

Evolution of the Living Conditions of Orphaned Children Aged 0 to 17 Years in Algeria: A Comparative Analysis of the MICS 2012-2013 and 2018-2019 Surveys.

تطور ظروف معيشة الأطفال اليتامى الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 0 و17 سنة في الجزائر: تحليل مقارن بين مسحي MICS 2012-2013 و2018-2019

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Date of submission: 22/11/2025

Date of acceptance: 01/12/2025

Date of publication: 20/12/2025

Abstract:

الملخص:

This study aims to analyze the situation of orphaned children as a vulnerable group by assessing their access to social policies and identifying gaps between orphans and non-orphans in the areas of social protection and education.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 2012–2013 and 2018–2019, focusing on indicators related to social protection and school enrollment.

The findings show a slight decline in the proportion of orphaned children and an improvement in their households' access to social transfers, while educational gaps persist, particularly at the secondary level.

Keywords: Orphaned Children, Child Protection, Evolution, Poverty, Education.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أوضاع الأطفال اليتامى باعتبارهم فئة هشة، من خلال تقييم مدى استفادتهم من السياسات الاجتماعية، ورصد الفجوات القائمة بينهم وبين غير اليتامى في مجالات الحماية الاجتماعية والتعليم.

اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، بالاستناد إلى بيانات المسح العنقودي متعدد المؤشرات (MICS) لسنتي 2012-2013 و2018-2019، مع تحليل المؤشرات المرتبطة بالحماية الاجتماعية والالتحاق المدرسي.

أظهرت النتائج انخفاضاً طفيفاً في نسبة الأطفال اليتامى، وتحسناً في استفادة أسرهم من التحويلات الاجتماعية، مقابل استمرار فجوات تعليمية، خاصة في المرحلة الثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأطفال اليتامى، حماية الأطفال، التطور، الفقر، التعليم.

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1. Introduction

Orphaned children, defined by the loss of at least one biological parent, constitute a population particularly susceptible to a confluence of vulnerabilities, encompassing poverty, exclusion from educational systems, and impairments to physical and psychosocial health. Consequently, their circumstances represent a critical challenge for both child protection policies and broader social development strategies.

In Algeria, as in numerous national contexts, this population grapples with these multifaceted risks. While extended family structures continue to play a pivotal role in their care, the capacities of these arrangements may prove inadequate in the face of the magnitude of needs. This reality underscores the imperative for rigorous and ongoing assessment of their living conditions, so as to inform public action by furnishing evidence-based data. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the Algerian government, provide nationally representative data in this regard, offering a robust foundation for monitoring and analysis.

The present article aims to undertake a comparative analysis of key indicators pertaining to the living conditions of orphaned children aged 0 to 17 years, drawing on data from the two MICS surveys of 2012-2013 and 2018-2019. This approach seeks to identify both the progress achieved and the domains requiring intensified intervention. The study is structured around an examination of the prevalence of orphan hood, living arrangements, access to education and social transfers, while highlighting temporal evolutions and significant disparities observed in comparison to non-orphaned children.

2 - 1. Materials and Methods:

2-1 -Data Sources:

This study is based on a secondary analysis of the final reports of the Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). The MICS 2012-2013 survey covered 27,198 households, encompassing a weighted sample of 48,868 children aged 0 to 17 years. The MICS 2018-2019 wave included 29,919 households, enabling the collection of data for 48,751 children in the same age group. These surveys are cross-sectional, probabilistic, and stratified by place of residence (urban/rural) and Territorial Programming

Spaces (TPS). The relevant data were extracted from the modules on child status, child protection, and household characteristics.

2-2- Definitions and Indicators :

- Social and Administrative Protection: Birth Registration.
- Orphans: Children who have lost one or both parents (according to MICS6 Indicators: SR.19 & MICS4: 9.17 & 9.18).
- Double Orphan: Children whose father and mother have both deceased.
- Living Conditions: This dimension includes residential arrangements, school attendance (adjusted net school attendance rates), and access to social transfers. Comparative analyses are based on orphan-to-non-orphan ratios, where non-orphans are defined as children living with at least one biological parent.

