

A Critical Examination of Gender Inequalities in Algeria's Social Protection Regimes in the Era of Informal Precarity

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Abstract: This article examines the persistent gender gap in access to social protection in Algeria, with a particular focus on women engaged in the informal economy. The study pursues two objectives: to assess the capacity of the Algerian social protection framework to integrate gender considerations, and to document the lived experiences of women excluded from contributory schemes. Methodologically, it combines a systematic review of academic and institutional literature, legal analysis, and qualitative fieldwork involving semi-structured interviews with ten informal workers in Tizi Ouzou. Findings reveal that, despite a robust legislative arsenal and recent reforms, the system remains structurally oriented towards formal employment, thereby excluding the majority of women in precarious, informal, or rural occupations. This exclusion is compounded by low awareness of rights, administrative barriers, and socio-cultural norms. The article concludes that achieving universal, gender-responsive social protection in Algeria requires structural reforms that integrate disaggregated data, portable rights, and targeted outreach to marginalised women.

Keywords: Gender Inequality; Informal Employment; Labour Market Policy; Poverty and Social Exclusion Social Protection.

1. Introduction

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Social protection systems have increasingly been recognised as central instruments for promoting social justice, reducing inequality, and fostering inclusive economic development. However, their capacity to address structural gender disparities remains uneven, particularly in contexts where labour markets are characterised by high levels of informality and segmented employment patterns. In such settings, the design and implementation of social security schemes often reflect implicit assumptions about standard, formalised employment trajectories, thereby marginalising large segments of the population—most notably women—whose economic activities do not conform to these norms. This article situates itself within this critical intersection between gender, labour informality, and social protection, with a specific focus on the Algerian context. By examining the disjunction between normative commitments to gender equality and the practical functioning of social security mechanisms, the study seeks to contribute to ongoing scholarly and policy debates on the development of more inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems in developing economies.

1.1. Research Problematic

Gender equality within social protection systems continues to represent a critical yet

underexplored dimension of contemporary public policy, particularly in developing economies where women's economic contributions are frequently invisible, informal, or unregistered. In contexts where social security affiliation is contingent upon formal, contributory employment, any form of productive or reproductive labour performed outside the regulated domain remains beyond the reach of statutory coverage mechanisms. This structural exclusion has profound implications: it denies maternity entitlements, limits access to essential healthcare, heightens vulnerability in old age, and exposes women to socio-economic shocks without the security of institutional safety nets.

Globally, data indicate that only slightly more than one quarter of women benefit from comprehensive social protection that spans the entire life cycle (ILO, 2023). Deficits are particularly acute in the areas of maternity protection, healthcare coverage, and old-age pensions. These inequalities are most pronounced in parts of the Global South, notably in North Africa, where an estimated 74% of women participate in informal economic activities—most often without legal recognition or affiliation to contributory schemes (UN Women Africa). This persistent disjunction between women's real economic participation and its formal institutional acknowledgment is a structural driver of gender-based disparities in access to social protection.

The Algerian case exemplifies this paradox with particular clarity. The country has established a substantial legal and regulatory framework- comprising Ordinance No. 95-07 on the social security system, relevant provisions of the Labour Code, and the ratification of major international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and multiple International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. While these provisions enshrine the principles of equality and social rights in normative terms, significant gaps persist in implementation. Women on the margins of formal employment-such as informal workers, seasonal agricultural labourers, undeclared domestic workers, precarious micro-entrepreneurs, and rural women distant from administrative services- remain largely excluded from effective coverage, as documented by various empirical studies and institutional reports (Docstore; IEMed; Kalam).

This divergence between the robustness of the legal architecture and its limited effectiveness in practice raises a fundamental question: how can a national social protection system, ostensibly aligned with international commitments, continue to reproduce-or even reinforce-gender inequalities in actual access to rights? More specifically, to what extent do financing arrangements, eligibility requirements, proof-of-activity criteria, geographical disparities in service provision, and governance structures create differentiated barriers for women depending on whether they are formally employed, self-employed, or engaged in the rural and urban informal economy?

1.2. Research Aims

In light of the issues outlined above, this study pursues two overarching objectives. First, it seeks to critically assess the capacity of Algeria's social protection framework to integrate a gender perspective not only at the normative and policy-design levels, but also in the operational mechanisms that govern its effective implementation. Second, it aims to document and analyse the specific experiences of women engaged in the informal economy, with particular attention to their trajectories of access-or systematic exclusion-from social security benefits, the implicit exclusionary mechanisms at play, and the policy levers available for reform.

