charge of mobilizing the underemployed or unemployed labor force in Morocco for the implementation of low capital-intensive projects, calling upon simple technology likely to be used by a labor force without qualification. It is one of the major programs of social protection in Morocco and is the oldest, most important, and best targeted social program in the country.

Vis-a-vis the importance of the rural underemployment (estimated in millions of working days), this entity aims at improving employment by developing collective working methods, generating large-scale investments for the realization of infrastructure works, and development of rural facilities. This institution aims at fighting against rural migration through permanent improvement of local income and living conditions. It thus constitutes a safety net for a large part of the population, particularly in the rural areas. The resources allocated to this institution have been appreciably improved since 2005.

Since 1976, PN has focused its efforts on the development of the Saharan provinces through mobilization of the labor force. In addition, since 1978 it supports local communities by providing assistance in administrative or municipal tasks to decentralized services that are usually understaffed. This paper aims at presenting the objectives and the action of *Promotion Nationale* by its programs, its funding, its achievements (in terms of employment), a trial of evaluation of its impacts on the population, its main difficulties, its limits, and its prospects.

PRESENTATION OF *PROMOTION NATIONALE*

Organization

The PN has an appropriate administrative structure with a relatively small number of officers. It has 71 external offices located in provinces with a total staff of 364 persons (59 persons at the central level and 305 in the external offices).

Its Objectives

Based primarily on the intensive use of labor, PN aims to:

- mobilize the labor force of the poor rural populations in order to address unemployment and attenuate rural migration;
- widen the field of its action and prioritize more profitable and less expensive projects;
- direct its intervention in the rural zones to the construction of water supply channels and cisterns, the digging of wells, the construction of rural roads, reforestation, etc.;
- contribute to the cleaning and maintenance of parks, as well as improvement of the quality of life and environment in the urban areas;
- support sector projects carried out within the framework of the social development strategy.

In rural areas, PN acts by providing employment through construction and development of sites for a limited duration. It is especially men who are recruited at the local level.

In urban areas, PN supports the community by recruiting secretaries, cleaners, nurse's aides, instructors for specialized centers (for handicapped, orphan, abandoned children, etc.), as well as through the construction and maintenance of hospitals and health centers. The PN also provides employment for the maintenance of gardens and parks (often men).

Manpower employed is currently around 50,000 persons per annum. According to PN estimations, women represent nearly 20% of the total employed.

Recruitment is done randomly in the rural areas by selecting national ID's cards. In urban areas, the PN decides to recruit on the basis of needs expressed by certain public establishments (care centers, hospitals, communities, etc.).

Remuneration is indexed to the guaranteed agricultural minimum wage (SMAG) and to the guaranteed interprofessional minimum wage (SMIG) with a scale for the semiqualfied and nonspecialized workers—nonspecialized labor (SMAG, 41 DH/day), semiqualfied labor (48.75 DH/day), and qualified labor (53.75 DH/day).² The workers are paid every 15 days.

² World Bank (2002)

The cycle of project selection is based on a set of precise criteria. The formulation of projects is carried out at the local level, the selection of the projects at the provincial level, and the final decision is made at the central level.

PROMOTION NATIONALE PROGRAMS

PN acts through the following main programs: the communities program, the equipment program, the development of Saharan provinces program, the social priorities program or BAJ1 (completed in 2003), the employment promotion in the South provinces program, and the social proximity actions program.

Community Program

This program is intended for employment of officers working in public services lacking personnel, as well as subordinate officers (drivers, caretakers, cleaners, nurse's aides, etc.).

Equipment Program

In urban areas, the PN takes part in the improvement of the cities' environment through the cleaning and maintenance of parks. In rural areas, the actions particularly aim at providing the communities with a minimum of infrastructure, as well as fighting unemployment and rural underemployment while trying to reduce regional disparities. The equipment program includes the development of local infrastructure and the equipment of the urban zones.

Saharan Provinces Development Program

Since 1976, this program contributes to mobilizing the labor force available in the Saharan provinces.

Social Priorities Program (BAJ1)

The first social priorities program (BAJ1) was completed in 2003 and represents the implementation of the social development strategy. It was composed of three projects: basic education, basic health, and employment promotion through PN. Within the framework of BAJ1,

PN aimed at improving the level of basic education and health infrastructure, while raising social development indicators of the 14 most underprivileged provinces.