The selected indicators for comparison cover the following four essential dimensions:

- Social Protection: This dimension is analyzed by taking into account the resilience of the extended family as a primary support mechanism, in addition to universal social protection policies (such as cash transfers) targeting all vulnerable children, including orphans.
- Education: analyzed through the examination of the school attendance rates.
- Family Environment and Protection: Living situation (with one parent, both parents, or in an institution) and exposure to violent discipline (corporal punishment).
- Household Economic Well-being: Incidence of monetary poverty.

2-3-Analytical Approach :

The analysis conducted is primarily descriptive and comparative, disaggregated by sex, age, place of residence, wealth quintiles, and territorial programming spaces (TPS), with the aim of identifying trends over the six-year period separating the two surveys. The limited size of the orphan sub-samples (representing approximately 1 to 3% of the study population) precluded the use of advanced statistical modeling.

3-Results:

The findings of our analysis covered the following areas:

3-1-Prevalence and Living Arrangements (UNICEF O. &, 2023):

Between 2012-2013 and 2018-2019 MICS's surveys ((ONS), 2014), the prevalence of orphaned children in Algeria exhibited a modest decline, from 3.0% to 2.8% , while double orphans remained exceedingly rare (0.2% in 2012-2013, with no precise details provided for the subsequent survey). The overwhelming majority of orphans (94.1% in 2018-2019) resided with at least one biological parent, and more than 99.5% of them lived within households, thereby underscoring the predominance of familial caregiving arrangements, particularly those involving extended family structures (such as grandparents, uncles, or aunts). Approximately 2.1% of orphans dwelled without either parent, frequently in the capacity of grandchildren (36.3%) or adopted children (36.4%), while the proportion of children lacking biological parents yet residing in households remained stable at around 1.2%. Nonetheless, disparities endured, with elevated rates observed in the South (3.9% in 2018-2019) and among the lowest wealth quintiles (3.0%).

3-2-Birth Registration:

Birth registration is of paramount administrative importance in assessing the situation of orphaned children, particularly within the African context(UNICEF, 2018). It frequently represents the foundational cornerstone of all child rights - a step that proves especially precarious for orphans. In Algeria, as in many nations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, overall registration rates remain high; however, structural disparities persist, disproportionately affecting orphaned children.

In various Sub-Saharan African states such as Senegal(Senegalese Ministry of Women and Family, 2020), Niger, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, empirical investigations reveal that orphans face an elevated risk of non-registration, with incidence rates reaching up to 35% in certain areas, compared to a national average of approximately 20% for the general child population. This situation generates exacerbated administrative vulnerability, hindering access to fundamental social services.

At the regional level, targeted initiatives have been implemented to address these shortcomings. In Morocco, the "Wadiae(وَعْدْنَا)¹" program(Moroccan Ministry of Family and Solidarity, 2021), dedicated to late birth registration, succeeded in regularizing the situations of over 50,000 unregistered children between 2018 and 2021, with a substantial proportion involving orphans. In Tunisia(Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, 2019), the recent digitization of civil registry records has significantly optimized the monitoring of vulnerable minors, despite persistent logistical obstacles in isolated rural areas.

In the specific case of Algeria, significant progress has been observed in legal identification. The proportion of orphaned children under five with duly registered births increased from 98.1% in 2012-2013 to 99.4% in 2018-2019. This near-universalization of birth registration(UNICEF, 2018) constitutes a major achievement, ensuring children's effective exercise of civic rights, access to nationality, healthcare, and education.

It should be emphasized that the implications for orphan protection are evident. Lack of registration may (UNICEF. 2018):

- Compromise access to social protection mechanisms, such as family allowances & free healthcare in Algeria;
- Impede secondary school enrollment;
- Increase risks of economic exploitation;
- Complicate the implementation of judicial safeguard measures.

3-3-Schooling:

The accurate comparison between MICS4 (2012-13) ((ONS), 2014) and MICS6 (2019) (Statistiques, 2020)reveals an educational system that, while maintaining its general performance, did not succeed during this period in substantially closing the schooling gap for orphaned children. The persistence of this gap calls for a strengthening of targeted social protection policies.

1 The program, which means "our commitment" (وَعْدْنَا) in Arabic, was launched in 2018 by the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior in partnership with UNICEF.

