ICSW NEWS
International Council on Social Welfare

Welcome Letter

by Antonio López Peláez, *ICSW Executive Director*

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the August – September 2025 issue of our newsletter.

We find ourselves immersed in a very complex context, with challenges in multiple dimensions of our lives. Poverty, the lack of universal social protection systems, and processes of social exclusion demand new coping strategies in a global context marked by uncertainty, geopolitical conflicts, and the revolution in digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Today more than ever, we must strengthen our ability to formulate shared diagnoses and establish common goals that enable us to enhance the personal and collective well-being of human beings. International organizations such as the ICSW play a fundamental role in raising awareness of problems, sharing diagnoses, establishing alliances, and disseminating good practices.

The Second World Summit for Social Development 2025, Qatar, November 4-6, 2025, is a key event in this process of shared diagnosis, as was the World Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. Throughout 2024 and 2025, in collaboration with our sister organizations, the IFSW and the IASSW, as well as the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD), we have designed various activities and submitted different proposals to the World Summit selection committee:

Together with IASSW and IFSW, we have submitted applications for three side events:
- Designing Integrated Social Policies for Inclusive and Sustainable Development
- Universal Social Protection as a Pillar of a Just Society
- Strengthening Social Integration through Intergenerational Solidarity

In collaboration with the International Consortium for Social Development, the IASSW and the IFSW, we have submitted a proposal titled Integrated Social Policy as a Core Driver of Sustainable Development. This proposal, inspired by WSSD Commitment 10 (and linked to commitments on enabling environment and social cohesion), is distinct from the above-mentioned side events. The final selections will be made by the Summit Secretariat (for side events) and by an independent NGO committee (for the Civil Society Forum), with decisions expected by mid-September.

In this issue of the ICSW newsletter, in addition to the traditional President's Corner, we have contributions from our colleagues in the MENA Region, who have sent us very relevant articles about their activities and the challenges facing the MENA Region. I would like to thank them very warmly for their commitment to the ICSW.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Gonzalo Cavero Cano, professor at URJC in Spain, who has worked as ICSW's information officer in 2024 and 2025, for all his excellent work. Due to other commitments, he left us in June 2025, but the ICSW will continue to be his home and we hope to continue to count on his contributions as a researcher in the field of social policy. After a complex selection process, I would also like to welcome our new administrative officer, Mrs. Maria Yepes, who will take up her new responsibilities at the ICSW on September 2, 2025. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the previous administrative officers, EDs, presidents, and MC members who, over the course of nearly 100 years, have been an essential part of the ICSW's successful history.

Take care and stay healthy,

Antonio López Peláez
ICSW Executive Director

President's Corner

Developing Integrated Social Policy: A Road Full of Paradoxes

by Sergei Zelenev, *ICSW President*

There's an old saying that "politics is the art of the possible." I've always felt that this applies just as well to social policy. No matter how ambitious our visions, they have to live within the realities of trade-offs, limited resources, and political constraints. That doesn't make them less important—if anything, it makes them more urgent to get right. In my experience, social policy has always been both an art and a balancing act, shaped not just by theories and models, but by the very specific national and local contexts in which it unfolds.

And yet, when we try to pin it down, social policy proves surprisingly slippery. It is less a fixed formula than an evolving conversation—its boundaries shifting with each social, economic, and political turn. For me, the most meaningful kind of social policy is one that reflects both where people are now and where they hope to go. It must be rooted in real conditions, but also leave room for aspiration. That is why I'm drawn to the idea of integrated social policy: an approach that sees the whole picture rather than just its separate pieces.

Definitions in this field are never straightforward. Societies change—sometimes gradually, sometimes in sudden bursts—and the definitions must follow. Technological shifts reshape economies, which in turn alter how people relate to one another. Across cultures and languages, the challenge grows: what "social policy" means in one country can be something else entirely in another. A measure that is transformative in one national context may be irrelevant—or even harmful—in another.

One way to anchor the concept is to link social policy to the broader notion of social welfare—understood not narrowly as aid to those in need, but as the well-being of the population as a whole. The International Council on Social Welfare has long embraced this perspective, as reflected in its Manifesto for the forthcoming Second World Social Summit in Doha in November 2025. In this sense, social welfare encompasses the organized means of meeting basic human needs, supporting mutual aid, managing collective risks, and distributing the benefits of progress in ways that strengthen cohesion and resilience. It is not just about responding to crises, but ensuring the security and stability that allow people to navigate life's uncertainties with confidence.

Seeing social welfare as the starting point changes how we think about integrated social policy. It's no longer about plugging gaps—it's about building systems, both formal and informal, that support people across the life course. Traditional pillars like healthcare, education, and social protection remain essential, but the agenda now also includes adapting to climate change, navigating the digital revolution, and supporting communities through demographic shifts. The stronger this foundation, the better prepared societies are to face economic shocks or cultural change.

Why integration matters

The idea of integration becomes obvious once you see how interdependent the challenges are. You can't address poverty without tackling education, health, and employment. You can't promote health without looking at housing. You can't prepare for climate change without considering its social and economic impacts. Gender equality, intergenerational equity, and migration all cut across the same landscape.

Integration means policies reinforce each other rather than work at cross purposes. Well-designed affordable housing, for example, can meet shelter needs, improve health outcomes, reduce energy costs, and advance environmental goals all at once. For me, integrated social policy is about coherence—seeing how different threads can be woven into something stronger than the sum of its parts. It's also about time horizons: designing with today's needs and tomorrow's risks in mind, building resilience so that when crises do come, societies bend but don't break.