The main achievements were the development of medical and basic education infrastructure, and the reduction of unemployment through labor-intensive works in targeted rural provinces. This program was supported by a loan from the World Bank in 1996.³

Employment Promotion in the South Provinces Program

In addition to its traditional activities in the Saharan provinces, the PN is also in charge of undertaking specific actions to promote employment in the Southern provinces (Laayoune, Boujdour, Oued Eddahab, Aousserd, Smara, Tan Tan, Guelmim, Assa-Zag, and Tata).

Social Proximity Action Program

This program promotes social proximity actions. It is targeted to populations with special needs such as teenagers, illiterate adults, etc. It contains actions in favor of young people, the organization and the housing of hawkers, the elimination of adult illiteracy, and the program “holidays for all,” allowing poor children and teenagers to go on holiday during the summer.

PN PROGRAMS ACHIEVEMENT

The various works launched by PN allowed the creation of 13,559,000 working days in 2002, 12,263,000 in 2003, 13,834,000 in 2004, and nearly 14,000,000 in 2005.

Achievements of the Equipment Program

The main achievements of the equipment program (which includes development works, the development of local infrastructures, and the equipment of urban zones) are as follows.

- *The development works* component has as a principal objective reforestation and the restoration of the parks and public spaces, as well as the digging of wells, the construction of irrigation channels, cisterns, fountains, and creation of other water sources. (See table of achievements in appendix).

³ World Bank (1996).

- *The local infrastructures* component focuses primarily on constructing rural roads or structures.
- *The social equipments* component provides rural localities with social equipment in order to improve the standard of living of the population. The achievements in this area are related, in particular, to social housing, boarding schools, hostels for the young or for women, classrooms, latrines within schools, sports grounds, dispensaries, and drinking water conveyance.
- *The urban zones equipment* component includes the cleaning and maintenance of parks to improve the living environment. These works allowed the creation of 11,957,607 working days during the period from 2002 to 2004.

Communities Program

The total working days carried out within the communities program for the period 2002–2004 reached 5,928,096 working days, mainly through the employment of officers working in public services lacking personnel, as well as subordinate officers in jobs such as drivers, caretakers, cleaners, nurse's aides, etc.

Employment Promotion in the South Provinces Program

This program, which undertakes specific actions to promote employment in the Southern provinces, generated 10,609,871 working days from 2003–2005.

Saharan Provinces Development Program

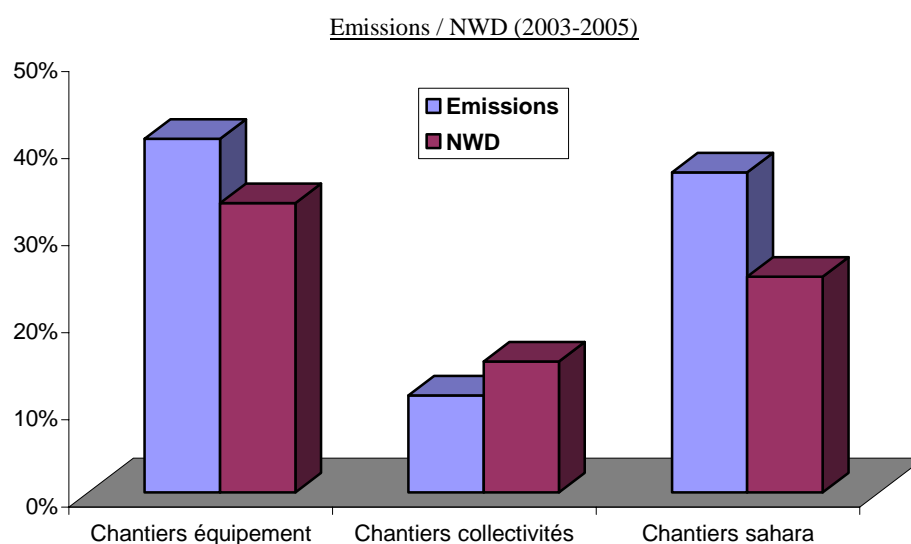
This program created 18,970,564 working days during the period from 2002–2004 and aims at mobilizing the labor force available in the Saharan provinces.