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Table 01: Summary Comparison of Orphans & non-Orphans Net Enrollment Rates between MICS4 and MICS6

Indicator	Group	MICS4 (2012-2013)	MICS6 (2018-2019)	Evolution & Analyses
Primary NER	General	~97%	>98%	Stable and universal
	Orphans	~92-94%	~96-97%	Catch-up, but slight residual gap.
Secondary NER (1st and 2nd cycle)	General	~72%	~87%	Spectacular progress (+15 points).
	Orphans	~60-65%	~75-80%	Real improvement (+10-15 points), but persistent gap. Orphans have benefited from the national dynamic, but have not closed their lag.

Limited Progress Over a Short Period: Marginal improvements may have occurred, but the baseline situation in 2012-13 was already that of a mature education system with targeted issues. The primary enrollment rate was very high, around 97%. However, for the lower secondary cycle (middle school), a slight decline is observed, dropping from about 91% in 2012-2013 to 88% in 2018-2019. Efforts were therefore focused on secondary education and reducing the remaining inequalities.

Table 02: Total Adjusted Net Attendance Rate, Gender Parity Index (GPI) & Orphans /non-Orphans parity index. MICS6 (2018-2019).

	TANAR Primary Cycle				TANAR Lower Secondary Cycle				TANAR Upper Secondary Cycle			
Situation	Girls	Boys	Total	Gender Parity Index (GPI)	Girls	Boys	Total	Gender Parity Index (GPI)	Girls	Boys	Total	Gender Parity Index (GPI)
Orphan	95,3	100,0	97,2	0,95	80,1	49,4	66,7	1,62	9,3	54,5	32,4	0,17
Non-orphan	97,0	97,2	97,1	1,00	88,7	82,3	85,4	1,08	62,4	40,5	51,0	1,54
Orphans / non-Orphans	0,98	1,03	1,00	na	0,90	0,60	0,78	na	0,15	1,35	0,64	Na

TANAR: Total Adjusted Net Attendance Rate

• **Persistent Inequalities:** The fact that the gap in schooling between orphans and non-orphans remains significant in 2019, merely six years after the previous survey, underscores the profound vulnerability of orphans—a challenge that resists broad educational policies. The preceding table, in essence, provides a valuable diagnostic snapshot, revealing near-perfect parity between orphans and non-orphans at the primary level, with excellent enrollment rates for all (around 97%). There is virtually no difference between the two groups (parity index of 1.00). Regarding the gender parity index, particularly among orphans, a slight advantage emerges for boys (GPI = 0.95), yet enrollment rates for girls remain impressively high (95.3%). In contrast, both secondary cycles witness the emergence of a crisis for orphaned boys in the first secondary cycle (middle school). It is at this level that inequalities become starkly apparent. Enrollment rates for orphaned boys plummet to 49.4% (compared to 85.4% for non-orphans), while rates for orphaned girls remain respectable (80.1% versus 88.7% for non-orphaned girls). For this same cycle, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) among orphans is markedly elevated at 1.62. This is not an indicator of "parity" but rather a reflection of extreme inequality in favor of girls. An orphaned boy has 40% fewer chances of attending middle school than a non-orphaned boy. In other words, for every 100 enrolled orphaned girls, there are only about 60 orphaned boys. Orphaned boys in this cycle (middle school) drop out in mass, likely due to economic pressures (becoming income providers).

For the second secondary cycle (high school), a dual crisis unfolds, marked by the abandonment of orphaned girls. The situation thus becomes critical, with the gendered dynamics of inequality reversing. There is a general collapse, particularly catastrophic for girls (a mere 9.3%). The enrollment rate for orphaned boys (54.5%) surpasses that of non-orphaned boys. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) among orphans is extraordinarily low (0.17), signaling a near-total desertion by girls. The Orphans/Non-Orphans Parity Index, in turn, reveals substantial sex-based disparities (0.15 for girls versus 1.35 for boys). This paints a dire picture: an orphaned girl has 85% fewer chances of attending high school than a non-orphaned girl, whereas orphaned boys appear better enrolled than their non-orphaned peers. One may thus conclude that, at the high school level, the plight of orphaned girls is the most pressing concern. Explanatory factors are likely social and cultural in nature (domestic roles, marriage), including early marriages,

adolescent pregnancies, the burden of household chores within their host families, or a lack of academic ambition for girls without parental support.

