

Sustainable Local Development In Shadow Areas In Light Of The Economic Recovery Program In Algeria (2020/2024)

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the Economic Recovery Program directed toward the development of shadow areas, approved by the President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, during the period (2020/2024). The program seeks to address all forms of isolation, marginalization, and lack of development at all levels, and to achieve local development that encompasses all regions of Algeria. This is to be accomplished through the adoption of an urgent remedial policy based on support, and by taking various measures, programs, and projects to realize local development, ensure equal opportunities among all regions, and achieve balance and social justice. This process is carried out through local initiatives undertaken by regional communities to achieve social security and stability.

Keywords: Sustainable local development, shadow areas, Economic Recovery Program (2020/2024), Algeria.

Introduction:

Sustainable local development is one of the most important objectives pursued by various countries to achieve prosperity, enhance well-being, and ensure a high quality of life for citizens at the local level. In light of the social, economic, political, and security challenges facing Algeria, the Economic Recovery Program for the period (2020/2024), approved by the President of the Republic Abdelmadjid Tebboune, was established to promote economic growth and achieve sustainable development at the national level. This governmental program aims to stimulate investment and revitalize different economic sectors, which in turn contributes to achieving security and development throughout the country, including the remote and disadvantaged regions known as “shadow areas” that experienced instability during the Black Decade.

This research seeks to analyze how sustainable local development can be achieved in marginalized, isolated, and deprived areas in Algeria — including the lack of economic opportunities, weak infrastructure, and the absence of educational and health facilities, among other problems faced by the inhabitants of remote regions.

Accordingly, the main research question is formulated as follows:

To what extent has the Economic Recovery Program for shadow areas achieved sustainable local development in Algeria?

From this main problem, a set of sub-questions arises:

- What is the concept of local development?
- What is the concept of shadow areas?
- What is the reality of sustainable local development in shadow areas within the framework of the Economic Recovery Program (2020/2024)?

To answer this central question and test the hypothesis stating that:

“Algeria’s effort to implement the Economic Recovery Program for shadow areas is a key factor in promoting local development and achieving social security and stability.”

Based on this hypothesis, the study relies on the descriptive-analytical method to collect, present, and analyze the available data related to the research topic and to interpret it scientifically.

Research Methodology:

The study began by employing diagnostic methods to understand the living conditions of residents in shadow areas, using observation, interviews, and comparison between the conditions of people living in shadow areas and those in urban cities. It also relied on the analysis of development projects under the Economic Recovery Program (2020/2024) to interpret and discuss the proposed research problem according to the following main axes:

First: The conceptual framework of the study: local development and shadow areas.

Second: The reality of sustainable local development in shadow areas within the framework of the Economic Recovery Program (2020/2024).

Third: The challenges of local development in border shadow areas in Algeria.

Fourth: Evaluation of the Algerian developmental approach in supporting shadow areas to achieve security and social stability.

First: The Conceptual Framework Of The Study: Local Development And Shadow Areas

The Algerian state, through the Economic Recovery Program (2001–2014), sought to embody and achieve sustainable local development and improve the living conditions of citizens by allocating significant financial resources to this program, with a specific share dedicated to local development. The aim was to accelerate the process of local development and ensure its continuity and sustainability.

However, despite these developmental programs, the desired objective was not achieved for various reasons foremost among them the Black Decade, which led to a population shift from rural to urban areas. This resulted in population concentration around major cities and the emergence of deprived regions suffering from difficult social conditions in terms of education, housing, employment, and health services.

1 – The Concept of Local Development

The process of development is considered a shared responsibility between the state and citizens, achieved by involving citizens in the formulation, design, and implementation of public policy at the local level through decentralized local communities.

Development is defined as **a process that primarily targets the transformation of practices and attitudes within a conscious societal process, aiming to bring about changes in the economic and social structures capable of fostering self-supported productive capacities that lead to a regular increase in the average real income per individual.**¹

It is also defined as **a process aimed at achieving structural, economic, and social transformations through which the majority of the members of society attain a decent standard of living.**²

Both definitions reflect a purely economic perspective, linking development to the increase in production and income within society.