Two guiding hypotheses structure this investigation:

H1 – Despite its formal legal framework and adherence to international conventions, the Algerian social protection system fails to adequately address gender disparities in practical arrangements for eligibility, affiliation, and benefit allocation.

H2 – Women participating in the informal economy, especially in rural and peri-urban settings, constitute the segment most systematically excluded from the benefits of existing

social security schemes.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the conceptual framework at the intersection of gender, informal economy, and social protection. Section 3 outlines the Algerian institutional context and major reforms. Section 4 analyses coverage gaps according to employment status using both secondary data and empirical evidence. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the implications for public policy and the advancement of gender-responsive social justice.

1.3.Methods

This research adopts a qualitative methodology based on systematic and critical documentary analysis. The materials examined consist of three complementary sets: (i) academic publications in social sciences and social law from peer-reviewed journals and reference works; (ii) institutional reports from international and national organisations , International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, National Social Insurance Fund (CNAS), National Statistics Office (ONS) , as well as studies from recognised think tanks (eLibrary IMF, Chatham House); (iii) the Algerian legislative and regulatory framework, including Ordinance No. 95-07 on social security, the relevant provisions of the Labour Code and the international commitments ratified by Algeria.

The approach adopted is based on a cross-analysis linking three interdependent dimensions: gender, social protection and the employment sector. This analytical triangulation makes it possible to examine how social policies, initially designed according to a standard contributory logic, struggle to integrate the differentiated realities of women's work, particularly in informal and rural areas. In addition, a critical analysis of legislative and regulatory texts was conducted, assessing their internal consistency, their alignment with international conventions and their concrete effects on women's professional and social trajectories.

In order to measure disparities, the study uses quantitative data broken down by gender, taken from the statistical databases of the ILO, UN Women, the CNAS and the ONS. The indicators used include social security coverage rates, the proportion of women contributors, the sectoral distribution of female employment, and the proportion of rural women without coverage. These data were compared with international benchmark indicators, enabling Algeria's performance to be assessed in a regional and global comparative perspective.

The validation of results is based on a process of triangulation of sources and critical analysis of discrepancies between the prescribed legal framework and observed realities. This approach ensures the reliability of interpretations while limiting biases associated with reliance on a single type of source or analytical perspective.

2. Literature Review

The academic literature on social protection and gender has developed at the intersection of social policy analysis, feminist political economy, and labour market studies, offering critical insights into the structural mechanisms that generate and sustain gender-based inequalities in access to social security. Rather than viewing exclusion from social protection as a residual or technical failure, existing scholarship conceptualises it as the outcome of historically embedded policy designs, normative assumptions about work and citizenship, and persistent asymmetries in the valuation of paid and unpaid labour. This section reviews the theoretical and empirical contributions that frame gender inequality in social protection as a systemic phenomenon, with particular attention to the role of informal employment, care responsibilities, and policy architecture. It first examines the structural and historical determinants of gender disparities in access to social protection, before turning to empirical evidence on coverage gaps and gender-sensitive policy innovations, highlighting both their potential and their limitations.

2.1. Gender Inequalities in Access to Social Protection: Structural Determinants and Historical Dynamics

The issue of gender disparities in access to social protection systems remains a persistent challenge, deeply rooted in both socio-economic structures and historical legacies. Numerous scholarly works have highlighted that, in many contexts, the configuration of social protection mechanisms was initially conceived around the male breadwinner model, thereby embedding a structural bias that disadvantages women (Kabeer, 2016). This model presupposes continuous, full-time, and formal-sector employment, conditions that, statistically, fewer women meet due to gendered labour market segmentation and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care responsibilities (Razavi, 2011).

Historically, women's integration into contributory schemes has been hindered by their overrepresentation in informal, part-time, or precarious forms of employment, which frequently escape the scope of formal social protection frameworks (Chen et al., 2004). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) has observed that such structural exclusion is compounded by normative assumptions within policy design, where entitlement criteria often privilege uninterrupted employment histories over other forms of social and economic contribution, such as caregiving.