• **Imperative for Targeted Interventions:** This analysis bolsters the conclusion that targeted interventions are essential. Universal policies (such as free schooling) are indispensable yet insufficient to reach the most vulnerable children, such as orphans. Scholarships and conditional assistance are required for orphaned boys in middle school to sustain their attendance; psychosocial support within schools and individualized monitoring for children in vulnerable situations—through, *inter alia*, protection and mentoring programs for orphaned girls in high school—are imperative. These measures must combat early marriages and promote the continuation of education.

The data from both surveys have unveiled stark disparities between orphans and non-orphans in terms of school completion and dropout rates. While the MICS4 (2012–13) had already indicated that orphans faced an elevated risk of dropout—particularly at the pivotal transition from middle to high school—the MICS6 (2018–2019) further corroborated that school dropout remains the paramount challenge. The disparity in completion rates between orphans and non-orphans arguably constitutes the most compelling indicator of the former's vulnerability. The bereavement of a parent continues to render children susceptible to economic and psychosocial perils that impede their full educational progression. The findings from both surveys affirm the intersecting nature of orphans' vulnerabilities:

- Household poverty emerges as the most potent predictor of non-enrollment or dropout among orphans.
- Gender and residential locale: Orphaned girls in rural areas constitute, in all likelihood, the most disadvantaged cohort.
- Educational attainment of the household head: This metric is pivotal; a low level of parental education within the host family circumscribes the orphan child's prospects.

3-4-Protection against Violence:

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted in Algeria by the National Office of Statistics (ONS) and UNICEF constitute invaluable repositories of data on the circumstances of children. The MICS4 (2012–2013) and MICS6 (2018–2019) encompass children aged 0–17 years,

with a particular emphasis on child protection within their respective modules (encompassing child discipline, family arrangements, and vulnerabilities). Nonetheless, a salient limitation resides in the absence of systematic disaggregation of violence indicators by orphan status across the final reports and secondary analyses. Orphans—comprising approximately 3% of children in the MICS4, with comparable figures in the MICS6—are delineated as a profoundly vulnerable cohort, beset by elevated risks of educational exclusion and socio-economic precarity, which may indirectly intensify their susceptibility to violence.

Below is a synthesis of the pertinent elements, drawn from official reports and analyses predicated upon these data (notably an analytical study of the MICS6 published in 2022). The indicators center on violent discipline (encompassing psychological aggression and/or corporal punishment) directed toward children aged 1–14 years (the standard MICS module; with no data available for children aged 0–1 year or 15–17 years regarding disciplinary violence). Protection against violence is gauged through its prevalence, forms, parental attitudes, and intersecting vulnerabilities.

➤ **General Prevalence of Disciplinary Violence Against Children:**

The two surveys disclose a high prevalence of violence, signifying inadequate protection at the national level. A modest decline is discernible between the MICS4 and MICS6, yet the rates persist at alarming levels (with over 80% of children exposed). This intimates marginal advancements, conceivably attributable to sensitization campaigns, alongside the enduring influence of cultural norms that legitimize violence as a pedagogical instrument.

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Table 03: Exposure to Different Forms of Violence

Indicator	MICS4 (2012–2013)	MICS6 (2018–2019)	Evolution	Source
Children (1–14 years) exposed to at least one form of disciplinary violence (psychological and/or physical)	86.3%	84.1%	Decrease of 2.2 points (stable, but high)	MICS4 Report (Table CP.4); MICS6 Analysis (2022)
Psychological aggression alone or combined	81.0%	77.7%	Decrease of 3.3 points	Ibid.
Physical punishment (all levels)	71.0% (of which 23% severe: blows with object causing injuries)	66.4% (of which 16.8% severe/violent corporal)	Decrease of 4.6 points	Ibid.
Non-violent discipline only	9.0%	10.5%	Slight improvement (+1.5 points)	Ibid.
Sample concerned	33,828 children (weighted)	40,229 children (1–14 years)	–	Ibid.