2 – The Concept of Shadow Areas

The term shadow areas is a relatively new concept that recently emerged during the government council meeting held on (16/02/2020), where a report entitled “The Suffering of Shadow Areas” was presented by Algerian Television at the request of the President of the Republic,

Abdelmadjid Tebboune. The report revealed the hardships experienced by residents of remote areas, which the President referred to as “shadow areas.”

Following the President’s speech, the term became a widely used political, social, and economic expression, denoting underdeveloped regions across the country suffering from marginalization and a lack of development.³

After this meeting, work immediately began to identify and map shadow areas accurately, with a clear and precise assessment of their priority needs in order to address them through government action.⁴

2-A: Definition of Shadow Areas

Shadow areas are defined as isolated, marginalized, remote, and deprived regions that lack development, typically located in mountainous, steppe, desert, or border zones near neighboring countries, or in inter-wilaya (inter-province) areas.

These regions are often depopulated due to their harsh natural conditions and the absence of the basic necessities for a decent life — such as infrastructure, road and rural track networks, connections to rural electricity and natural gas grids, and insufficient or non-existent access to potable water.

Moreover, they often lack schools and health facilities altogether, or these exist but remain closed due to the difficulty of staff commuting to their workplaces. Even when open, such institutions provide neither adequate nor qualitative services.

All these factors have led to regional inequality and a clear imbalance in territorial equity.⁵

According to Instruction No. (10881) issued by the Ministry of Interior, Local Authorities and Urban Planning, shadow areas are defined as remote and isolated locations suffering from fragile conditions, where inhabitants experience difficult and miserable living circumstances due to the absence of vital infrastructure and the basic necessities of life such as water, gas, electricity, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.⁶

2-B: Effects of Achieving Sustainable Local Development in Shadow Areas in Algeria

Sustainable local development in shadow areas in Algeria has several positive outcomes, including:⁷

- Reducing rural exodus and encouraging inhabitants to remain in their regions.
- Achieving regional equity.
- Eliminating social and economic disparities.
- Creating new population clusters that contribute to economic and social development in shadow areas.
- Establishing rural centers in sectors such as health, education, sports, electricity, and gas, thereby reducing population pressure on cities.
- Lifting isolation and marginalization from remote regions, which helps counter negative ideas that may otherwise foster extremist or terrorist groups.

Second: The Reality of Sustainable Local Development in Shadow Areas Within the Framework of the Economic Recovery Program (2020–2024)

Following the government meeting with the governors held on (16–17 February 2020), the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, presented a televised report on rural, marginalized, and deprived areas in Algeria, which he referred to as “shadow areas.” He instructed that these areas be surveyed and that the necessary decisions be taken to achieve comprehensive and genuine development within them.

The Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities subsequently implemented these directives, leading the President of the Republic to allocate a specific financial envelope for shadow areas within the framework of the Economic Recovery Program.

1 – General Data on Development in Shadow Areas Within the Framework of the Economic Recovery Program (2020–2025):

These data concern the shadow areas, the development projects programmed for them, and the expected rates of achievement up to the end of (2021), which are summarized as follows:⁸

- **Total number of identified shadow areas:** (13,587) shadow areas.
- **Total number of identified projects for upgrading:** (327,000) projects.
- **Population concerned:** (8.5) million inhabitants, representing approximately (20%) of the total population.
- **Required financial allocation:** (480.42) billion.
- **Projects already financed:** (12,841) projects, with a total budget of (188.42) billion.
- **Projects without financing:** (19,859) projects, with a total budget of (292) billion.

The targets were distributed according to each year as follows:

- **Target for the year (2020):** Completion of (8,143) development projects.
- **Target for the year (2021):** Completion of (4,698) development projects.