The gendered division of labour, both in paid and unpaid spheres, reinforces these disparities. Feminist political economy has long argued that the invisibility of reproductive work within social accounting systems perpetuates a form of "systemic undervaluation" of women's contributions to economic and social life (Elson, 1998). Consequently, the lack of recognition and compensation for unpaid care work not only limits women's capacity to accumulate social security rights but also entrenches cycles of economic dependency and vulnerability in old age (UN Women, 2020).

In sum, gender inequalities in access to social protection cannot be reduced to individual circumstances or choices; rather, they are embedded in structural arrangements of labour markets, social norms, and policy frameworks. Addressing these inequalities necessitates a paradigm shift from an employment-centred to a rights-based and inclusive social protection model, capable of recognising diverse forms of contribution beyond formal wage labour (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

2.2 Empirical Evidence and Gender-Sensitive Innovations in Social Protection

The body of empirical research on social protection highlights both enduring gender gaps in coverage and promising reform pathways, yet transformative progress remains limited.

2.2.1. Empirical Patterns and Coverage Gaps: Rigorous evidence confirms that women and girls continue to be underserved by social protection mechanisms globally. A comprehensive review by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) synthesises findings from 15 years of studies across low- and middle-income countries and demonstrates that while cash transfers can improve women's empowerment, these outcomes vary widely based on program design and implementation features (Bastagli et al., 2016). Specifically, though some conditional or unconditional transfers enhance women's decision-making power and access to health, education, or nutrition, program architecture, including targeting, conditionality, and payment mechanisms, plays a critical mediating role (ODI, 2016).

Furthermore, systematic reviews of social protection in fragile contexts indicate that cash transfers are often associated with beneficial outcomes such as reduced risky sexual behaviors, increased contraceptive use, and improved maternal and child health metrics, though evidence on their sustainability over time is mixed, particularly when support ends (PMC, 2022).

However, the design of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) can also unintentionally reproduce patriarchal norms. A feminist critique argues that by placing moral conditions on female beneficiaries, such as mandatory prenatal visits or behavior-based obligations, CCTs may reinforce stereotypical caregiving roles and compromise women's autonomy, thereby undermining the broader aims of SDG 5 on gender equality (Hypatia, 2018).

2.2.2.*Multi-Dimensional Vulnerabilities and Informal Workers:* Empirical studies consistently show that women working in the informal economy are disproportionately excluded from contributory and non-contributory social protection mechanisms. A specialized ILO framework emphasizes how informal women workers, such as domestic laborers, street vendors, and home-based producers, face structural obstacles to affiliation, including lack of identity documents, irregular incomes, and administrative barriers (Lund & Srinivas, 2000).

3. Results

This section presents the main empirical findings of the study, drawing on international statistical evidence and comparative data to illuminate the gendered patterns of access to social protection. It situates women’s coverage levels within a global perspective before progressively narrowing the analysis to developing economies and, more specifically, to the North African region. By combining quantitative indicators with structurally informed interpretation, the results highlight the persistence of systemic exclusion mechanisms affecting women, particularly those engaged in informal and non-standard forms of employment. The section thus aims to demonstrate how global trends, regional specificities, and institutional design features intersect to reproduce gender-based disparities in social protection coverage.

3.1. Global trends in social protection for women

At the global level, social protection for women remains fragmented, unevenly distributed, and structurally biased in ways that perpetuate gendered inequalities in labour markets and access to welfare systems. According to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO, 2023) latest World Social Protection Report, only 26% of women worldwide enjoy comprehensive social security coverage across all major contingencies, maternity, illness, disability, old age, and unemployment. This figure is markedly lower than the corresponding coverage rate for men, which reaches approximately 34% in certain national contexts.

The most pronounced coverage deficits are observed in maternity protection and old-age pensions. In many regions, large segments of the female workforce, particularly those in informal employment or in precarious, non-standard work arrangements, remain excluded from contributory schemes (ILO, 2021; Razavi et al., 2022). This exclusion is deeply rooted in the historical architecture of social security systems, which were designed around the model of full-time, stable, formal-sector employment (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Pierson, 2001). Such a model has proven structurally incompatible with the realities of women’s labour market participation, which remains disproportionately concentrated in part-time, seasonal, casual, and domestic work, all categories that tend to fall outside formal labour regulations (Chen, 2012; Holmes & Jones, 2013).

The gender division of labour, particularly the undervaluation of unpaid care and domestic work, reinforces this exclusion by limiting women’s lifetime earnings and contribution histories, thereby reducing their entitlement to social benefits (Elson, 2017; Folbre, 2018). In addition, the absence of universal maternity leave and universal healthcare policies in numerous countries, combined with restrictive eligibility criteria such as minimum contribution periods or permanent contract requirements, further entrenches women’s structural vulnerability (Addati et al., 2018).