- **Cross-Cutting Trends:** Violence is more prevalent among boys (87.7% in MICS4 ; 85.1% in MICS6), in rural areas/South/High Plateaus, and in impoverished households or those characterized by low maternal education. It reaches its zenith between the ages of 3 and 9 years. These factors intersect with the vulnerabilities of orphans (who are frequently rural and impoverished).

➤ **Attitudes Toward Corporal Punishment :**

Parental attitudes evince a persistent tolerance, thereby circumscribing effective protection. Approximately 18–23% of parents/guardians deem physical punishments necessary, which substantiates the elevated prevalence observed.

Table 04 : Parental Attitudes Regarding Violence

Indicator	MICS4 (2012–2013)	MICS6 (2018–2019)	Evolution	Source
% of parents justifying physical punishments as necessary (children 2–14 years)	17.9%	23.0%	Increase of 5.1 points (concern)	MICS4 Report (Table CP.4); MICS6 Analysis (2022)
Justification of domestic violence (proxy for family norms affecting children)	59% (at least one reason: neglect, infidelity)	Not measured directly	–	MICS4 Report (Table CP.11)

- **Factors:** Elevated in rural areas (19.6% in MICS4), among older or less educated parents. In MICS6, approval is diminished among young parents (<25 years: 18.2%) and the most educated (18.5%).

➤ **Specificities Relating to Orphaned Children (0–17 Years):**

No direct disaggregation of violence by orphan status is available in the MICS4/MICS6 reports, notwithstanding the collection of data on family arrangements (94% of children reside with both parents; 3% are single orphans, 0.2% double orphans). Orphans are characterized as "vulnerable" in the analyses (intersecting with poverty, disability, and rural locale), with a doubled risk of exposure to violence owing to their socio-economic and psychosocial circumstances.

Table 05: Indirect Indicators of Vulnerability (Proxies for Protection Against Violence)

Indicator	MICS4 (2012–2013)	MICS6 (2018–2019)	Evolution	Notes
Prevalence of orphans (at least one parent deceased)	3.0% (higher in rural/South: 5%)	~3% (similar, not detailed)	Stable	MICS4 Report (Table CP.12); MICS6 (inferred)
Enrollment rate (0–17 years)	88.3% (vs. 95.7% non-orphans; gap of 7.4 points)	Overall improvement, but persistent gap (~96–97% orphans vs. >98% general)	Progress, but lag	MICS4 Report (Table CP.13); MICS6 Education Analysis
Exposure to severe accidents related to "parental correction" (<15 years)	0.1% (national)	Not measured	–	MICS4 Accidents Module (no orphan disaggregation)

- **Qualitative Analysis:** Orphans, frequently placed in foster families, confront heightened risks of neglect, economic exploitation, and psychological/physical violence (attributable to household poverty, the principal predictor of dropout and non-enrollment). The MICS6 study (2022) explicitly observes that orphans, alongside children with disabilities, endure a "double vulnerability": their status exacerbates the severity of punishments (e.g., 23.2% severe corporal punishments among children with functional difficulties vs. 16.6% without). Absent specific data, one may infer an elevated risk for orphans, consonant with global trends (UNICEF: orphans exposed 1.5–2 times more to violence in vulnerable contexts).

➤ **Implications for Child Protection and Recommendations:**

- **Limited Progress:** The high stability of disciplinary violence (86% → 84%) over six years suggests that universal policies—such as anti-violence legislation and free education—are inadequate in safeguarding the most vulnerable populations, including orphans. The increase in attitudes that justify corporal punishment (18% → 23%) remains a matter of grave concern.
- **Specific Challenges for Orphans:** Their vulnerability intersects with factors such as gender (rural orphaned girls being the most disadvantaged), poverty, and the low educational attainment of caregivers, thereby heightening the risks of school dropout particularly during the transition from middle to high school—and undetected instances of violence.
- **Data-Driven Recommendations:**
 - **Targeted Interventions:** Implementation of conditional scholarships and mentorship programs tailored to orphans; integration of psychosocial support services within schools.
 - **Legal Reinforcement:** Rigorous enforcement of Law No. 15-12 (2015) on the protection of children against all forms of violence; intensification of nationwide campaigns to eradicate corporal punishment (Ministère de la Solidarité Nationale, 2015).
 - **Future Data Collection:** Systematic disaggregation of data by orphan status in the forthcoming MICS7 survey to more precisely quantify disparities.
 - **Partnerships:** Enhanced collaboration between UNICEF and the National Office of Statistics (ONS) to develop protection programs, such as the school protection units initiated in 2022.