PN Achievements in Number of Working Days (NWD)

Programs	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2005	Total achievements	2006 (forecast)	2007 (forecast)
Communities	1979910	1959663	1956540	5.896.113	1952292	1952292
Urban Zones' Equipment	3404744	4768634	4866440	13.039.818	4345348	6094950
Employment Promotion in the South Provinces	3855805	3377033	3377033	10.609.871	3428729	3377033
Saharan Provinces	2821368	3196729	3711952	9.730.049	3819012	3819012
Total	12061827	13302059	13911965	39.275.851	13545381	15243287

Source: Promotion Nationale

The following graph compares the expenses for each activity with the number of working days (NWD) generated. We note that the communities program has the highest NWD/expenses ratio.



Several actions of the PN were undertaken in partnership with other government departments. Indeed, the technical ministries were always associated with PN's projects in order to guarantee their quality; we can give as examples the partnerships with:

- State Secretary in Charge of Water (SEE): The PN has a partnership agreement with the SEE for the construction of small dams, irrigation, and the fight against floods. The SEE ensures the technical supervision and the PN provides the labor force and the fuel.
- Within the framework of the cooperation with the Social Development Ministry (MDS), PN is in charge of the construction of social centers, while the MDS takes care of equipment and operational expenditures.
- Partnership with the State Secretariat in Charge of Youth for the construction of youth houses in rural zones.
- Partnership with the *Entraide Nationale* (National Mutual Aid organization) for the construction of Dar Attalib (boarding school).

The Importance of the Programs

During the 1960s, infrastructure works occupied the most significant part of the activities of PN, taking into account the important needs of Morocco—opening of rural roads, improvement of access to mountainous areas, etc. Equipment occupied a less important place during this period for two reasons: uncertain profitability of some works and priority given to the rural areas development. Currently the equipment takes the first place.

PN's projects were implemented in an integrated way. For example, the replacement of an old dam by a modern one benefits the receiving area fully only if it allows, on the one hand, to use water available upstream in the most effective way and, on the other hand, to distribute this water to the geographical and agricultural areas likely to produce the maximum economic advantages for all. The integration of a public work in its geographical and economic context is a fundamental aspect.

Regarding achievements, an audit of the PN carried out by the World Bank in 2000⁴ revealed the main following elements.

- Between 1990 and 1999, some 40,000 jobs were created per year. The average cost per day and per job was approximately 43 DH (\$4/day). Approximately 40% of the jobs created were

⁴ World Bank (2002)

in civil engineering works, employing a high intensity of labor and unskilled workers paid at the minimum wage.

- The general administrative expenses were very low. On average, the operating costs represent only 6% of investments costs, which was far lower than the average costs of the public administration.
- The investment budget of the PN ranged, on average, between 400 and 600 million DH (\$40–60 million), but during drought years, as in 1999 and 2000, it increased to nearly 1 billion DH (\$100 million) in order to improve transfers to the affected rural zones.
- The provincial governors and the local representatives of the PN constituted a dynamic unit for the implementation of the projects of development and infrastructure in difficult rural areas.

PN has many “almost permanent” employees at part-time and in subaltern works for local authorities (gardeners, park maintenance, guards, etc.); the majority of workers are unskilled and have dependent persons.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The financing of PN works is ensured by the state budget through a special appropriation account (CAS). This account, entitled “Financing of Equipment Expenditures and the Fight against Unemployment,” aims at accounting operations related to PN programs.

From 1990 to 2002, 7,151 billion DH were assigned to this CST account. Those expenditures reached 0.2% of the GDP in 2002.

The expenditures carried out by PN during the period 2002–2004 reached 702.6 million DH in 2002, 849.6 million DH in 2003, and 765.9 million DH in 2004.⁵

These expenditures allowed the achievement of projects related to various fields such as urban zones equipment, local communities, Saharan provinces, social proximity actions, and social priorities (BAJ1).