Table (1): Number of Development Projects in Shadow Areas by Sector Within the Framework of the Economic Recovery Program (2020–2024)

Sub-sectors	Funded Development Projects	
	Number	Amounts (Billion Dinars)
Drinking Water Supply	2465	30.66
Sanitation	1737	24.69
Electricity Connection	1352	16.77
Gas Supply	998	23.96
Improvement of Schooling Conditions	1436	11.49
Public Transportation	41	0.39
Lifting Isolation	3216	67.73
Public Lighting	693	4.75
Community Health	364	2.76
Playgrounds	356	3.27
Combating Sand Encroachment	3	0.058
Security Coverage	66	0.63
Natural Hazards	114	1.26
Total	12841	188.42

Source: People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (February 2021), **Report on Government Activity for the Implementation of the President of the Republic's Program for the Year (2020)**, Algiers, p. (53).

Observation: From the table, it is observed that the Algerian state has sought to pay particular attention to isolated areas across the national territory within the framework of the Shadow Areas Program, which is part of the Economic Recovery Program (2020–2024). The Algerian government planned the implementation of (12,841) development projects with a total financial allocation of (188.42) billion dinars.

It is also noted that the sub-sector related to lifting isolation in shadow areas ranked first among the funded development projects, with (3,216) projects and a total budget of (67.73) billion dinars.

The second rank was occupied by the sub-sector of drinking water supply, with (2,465) projects and a total budget of (30.66) billion dinars.

The third position was taken by the sanitation sub-sector, with (1,737) projects and a total implementation cost of (24.69) billion dinars.

In fourth place came the sub-sector of improving schooling conditions in shadow areas, with (1,436) funded development projects and an implementation budget of (11.49) billion dinars.

The fifth place went to the electricity connection network, with (1,352) projects and an implementation amount of (16.77) billion dinars.

The sixth position was occupied by public transportation, with (41) funded development projects and an implementation cost of (0.39) billion dinars.

Finally, the last position was held by the sub-sector of combating sand encroachment, with only (3) projects and a budget of (0.058) billion dinars.

2 – The Results of the Implementation of the Shadow Areas Program Within the Framework of the Economic Recovery Plan (2020–2024):

The results of the implementation of the Shadow Areas Program within the Economic Recovery Plan (2020–2024) for the year (2020) can be summarized as follows:⁹

- **Completed projects:** (7,276) projects, equivalent to **(89.35%)** of the objectives set for the year (2020).
- **Ongoing projects:** (2,914) projects, among which (1,268) projects have an implementation rate exceeding **(50%)**.
- **Projects not yet launched:** (2,651) projects currently undergoing administrative procedures.

The completed projects achieved the following outcomes:

- Connection of **(173,489)** households to the drinking water supply network.
- Connection of **(79,548)** households to the sanitation network.
- Construction of **(375)** classrooms and rehabilitation of **(298)** schools.
- Construction of **(1,323)** kilometers of roads and the provision of **(515)** school buses.
- Electrification of **(33,124)** homes.
- Connection of **(48,252)** households to the natural gas network.

Third: Problems of Local Development in Border Shadow Areas in Algeria

The shadow areas along the Algerian borders suffer from a set of economic and social problems, and the most significant obstacles can be summarized as follows: ¹⁰

a. Weak Local Resources:

More than (50%) of the municipalities located in border regions cannot cover their local revenues, which forces them to rely on the state budget to meet and fulfill their citizens' basic needs.

The weakness of financial resources in border shadow areas is mainly due to several factors, primarily the underdeveloped industrial, agricultural, and tourism sectors.

b. Weak Development Policies Regarding Balanced Development:

This is reflected in the failure of border provinces to fully exploit their material, economic, and human potential for the benefit of development across all regions and levels, without discrimination between municipalities.