In summary, the findings from MICS4 and MICS6 underscore a systemic failure in protecting Algerian children from violence, with orphans facing heightened exposure due to intersecting vulnerabilities, notwithstanding the absence of direct empirical data. Urgent measures are imperative to convert these insights into inclusive and effective policies.

3-5- Monetary Poverty:

Monetary poverty, defined as a household's inability to meet essential needs (food, housing, education) with an income threshold below 2.15 USD per day per person (according to the World Bank's revised international

standards), particularly affects orphaned children in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (MENA, 2021). These children, often cared for by extended families (kinship care) or kafala systems, face an amplified risk of impoverishment due to the loss of parental support, exacerbated by economic crises, conflicts, and pandemics.

In the MENA region, approximately one in four children lives in extreme poverty, with a higher prevalence among orphans owing to the heightened vulnerability of host households. The monetary poverty rate among households with orphans has been estimated at 28.7% in Morocco (MICS 2018), 3.8% in Tunisia (MICS 2018) (Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, 2019), 4.1% in Algeria (MICS 2018-2019), and 5.2% in Egypt (DHS 2021).

• Monetary Poverty Indicators:

These indicators reveal an increased vulnerability among households hosting orphans: in terms of consumption expenditures, families in the MENA region (MENA, 2021) allocate an average of 45-60% of their budget to food (compared to 35-45% for others), exhibit educational expenditures 25-40% below the national average, and more frequently resort to negative coping mechanisms or "adverse adaptation strategies" such as the sale of assets or indebtedness. Regarding access to basic services, 30% of orphans under 5 years of age lack required vaccinations, school dropout rates are 2 to 3 times higher than the national average, and 45% of these households suffer from residential overcrowding.

• Factors of Heightened Vulnerability

Several factors converge to amplify the vulnerability of orphans. Their situation is particularly critical in rural areas (where poverty is 1.8 times higher in the MENA region), in households headed by illiterate individuals, or when household size exceeds six persons, creating an unsustainable dependency burden. Orphaned girls bear an additional toll, with vulnerability indicators exacerbated by 15 to 20% compared to boys.

Monetary poverty among households hosting orphans serves as a key driver of institutionalization within MENA countries. In Morocco, 22.3% of placements in social protection establishments (EPS) are directly linked to financial precarity, particularly affecting abandoned orphans from single-parent or extended families unable to cover school fees as early as 4-5 years of age. In Tunisia (Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, 2019), 32% of admissions to reception centers (CIJE) stem from socioeconomic factors,

with monthly transfers of 100-200 TND (approximately 30-60 USD) deemed insufficient amid inflation, covering only 41% of vulnerable children. In Algeria, despite a low national poverty rate (5.5% in 2022 according to the ONS), orphans in alternative care represent 1.5% of vulnerable children, exposed to deprivations without adequate social safety nets.

Monetary poverty impedes the holistic development of orphans, with multidimensional impacts:

- o **Health and Nutrition:** Poor children face a 50% higher risk of severe malnutrition. Three out of five children in the Middle East and North Africa suffer from "child food poverty." Among Syrian and Iraqi orphans, the post-COVID crisis has doubled cases of under nutrition.
- o **Education:** Financial precarity leads to school dropout. In Morocco, 70% of institutional placements **are** due to the impossibility of paying school fees. In Tunisia (Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, 2019), only 17% of family reintegration succeed due to persistent poverty.
- o **Psychosocial Well-Being:** Orphans in poor families endure chronic stress. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate that poverty reduction enhances family functioning, a pattern transferable to the MENA region.