⁵ Ministry of Finance and Privatization (2006)

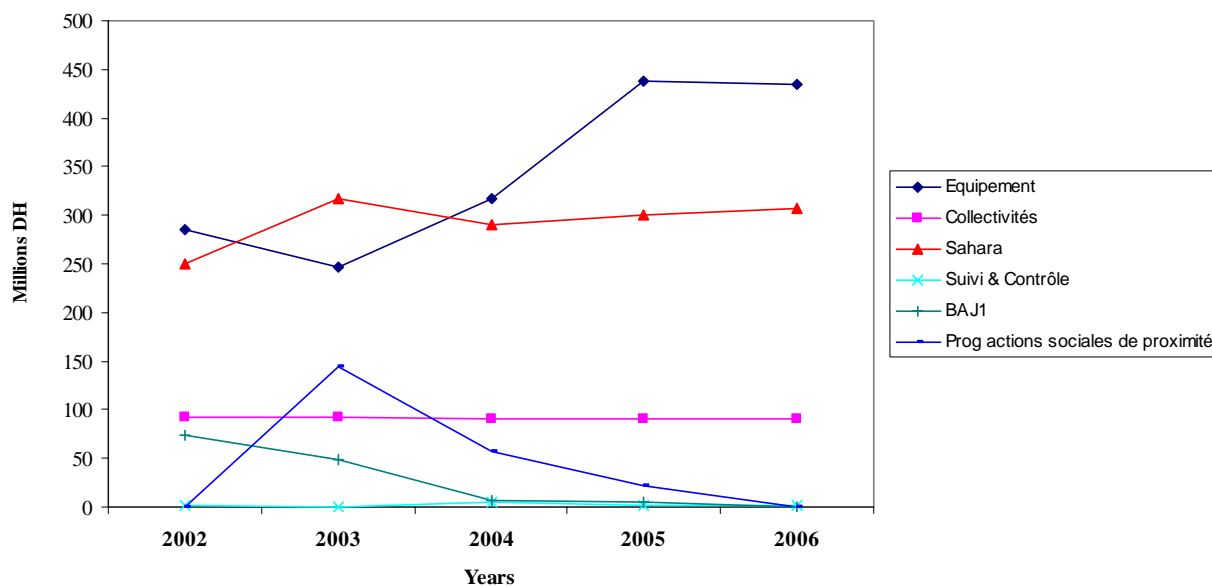
Expenditures Achieved by PN (in Million DH)

Financed Projects	Y2002	Y2003	Y2004	Y2005	2006 (Forecast)	Total
Equipment program	284,4	246,1	317,3	438,35	433,82	1 720,00
Communities program	91,7	92,7	90,7	91,01	90,60	456,83
Saharan provinces	250	316,5	289,9	300,60	307,24	1 464,22
Supervision	2,3	0,1	4,2	1,14	1,20	8,93
Social Priorities Program BAJ1	74,2	49,3	7,1	4,59	0,00	135,20
Social proximity action program	-	144,9	56,7	21,66	0,00	223,22
Total	702,6	849,6	765,9	857,35	832,85	4 008,41

Source: Ministry of Finance and Privatization

The following graph shows that the expenditures realized benefits in three main programs. The equipment program received the greatest part of the emissions and its share has been increased since 2004. The Sahara program arrived in second position. The share allocated to the communities is stable these last years and the other programs are nearing completion.

Expenditures Realized (in millions DH)



IMPACTS OF EXPENDITURES ALLOCATED TO PN WORKS

The advantages that are generated by PN works are either direct (such as the immediate benefits of the work for the area or the nation) or indirect (later economic effects pulled by the work created and, in a more general way, induced effects following the achievement of works that profit to the country).

The direct effects of PN works are an opportunity for the poor in marginal areas. One can cite:

- The acceleration of the national economy monetization. The circulation of the currency was very weak in some areas dominated by barter in the 1960s–1970s.
- Improvement of the purchasing power in the marginal zones thanks to the wages paid on the development works that resulted in the improvement of the well-being of the households. In 1969, the distributed wages represented almost half of the monetary incomes of the farming population, which means that the purchasing power of these populations was increased by 50% through PN works.⁶
- Improvement of human development with the increase in the schooling of the children.
- Reduction in the cost of realization of the hydro-agricultural works, saving financial resources to be allocated to other investment. It is estimated that the realization of hydro-agricultural works by PN was 30% less expensive compared to construction by a private company.
- Deceleration of the rural migration towards the cities through efforts to keep the rural population on their lands by providing them with proper standards of living in terms of infrastructure and revenues.
- Improvement of the environment, which was strongly degraded in certain rural zones.

Although the program provides benefits to Morocco overall, the first two decades of the PN did experience some negative effects. Indeed, some very important works in extremely poor areas upset the balance of traditional trade via localized inflation. The works considered could

⁶ Lancelot (1970)

destabilize the fragile agro-economic balance of an area by a sudden and temporary release of liquidities.