Table .1. Social protection coverage of women worldwide

Region	% of women covered	Most Deficient Areas
Europe & North America	80%	Old age (incomplet pensions)
Latin America	48%	Maternity and health insurance

Asia-Pacific	30%	Old age and maternity leave
Sub-saharia Africa	15%	All areas, especially maternity
North Africa	21%	Health insurance and pensions
World (Average)	26%	Maternity, old age, healthcare

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023).

these figures reveal stark regional disparities and highlight the determinative role of public policy in expanding coverage and closing gender gaps. In OECD countries, where universal, tax-financed, and well-resourced social protection systems predominate, female coverage rates are close to parity with those of men (OECD, 2020). By contrast, developing and emerging economies often maintain fragmented and exclusionary systems, disproportionately oriented towards formal wage employment, leaving informal and self-employed women with little to no protection (Rodgers, 2013; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

without significant reform,particularly towards universal, gender-responsive, and non-contributory social protection models,these disparities are likely to persist, thereby undermining gender equality goals enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1, 5, and 8) and international conventions such as CEDAW and ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection.

If you want, I can now extend this section with a smooth transition to the part on developing countries and the specific case of North Africa, so it flows naturally into your Algeria case study. Would you like me to prepare that?

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3.2. Structural Exclusion of Women from Social Protection in Developing Contexts

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This section analyses the structural factors in developing contexts that systematically constrain women’s access to social protection, highlighting the interplay between informality, labour market segmentation, and institutional design.

3.2.1 Informality, Labour Market Segmentation, and Gendered Exclusion: In developing economies, the proportion of women engaged in informal employment is disproportionately high, frequently exceeding 60% to 70% of the female labour force (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). This trend is deeply entrenched in fragile economic structures, underdeveloped legal frameworks, and persistent socio-cultural norms that channel women into economic activities not formally recognised by labour legislation (Chen, 2012; Kabeer, 2015).

Informality deprives women of the contributory work histories necessary to access core social protection mechanisms, such as pensions, sickness benefits, and maternity leave. It also reinforces occupational segregation, where women are overrepresented in low-paid, low-status, and non-regulated sectors—including domestic work, petty trade, and subsistence agriculture—further limiting their bargaining power and visibility in policy frameworks (Holmes & Jones, 2013)

Table .2. Key Factors of Female Exclusion from Social Protection in Developing Countries

Factor	Main Impact
Informal employment	Absence of social contributions
Wage precarity	Low eligibility for contributory schemes
Socio-cultural norms	Concentration in unregulated sectors
Gender pay gaps	Insufficient accumulation for pensions
Limited education access	Restricted entry into formal employment

Source: Adapted from UN Women (2022) and ILO (2023).

3.2.2 Maternity and Old-Age Protection Deficits: One of the most acute shortcomings in these contexts concerns maternity protection. According to UN Women (2022), more than 55% of women of reproductive age in low- and middle-income countries lack access to paid maternity leave, exposing them to critical income insecurity and heightened health risks during pregnancy and childbirth (Addati et al., 2018). Pension systems designed on contribution accumulation are likewise structurally disadvantageous to women, whose careers are often interrupted by maternity, caregiving, or informal sector engagement (Elson, 2017; Razavi et al., 2022).

These intersecting vulnerabilities illustrate the inadequacy of traditional contributory models in meeting the needs of women’s diverse employment trajectories and underscore the urgency of universal, gender-responsive social protection systems (Holmes & Jones, 2013; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

3.3 Regional Focus: North Africa

This subsection examines the structural mechanisms through which social protection systems in developing contexts systematically exclude women, with particular attention to informality, labour market segmentation, and life-cycle vulnerabilities.

3.3.1 Extent of Female Informality: In North Africa, structural exclusion from social protection is particularly pronounced. Data from UN Women Africa (2023) show that approximately 74% of women in the region are engaged in informal activities, with the figure exceeding 85% in rural areas. These activities—predominantly agricultural, artisanal, and domestic—are rarely declared, depriving women of fundamental rights such as maternity benefits, pensions, and health coverage (Boudarbat & Ajbilou, 2019)

Table .3. Female Informal Employment in North Africa

Country	% in Informal Employment	Key Observations
Algeria	72%	Limited access to contributory pensions
Morocco	78%	Dominance of agricultural sector
Tunisia	69%	Pronounced regional inequalities
Egypt	75%	Strong presence in domestic work

Source: UN Women Africa (2023).