As a result, poor municipalities have emerged, creating an imbalance between urban centers and rural areas within each border province.

c. Organizational and Technical Problems:

These are manifested in the lack of effective implementation of administrative decentralization and democracy in border areas. Consequently, there is no unified process for the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of development plans, which hinders the achievement of various development objectives in shadow areas.

d. Problems Related to Human Resources:

The situation of human resources in border shadow areas and regional communities is poor due to local employment policies on one hand, and the absence of training and reform tools on the other.

e. Numerous Administrative Obstacles:

These include bureaucracy, avoidance of responsibility, lack of planning, programming, and prior studies for various development programs.

f. The Spread of Corruption in All Its Forms:

Corruption in Algeria has become a nationwide phenomenon, and many Algerian border units have been among the most affected local entities, especially due to the lack of monitoring and supervision of the spending of development project funds.

This is accompanied by the spread of nepotism and favoritism between citizens and the administration to achieve personal or group interests.

g. Weak Participation Tools Between the Private Sector and Civil Society in Local Development:

The participation of the private sector and civil society in the local development process remains weak, even though they are official actors in meeting citizens' needs and serve as social partners that can support public institutions in fulfilling their various functions, particularly developmental ones.¹¹

h. The Spread of Social, Economic, Cultural, and Security Problems:

Diseases and epidemics have spread in shadow areas, and "black spots" have emerged due to the low standard of living, inadequate healthcare, malnutrition, and the rise of crime and imported criminal activities, as well as the absence of individual, collective, and social security, all of which have negatively affected economic development. Among these obstacles are the following:¹²

- Lack of governance in local administration in Algeria.
- Citizens' dissatisfaction with elected officials due to isolation and marginalization in shadow areas.
- Shortage of economic resources in shadow areas.
- The spread of early school dropout and children turning to hard labor.
- The phenomenon of illegal migration and Algeria's transformation into a **transit zone for Africans**, leading to the formation of **terrorist groups** that threaten state security.
- Widespread **environmental pollution**, lack of **health and food security**, and malnutrition.
- **Precarious and inadequate housing**, with the absence of proper housing planning.
- Failure to exploit **water resources** by building dams.
- **Destruction of forest wealth** due to summer fires and the difficulty of extinguishing them, resulting from the absence of modern access routes and outdated equipment to protect the lives and property of residents.

Fourth: Evaluation of the Algerian Developmental Approach in Supporting Shadow Areas to Achieve Security and Social Stability

The Algerian borders have been exposed to various threats and risks resulting from both external and internal environments due to the economic, social, and political conditions prevailing in neighboring countries. These circumstances have affected Algeria's national security through the proliferation of weapons and the armed conflicts between groups and terrorist militias. In addition, the border shadow areas have suffered from poor development in terms of the distribution of investment projects and development programs aimed at promoting local growth.

Algeria has realized the necessity of implementing a developmental approach for border areas by improving infrastructure, diversifying the transport network, and supporting isolation-reduction policies through the connection of regions to the Internet, gas, and electricity. The goal has been to make these regions more attractive for investment, to achieve regional balance, and to ensure that all citizens benefit from the advantages provided by law in its economic, social, and political dimensions—thereby contributing to community security.

Moreover, the Algerian government has adopted economic recovery support policies to enhance social welfare and achieve security, social, and political stability. However, in many cases, these policies did not take into consideration the specific characteristics of those regions and the real needs of their populations due to administrative corruption within governmental institutions—beginning from the first nucleus of power, the municipality—resulting from poor regional planning and the exclusion of civil society from the development process, even though it is most aware of its own economic potential.¹³

Despite the financial allocations granted by the President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, to shadow areas, these regions continue to face multiple problems such as school transportation, roads, and facilities. For example, gas cylinders in some remote areas are distributed through favoritism, patronage, and bribery. This situation hampers the development process in shadow areas and poses a security challenge to the state, as isolation and marginalization can lead to disastrous consequences such as turning these regions into transit zones for terrorist groups and organized crime. Therefore, the Algerian government must take preventive measures and actions to achieve sustainable development and community security in the border shadow areas of Algeria. This can be achieved through new foundations, as follows:¹⁴

- Designing an economic approach with a comprehensive developmental dimension for border shadow areas within the framework of sustainable development, diagnosing weaknesses, and identifying developmental and security challenges in border shadow areas and their relation to national development and state security.
- Providing an “Atlas of Developmental Data for Border Shadow Areas” with a precise description of the economic and social realities.
- Setting a detailed timeline for the implementation of the development strategy directed at border shadow areas.
- Integrating the development strategy within a comprehensive participatory approach that places the inhabitants of shadow areas at the center of the development equation, making citizens key partners in all development programs implemented by local authorities. This participatory model ensures comprehensive security and social stability as a guarantee for achieving Algeria's national security.