Indirect effects are all the achieved results once the work is finished. These results vary according to the effect of the work to the area and according to the degree of permanence of the achieved results.

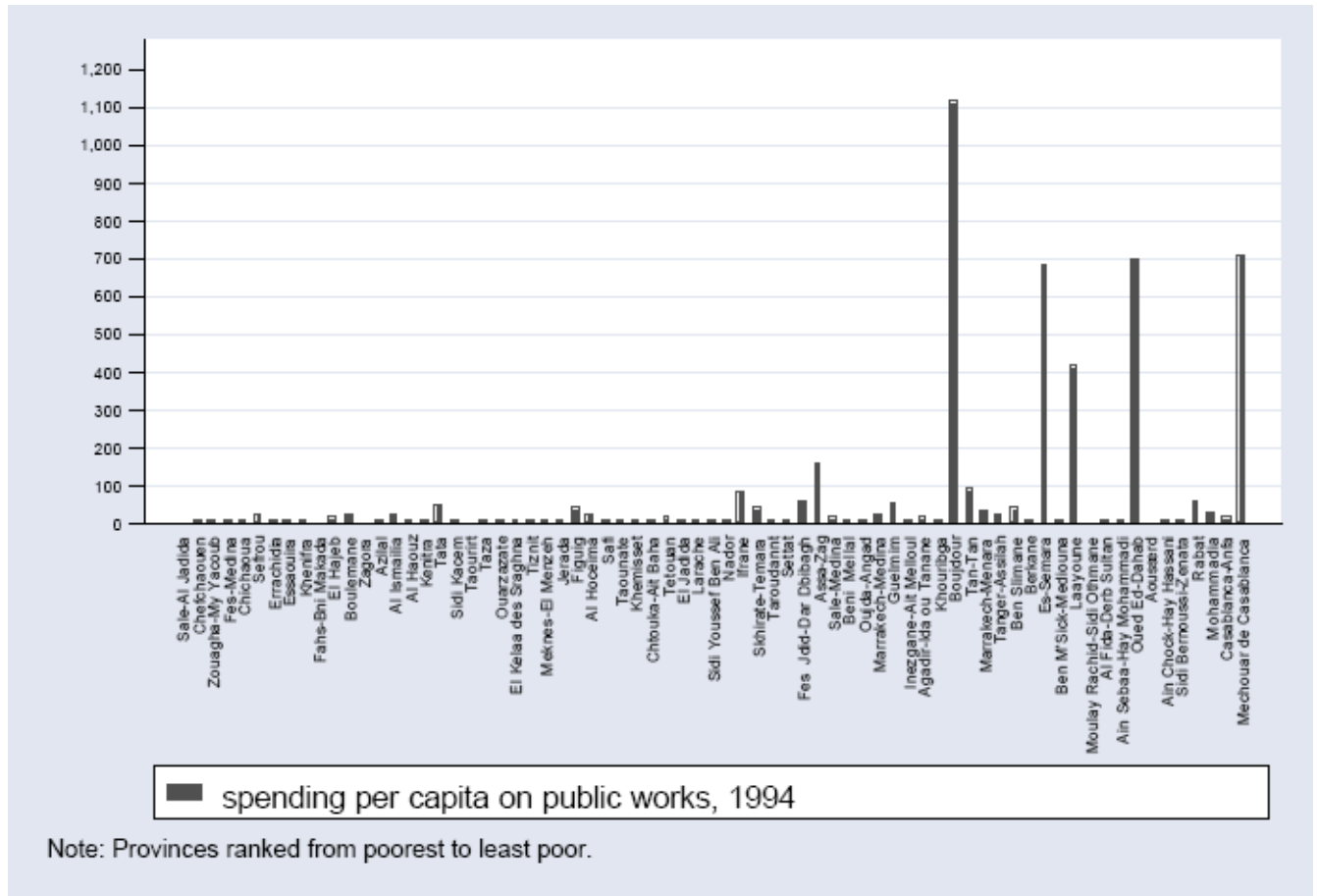
Poverty Geographic Targeting

An examination of the expenditures of PN programs at provincial level⁷ shows a strong concentration in some provinces that are not among the poorest. According to the PN Provincial Expenditures Analysis from 1994 to 2002 (see the figures below), it appears that the expenditures per capita at the provincial level were not correlated with the incidence of poverty. For a considerable number of provinces, the amounts per capita were relatively the same. The average receipt was 77 DH⁸ per capita, but there was also the aberration of certain rich provinces that received 15 times as much. These assignments per capita were not correlated to the poverty rate of these provinces, nor to the unemployment rates. The situation did not really change between 1994 and 2002.