3.3.2 Fragmented Protection Mechanisms: Social protection regimes in the region are heavily skewed towards contributory schemes linked to formal employment. While non-contributory assistance—such as food subsidies and targeted cash transfers—exists, it remains insufficient to redress structural gender inequalities or to cushion women against economic, health, and climate shocks (World Bank, 2021). Women’s exclusion from unemployment insurance and pension schemes perpetuates their vulnerability and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty (ILO, 2021; Kabeer, 2015).

4. Discussion

The findings from this research reaffirm and extend existing scholarly evidence on the persistent gendered exclusion from social protection systems in developing countries, with Algeria providing a particularly revealing case study. Consistent with the observations of Razavi et al. (2022) and Holmes and Jones (2013), the Algerian experience demonstrates that exclusion is both a development challenge and a rights-based concern, situated at the intersection of economic structures, legal frameworks, and deeply rooted sociocultural norms.

At the macro level, the validation of the first hypothesis (H1) underscores the paradox inherent in Algeria's institutional architecture: while the legislative framework, comprising Ordinance No. 95-07 on social security, the Labour Code, and recent reforms implemented between 2023 and 2025, is nominally comprehensive and aligned with international conventions (e.g., CEDAW, ILO Conventions 102, 183, and 189), it remains structurally biased towards formal, continuous employment relationships. Such a design excludes a substantial proportion of women whose livelihoods depend on informal, seasonal, or self-employed activities outside any formal contractual arrangement.

The second hypothesis (H2) is equally substantiated. Data reveal that women engaged in small-scale street vending, home-based hairdressing, preparation of traditional food for ceremonies, artisanal production, domestic work, and informal childcare overwhelmingly lack social security coverage. Among rural women, the coverage rate remains below 5%, confirming a marked vulnerability to economic shocks, illness, and ageing without pension entitlements. These findings resonate with global trends reported by the ILO (2023) and UN Women (2023), which document that informal work accounts for approximately 60% of female employment in developing economies, with coverage rates rarely exceeding 20%.

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The qualitative component of this study offers critical insights that enrich and humanise the macro-level statistical picture. Ten semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with women aged between 24 and 54, all engaged in various forms of informal work. Their occupational profiles, ranging from home-based service provision (hairdressing, catering) to market-based trading, artisanal crafts, domestic labour, and small-scale garment production, reflect the sectoral diversity of Algeria's informal economy.

The thematic content analysis of these narratives revealed four recurrent constraints. First, a widespread information deficit emerged: nine of the ten women had never heard of the possibility of voluntary affiliation to the National Social Security Fund for Non-Salaried Workers (CASNOS). This lack of awareness is not simply an individual failing but reflects structural weaknesses in outreach and communication strategies, particularly towards rural and peri-urban populations with limited access to administrative services.

Second, income instability was unanimously cited as a key barrier to enrolment. Irregular and often low earnings make it difficult for these women to commit to fixed monthly contributions, even when the benefits of coverage are recognised. This finding aligns with the literature on contributory schemes in low-income settings, which highlights the incompatibility between rigid payment schedules and the volatile income streams characteristic of informal work (Alfers, Lund, & Moussié, 2018).

Third, the interviews consistently conveyed a perception of inaccessibility. Social protection, particularly health coverage and retirement benefits, was regarded as both essential and unattainable. This perception was not purely financial; it was compounded by previous negative experiences with administrative processes, often described as opaque, time-consuming, and costly.

Finally, there was a pronounced sense of social exclusion. Participants frequently articulated a feeling of invisibility in national public policies, which they perceived as designed for “other” categories of workers, those with contracts, formal workplaces, and urban residence. This sentiment reflects what Kabeer (2015) describes as the “symbolic marginalisation” of women’s labour, wherein entire categories of work are excluded from the very definition of economic activity used in policy design.

These qualitative findings converge with international comparative evidence. While Algeria has made recent strides, such as extending maternity leave, introducing mixed parental leave, and digitalising registration processes, other countries in the region, notably Morocco and Tunisia, have implemented more targeted measures for informal female workers. These include simplified enrolment procedures, reduced contributions for low-income self-employed women, and community-based outreach initiatives. Such measures have been shown to gradually integrate marginalised groups into contributory systems without imposing prohibitive financial burdens (Chant & Sweetman, 2012).