Algeria's long experience in combating terrorism has contributed to the maturity of its security vision for containing the terrorist phenomenon. This vision operates on multiple levels and does not remain confined within the boundaries of military action alone. Algeria has adopted non-

military measures of an economic and developmental nature. Algerian legislation has criminalized terrorism and enacted all punitive measures that help curb the phenomenon. It is evident that Algeria's anti-terrorism legislation combines prevention, deterrence, and suppression of all forms of terrorist activity.

It is also noticeable that Algeria has used both security and military approaches to contain and prevent terrorist acts, while simultaneously resorting to political solutions that enabled it to overcome the crisis to a large extent. These political mechanisms were introduced after the failure of purely military and security solutions.

Furthermore, the media played an important role in combating terrorism. Although the security authorities initially imposed strict control over the media, particularly in the early 1990s, they later used media positively to communicate the meaning of the Law of Clemency, Civil Concord, and National Reconciliation. Through this, Algeria succeeded in restoring public trust in its political system.

In addition to developing the border regions that serve as sources of terrorism and organized crime, Algeria continues to focus on economic and social policies to mitigate the conditions that foster terrorism. This includes the implementation of comprehensive developmental and economic programs aimed at improving the living conditions of residents in those vulnerable areas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, and in response to the problem raised and the hypothesis tested in this study, we conclude that the efforts made by local authorities in recent years have shown tangible progress toward development. Within these efforts, the delays recorded in some programs have been addressed.

Through the analysis of various data concerning the shadow areas in Algeria—an issue emphasized by the President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, within the framework of the Economic Recovery Program—we reached the following results:

- From our study of shadow areas in Algeria, it is observed that the planned projects are, in fact, insufficient programs to move these areas from the circle of shadow to that of light. They are palliative and temporary relief measures rather than true development initiatives, meaning that they offer urgent and temporary solutions rather than permanent ones.

- The Economic Recovery Program was allocated a large financial envelope to address the needs of isolated, remote, and marginalized deprived areas. However, its practical implementation was lacking due to the limited experience, competence, and expertise of elected local councils, in addition to the problems existing in most municipalities across the country. This is mainly due to the shortage of development projects and the lack of investment.

Based on the above, we find that the Economic Recovery Program has contributed significantly to sustainable local development in the shadow areas of Algeria. Nevertheless, the cooperation and concerted efforts of all parties are essential to achieve the desired goals at the local level.

In addition to what has been mentioned, we present the following recommendations and suggestions, which we believe are largely capable of improving daily living conditions, achieving social justice, and ensuring balance at all levels, with the aim of realizing comprehensive and sustainable local development in the shadow areas:

- Establishing a national-level developmental and social policy based on accurate data, statistics, and information about each area.

- Studying the essential needs and demands of the inhabitants of shadow areas and setting clear priorities.

- Involving local citizens and the economic sector in shaping the general local policy.

- Preparing a national statistical database for shadow areas, classifying and ranking them according to social and economic criteria.
- Paying attention to and supporting the agricultural and political dimensions of shadow areas.
- Granting real authority to the elected municipal local councils, based on the principles of decentralization in management, to foster creativity and local initiative.
- The Economic Recovery Program (2020/2024) is an ambitious program; however, it was not sufficiently studied to identify the specific needs of each region (coastal, inland, or border areas). It also lacks adequate funding, as most municipalities in Algeria are poor and rely primarily on state subsidies.

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Footnotes

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