⁷ World Bank (2004)

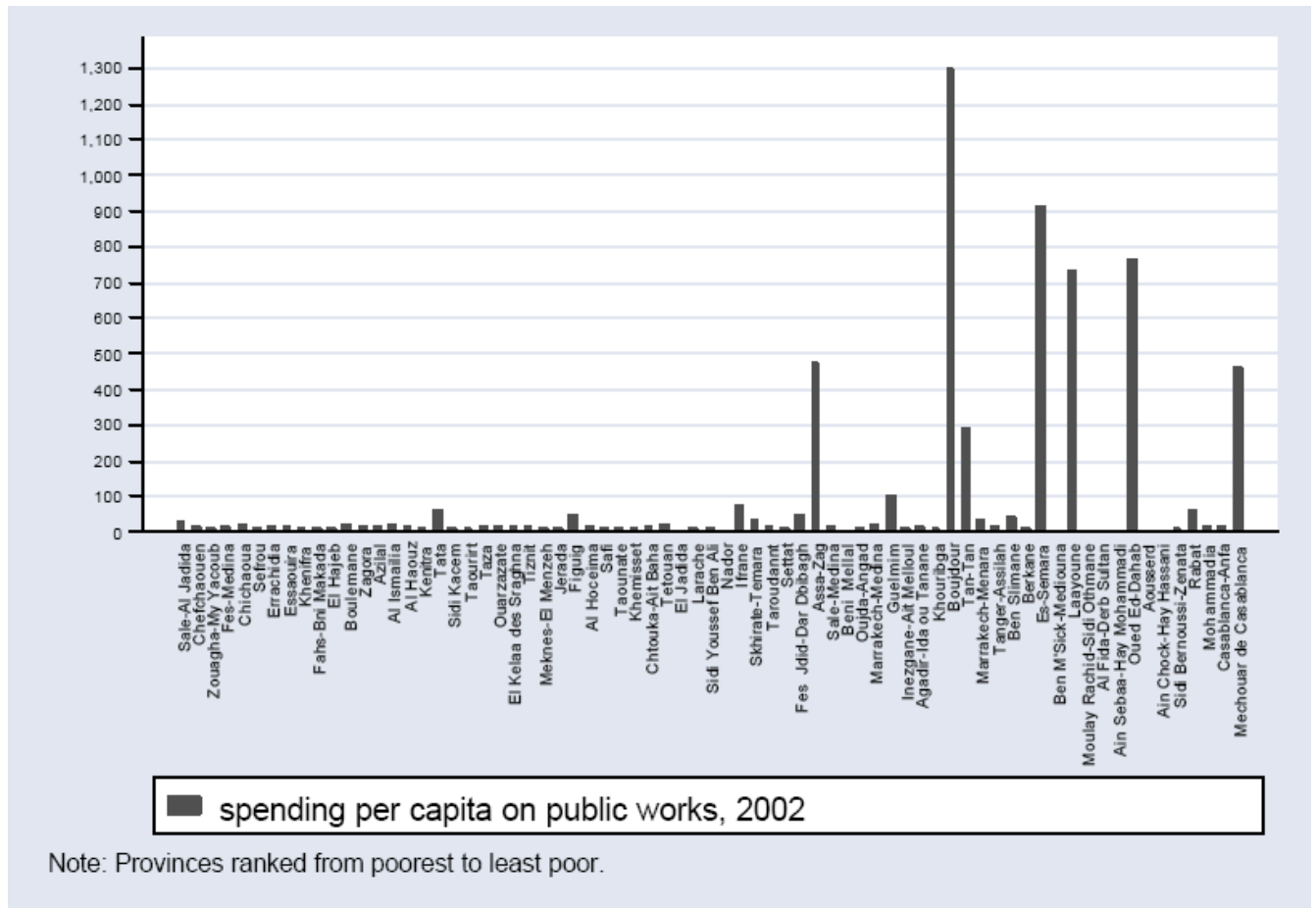
⁸ Budget allocation affected to an area divided by the area population.