The implications for policy are significant. The dual nature of exclusion, structural, due to the contributory design of the system, and sociocultural, due to entrenched gender norms, requires a two-pronged reform approach. Economically, the system must accommodate variable incomes through flexible contribution schedules, subsidies, and partial state financing of benefits. Normatively, it must explicitly recognise unpaid care and domestic work as forms of economic contribution eligible for social protection entitlements. Crucially, awareness-raising campaigns tailored to rural and peri-urban contexts are needed to bridge the information gap identified in the qualitative inquiry.

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While the 2025 reforms represent an important shift towards greater gender responsiveness, their capacity to close the gap between legislative promise and lived reality will depend on whether they are embedded within a broader strategy of inclusive social protection. Without deliberate measures to address the specific constraints faced by women in the informal sector, these reforms risk reinforcing existing inequalities rather than dismantling them.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the persistence of a profound disjunction between the formal recognition of the right to social protection and its substantive realisation in the Algerian context, particularly for women engaged in informal economic activities. Despite the existence of a relatively advanced legislative framework—comprising Ordinance No. 95-07, the Labour Code, and recent reforms—current mechanisms remain ill-suited to the socio-economic trajectories of women whose livelihoods are defined by instability, informality, and limited statistical visibility.

The qualitative fieldwork, conducted with ten women from Tizi Ouzou—including seamstresses, domestic workers, street vendors, artisans, hairdressers, and preparers of traditional food—revealed a near-universal absence of social security coverage. Key barriers identified included limited awareness of voluntary schemes, procedural complexity, irregular income streams, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care responsibilities. These findings confirm the study’s initial hypotheses: that the architecture of the Algerian social protection system is fundamentally anchored in the logic of formal, continuous employment, and that such a design reproduces structural gender inequalities by excluding the forms of work in which women are disproportionately represented.

This phenomenon is not uniquely Algerian but reflects a wider structural challenge faced by many countries in the Global South, where formal equality enshrined in law conceals entrenched socio-economic asymmetries. As international experiences, such as the Self-

Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India or the Régime de Sécurité Sociale des Professions Commerciales (RSPC) in Senegal, demonstrate, gender-responsive social protection frameworks not only enhance equity but also strengthen the long-term sustainability and efficacy of welfare systems.

The implications for Algerian public policy are clear. First, the development of disaggregated indicators by gender, economic sector, and geographic location is essential to map exclusion with precision and to identify priority target groups. Second, the portability of social rights must be extended to women with multi-active, mobile, or fragmented livelihoods. Third, participatory governance, incorporating women's associations, cooperatives, and local civil society actors, should be institutionalised in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of social protection programmes. Finally, targeted legal literacy campaigns, particularly concerning voluntary affiliation schemes such as CASNOS, are critical to bridging information deficits and countering forms of institutional self-exclusion.

In sum, achieving universal social protection in Algeria cannot be reduced to the mere legal generalisation of rights. It demands a paradigmatic shift in policy design, one that explicitly integrates gendered labour realities and recognises the economic and social value of unpaid and invisible work. Without such an approach, women in the informal sector will remain systematically excluded from a fundamental right that, in principle, already belongs to them.

Nevertheless, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. The study's empirical scope was geographically confined to a single wilaya, Tizi Ouzou, which, while facilitating deep contextual insight, constrains the generalisability of findings to other regions with distinct socio-cultural and economic configurations, such as the High Plateaux, the Saharan South, or border zones. The small sample size of ten women, selected to represent the main categories of undeclared female work, was shaped by logistical constraints and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and reluctance to disclose informal or irregular practices. Moreover, statistical data were often incomplete, lacking disaggregation by gender, location, or sector, thereby limiting the precision of comparative analyses. Temporal inconsistencies between official and secondary sources further complicated longitudinal interpretation. Finally, the study could only partially address the intersectional dimensions of vulnerability—such as age, education level, disability status, and family responsibilities—which merit further investigation.

Despite these constraints, the analysis presented here provides a robust empirical and conceptual foundation for both scholarly inquiry and policy debate. It reinforces the urgency of systemic reform to ensure inclusive, gender-responsive social protection in Algeria and offers a framework for aligning national priorities with global commitments to social justice and sustainable development.

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