An examination of Algerian MICS4 and MICS6 survey reports revealed that the incidence of monetary poverty in households sheltering orphaned children experienced a dramatic decline. It fell from 9.8% in 2012-2013 to a mere 1.6% in 2018-2019. This drastic reduction very likely reflects the impact of social policies and income redistribution measures implemented by the Algerian state during this period, particularly through various aid and subsidy systems. To further improve the plight of orphans, it is imperative to strengthen social protection systems by drawing on regional best practices, such as Tunisia's targeted family allowance programs or the successful community sponsorship mechanisms piloted in Senegal (Family, 2020) (Senegalese Ministry of Women and Family, 2020). The necessary enhancement of educational monitoring for orphans could leverage promising experiences in tutoring programs implemented in Morocco under the "Second Chance Schools" initiative.

It is also recommended to undertake a number of actions, including:

- o Prioritizing the integration of a dedicated module for orphans into existing social targeting systems,
- o Establishing a national registry of orphaned children,
- o Strengthening targeted monetary transfers for immediate financial support.
- o Developing psychosocial support programs, improving access to education through specific scholarships,
- o Enhancing the capacities of social workers for more effective care provision.
- o Reforming social protection systems by explicitly integrating orphans,
- o Elaborating regional development plans that account for specific vulnerabilities,
- o Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems for greater sustainability.

4-Conclusion & Discussion:

Algeria's MICS surveys reveal moderate yet uneven progress in the situation of orphaned children, characterized by a stable prevalence rate of 2.8-3% (with rare double orphans at 0.2%) and overwhelming predominance of extended family arrangements (94.1% living with at least one biological parent or in kinship care). While this stability demonstrates the resilience of traditional family structures, particularly care by grandparents or aunts/uncles, it exposes orphans to regional disparities (higher in Southern regions at 3.9%) and socioeconomic inequalities (3% in the lowest wealth quintiles).

A major achievement emerges in birth registration, reaching near-universal coverage (99.4% for orphans under 5 in 2019 versus 98.1% in 2013). This success starkly contrasts with administrative vulnerabilities observed in sub-Saharan Africa (up to 35% non-registration) and secures access to civic rights, healthcare, and education. However, it underscores the need for continued vigilance to prevent risks of economic exploitation or judicial obstacles.

•Educational Disparities:

Despite Algeria's remarkable overall educational performance (net primary enrollment >98%, secondary +15 points), significant gaps persist for orphans:

- o Slight improvement at primary level (96-97% vs. 92-94%)
- o Persistent secondary level challenges (75-80% vs. 87%)
- o Gender dynamics reveal alarming trends: orphaned boys drop to 49.4% in middle school (40% gap with non-orphans) due to economic pressures pushing them into labor forces, while orphaned girls collapse to 9.3% in high school (GPI 0.17), exacerbated by socio-cultural factors including early marriage and domestic burdens.

• Protection Concerns:

Violence prevention remains concerning with high prevalence of violent discipline (84.1% in 2019 versus 86.3% in 2013), including 77.7% psychological aggression and 66.4% physical punishment (16.8% severe). Although modestly declining, parental tolerance is increasing (23% justify corporal punishment, +5.1 points), particularly in rural areas and among less-educated mothers.

• Monetary Poverty Context:

Households hosting orphans face severe monetary pressure (incidence of 1.6% in MICS6 2018-2019 versus 9.8% in MICS4 2012-2013), reflecting the positive impact of Algerian redistribution policies. Nevertheless, poverty remains 1.8 times higher in rural areas and affects girls more severely (15-20% worsening). Within the MENA region (MENA, 2021), such poverty drives institutionalization (22.3% in Morocco, 32% in Tunisia) with multidimensional impacts: +50% malnutrition risk, 2-3x school dropout rates, and chronic stress.

• Policy Implications:

These findings reveal systemic "double vulnerability" - economic, educational, and protective - resistant to universal approaches. Progress in birth registration and poverty reduction validates state investments, yet persistent gender and rural gaps demand targeted reforms:

- Integration of orphan-specific modules in social systems
- Establishment of a national registry for orphaned children,
- Enhanced conditional cash transfers and scholarships
- Psychosocial support programs
- Legal protection reforms (Law 15-12)
- Systematic data disaggregation in MICS7

Algeria can transform these insights into inclusive policies by adapting regional best practices (Tunisian allowances, Moroccan tutoring, Senegalese sponsorship), ultimately breaking intergenerational vulnerability cycles. Strengthened ONS-UNICEF collaboration remains crucial for monitoring and evaluating these advancements toward SDG alignment.

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