Expenditures per capita Allocations Classified by Poverty Incidence
(Promotion Nationale 1994)



Source: World Bank (2004)

**Expenditures per capita Allocations Classified by Poverty Incidence
(Promotion Nationale 2002)**



Source: World Bank (2004)

PN programs did not seem to reach the rural poor zones effectively. Indeed, the distribution of the budget (except BAJ) of the PN seemed to go to the urban, nonpoor zones.

This phenomenon could be explained owing to the fact that today the program has a more complex set of objectives than during its establishment. Its mandate today exceeds the public-works programs with strong intensity of labor that had been conceived initially to provide work to the rural households during difficult periods of the year. Currently, 40% of the PN budget is allocated to urban households within permanent employment programs. According to the World Bank, the program does not only reach poorest or most vulnerable.

MAIN DIFFICULTIES

The technical supervision (in the past) and human resources (today) are the principal difficulties that hinder PN action.

Technical Supervision

In the 1960s and 1970s, Morocco suffered from insufficient technical supervision. This weakness was alleviated with the technical support of partners like France, the USAID, etc. In addition, the lack of the local labor know-how was circumnavigated by PN through private companies of public works.

Human Resources

The PN quickly faced human management problems, such as absence of a legal statute of the personnel employed, requests for establishment (permanent-staff status), complaints of welfare benefits (family benefits, etc.), and demand of social protection (insurance, retirements, etc.).

Other issues faced include:

- Difficulties in dismissing the personnel employed, especially in urban zones (employment in the communities, orphanages, health centers, etc.) and thus, a drop in the turnover of the people employed. This is completely conflicting with the initial goal of the PN that aimed at creating provisional employment.
- Difficulties of acquired rights and request for permanent-staff status.

There was more movement in rural zones and those difficulties listed above appeared more in urban zones.

PN intends to integrate the beneficiaries of the employment programs within the framework of the health insurance program for those in extreme poverty (RAMED) that will be set up in 2008 in some pilot regions in the country to ensure a medical insurance to those with no regular income.

PN LIMITATIONS

Public institutions such as PN that implement specific social actions to provide employment and to fight poverty generally face the following limitations:

- limits of the public financing;
- the reduction or suppression of certain forms of bilateral or multilateral assistance;
- repercussions of a centralized public management of the programs in terms of insufficiency of motivation of the personnel executing the projects, and also in terms of some inflexibility in the administration of these programs;
- problems in targeting the right population.

In addition, PN works should not become a source of permanent and sufficient incomes, otherwise the farmer would give up his land and work in PN projects. The effects of PN works will be all the more positive and permanent if this work generates future employment that is spread out in time and is complementary to the traditional activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The Moroccan experience in the public works of the underprivileged through the PN is remarkable. Indeed, 45 years after its installation, the PN has to its credit an important and single assessment regarding the fight against unemployment with minimal management costs. In spite of certain difficulties and limits that hinder the action of the organization regarding the geographical targeting of rural poor zones, PN programs remain some of the most efficient mechanisms of social protection of the country.

Indeed, the distribution of the PN budget seems to target the nonpoor urban zones. This phenomenon could be explained by the fact that today PN has a set of more various and complex objectives related to social, political, and security issues. Its mandate now exceeds the public works programs with high labor intensity that had been conceived to provide work to the rural

households during difficult periods of the year. In addition, this can also be explained by the existence of pockets of poverty in the sub-urban zones.

The lessons learned make it possible to define the modes of intervention, the standards of employment, and finally, the true vocation of this large company of employment of underemployed labor capital. One of the first conclusions, which is essential, is that the human investment, insofar as it is channeled towards concerted economic development operations, can be highly profitable. Whatever the solutions adopted to install a development tool adapted to the Moroccan needs, one notes that in last resort, it is, in the end, the massive employment of men and women that remains the base of the effort.

The absence of data prevented us from carrying out a deep analysis of the beneficiaries. To contribute effectively to the fight against unemployment and the development of the poor zones, one can make the following recommendations with the PN:

- to modernize the information system by disaggregating data related to the beneficiaries by sex in order to allow gender analysis of PN actions on the population;
- remove constraints that weaken the turnover of the beneficiaries in urban areas and fight against the acquired advantages, thereby reinforcing the transparency and the equity of the programs;
- to encourage the local communities to deal with the staff costs that weigh the PN budget down and to reallocate the communities program budget to the equipment of the rural areas;
- to pursue the reduction of the credits allocated to the urban areas and to increase allocations to the rural areas in order to improve the targeting of the poor populations.

In our opinion, as long as unemployment and poverty persist, PN action as a provider of public employment must continue, even if it means undergoing some reforms for removing the difficulties encountered and the targeting problems mentioned. Public employment remains one of the last public tools against inequalities in Morocco. It is also a social stabilization tool in periods of economic crisis or climatic hazards (drought, etc.).

To conclude, in order to contribute effectively to the fight against unemployment according to the employer of last resort model, PN has to offer more jobs for all those willing to work, to remove constraints that lessen the turnover of the beneficiaries in urban areas and fight against the acquired advantages, encourage the local communities to deal with the staff costs that weigh the PN budget down, and reallocate the communities program budget to the equipment of the rural areas. It must also pursue the reduction of the credits allocated to the urban areas and increase allocations to the rural locations in order to improve the targeting of the poor populations, as well as modernize the information system by disaggregating data related to beneficiaries by sex.

Appendix : PN Realizations

<i>Catégorie</i>	<i>Projet</i>	<i>Unité</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mise en valeur	Abreuvoirs	Unité	1				1
Mise en valeur	Canaux	ML	960				960
Mise en valeur	Citernes, Bassins d'accumulation et chateaux d'eaux	Unité	13	24	22	9	68
Mise en valeur	Digue de protection contre les inondations	Unité	1			2	1
Mise en valeur	Digue de dérivation	Unité	1				1
Mise en valeur	Barrage (partenariat)	Unité			1	7	1
Mise en valeur	Epierrage superficiel	HA	196				196
Mise en valeur	Pépinières	NJT	14 400				14 400
Mise en valeur	Puits	Unité		8	3	3	11
Mise en valeur	Seguias	ML	5 320	27 410	35 765	20 377	88 872
Mise en valeur	Jardins	M²				2 728	
Mise en valeur	Sources	Unité	3	1	10	3	17
Infrastructure	Ouvrages d'art	Unité	81	13	41	2	137
Infrastructure	Canivaux	ML			1 970		1 970
Infrastructure	Pistes	KM	303	172	247	8	730
Infrastructure	Dallage, carrelage des rues	M²	149 532	50 407	102 064	73 012	375 015
Construction	Radiers	Unité				39	
Construction	Adduction eau potable	ML	5 532	29 900	44 175	16 383	95 990
Construction	Borne fontaine	Unité				47	
Construction	Centre d'éducation	Unité	1				1
Construction	Centre de formation	Unité	1		1		2
Construction	Plate forme pour marchands ambulants	M²				2 200	
Construction	Classes	Unité	3	1	10		14
Construction	Cantines	Unité			1		1
Construction	Bibliothèque	Unité		1			1
Construction	Extension de maison de culture	Unité		1	2		3
Construction	Salles multifonction	Unité	1	1	5		7
Construction	Orphelinat	Unité		2			2
Construction	Dar Talib	Unité	5	16	55		76
Construction	Extension Dar Talib	Unité		4			4
Construction	Dépôts	Unité	1	10	6		17
Construction	Latrines	Unité	15	13	14		42
Construction	Locaux administratifs	Unité	13	5	14		32
Construction	Logements	Unité	61	17	8		86
Construction	Foyers féminins	Unité		4	36		40
Construction	Maisons de jeunes	Unité	2	4	30		36
Construction	Maisons de vieillards	Unité			1		1
Construction	Terrains de sport	Unité		1	5		6
Construction	Dalots	Unité				1	
Construction	Dispensaire	Unité		1	4		5
Construction	Abattoir	Unité			1		1
Construction	Murs de clôture; murs de protection; murs soutènement	ML	5 120	18 254	23 432	1 187	46 806
Construction	Réseaux d'égouts	ML	3 000	5 256	720		8 976
Total unités			203	105	216		538
Total KM			303	172	247		730
Total ML			19 932	80 820	104 092		241 604
Total M²			149 532	50 407	102 064		375 015
Total NJT			14 400	0	0		14 400

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