The paradoxes of integration

The road to integrated policy is not a straight one—it's full of paradoxes. One is between universality and targeting. Universal programs foster solidarity and ensure no one is excluded, while targeted measures can focus resources where disadvantages are most acute. Yet targeting can bring complexity, errors, and stigma, while universality can be politically and financially demanding.

Another paradox is between stability and adaptability. People need to trust that their protections won't vanish overnight, yet policies must adapt to new challenges—whether triggered by economic cycles, technological shifts, or evolving social norms. Striking this balance requires strong institutions and genuine public participation. Co-designing programs with civil society involvement is not just desirable—it's essential.

There's also the tension between national autonomy and global interdependence. Social policy is largely made nationally, but the forces shaping it—migration, climate change, economic crises—ignore borders. For integration to work, it must be deeply rooted locally while engaging in and learning from international cooperation.

From vision to practice

Making integrated social policy real takes more than goodwill. It requires clear objectives that balance urgent needs with long-term goals; institutions that can work across silos; decisions grounded in evidence; and meaningful participation from those affected. It calls for stable, fair financing and the political courage to sustain policies long enough for them to bear fruit—plus the humility to adjust when evidence shows a better path.

In today's world, the urgency is undeniable. Climate change, rapid technological transformation, demographic shifts, and global health threats are not distant risks—they are here, shaping lives every day. Fragmented, reactive policies cannot keep up. We need frameworks that connect economic, social, and environmental priorities, and place human well-being at the center.

Finland's Circular Economy Roadmap is a case in point. More than a technical plan, it's a shift in how nation thinks about production, consumption, and the future. By linking growth to renewable materials, recycling, and sharing-based models, Finland has created jobs and businesses while fostering shared responsibility and sustainable habits. The environmental gains—less waste, lower emissions, reduced resource pressure—show that prosperity and sustainability can go hand in hand.

New Zealand's Wellbeing Budget offers a different but equally inspiring example. By moving beyond GDP as the sole measure of success, it reframes government's purpose as improving lives, not just growing the economy. Investments in mental health, child poverty reduction, Indigenous support, and resilience-building reflect a vision that values social cohesion alongside fiscal health. And by embedding climate and sustainability goals into budgetary decisions, New Zealand makes environmental care a normal part of economic planning rather than an afterthought.

A continuing human project

Developing integrated social policy will always involve navigating paradoxes, compromises, and uncertainty. But at its heart, it is about creating societies where people live not just safely, but with dignity and opportunity. Social welfare, seen as a shared responsibility, becomes less a technical problem to solve than an ongoing human project—one requiring vision, persistence, and the constant linking of the possible with the desirable.

Policies do not implement themselves—they are carried by people. Governments set frameworks and provide funding, but civil society, the private sector, and international organizations all have indispensable roles. And at the center are social workers and social development practitioners, the human link between design and reality. They identify gaps, unintended consequences, and opportunities for improvement, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of communities rather than just the assumptions of policymakers. Without them, even the best-designed policies can falter in practice.

If politics is the art of the possible, then social policy is the craft of turning that possibility into something people can feel in their daily lives. The more integrated our approach, the greater the chance that those possibilities become real for everyone.

Introduction to the contribution of MENA REGION on ICSW Newsletter

by

Bachir Tamer
President of MENA Region of CIAS

&

Driss Guerraoui,
Member of the Executive Committee of CIAS

With rare exceptions, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is torn apart by new generations of wars and insecurity. The vast majority of the region is weakened by the extensive damage and devastation inflicted on its critical infrastructure (schools, universities, hospitals, roads, highways, ports, airports, factories, and agricultural lands) by deadly conflicts.

The consequences of this state of affairs include institutional instability, worsening social, territorial, and gender-based inequalities, and technological, security, military, health, and food dependency.

Moreover, this region lacks clear political prospects and genuine leadership. As a result, MENA states are compelled to form alliances that distance them from the real concerns of their peoples.

This situation places the affected states almost outside the course of history, with little influence on the complex dynamics of international relations, geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geostrategy in the 21st century.

In this context, it is evident that North African countries experience highly differentiated development trajectories (Driss Guerraoui), while others, such as Libya, face ongoing destabilization with no institutional prospects on the horizon due to the absence of a state (Mostafa Kharoufi).

This, in turn, explains the sharply contrasting evolution of key indicators related to the foundation of universal social protection (Bachir Tamer and Driss Guerraoui).

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Social Protection in the MENA Region: Realities, Challenges, and Horizons

by

Bachir Tamer
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&

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Réseau Maroc du Conseil international d'Action Sociale

Social protection transcends the mere notion of a safety net; it serves as a pivotal instrument for forging a more equitable society, mitigating disparities, and fostering sustainable economic development. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it manifests in diverse forms, encompassing social security programs, informal assistance, and governmental initiatives such as cash transfers, health insurance, pensions, family allowances, and compensations for occupational illnesses and unemployment. Yet, amidst economic crises, conflicts, and rapid demographic transitions, these systems frequently struggle to meet the population's needs. This article offers a nuanced and humane perspective on the realities of social protection in the MENA region, examines the challenges impeding its progress, and envisions pathways toward a more just future, drawing upon recent data and concrete examples.

I- The Realities of Social Protection: A Fragmented Mosaic

1- Diversity Shaped by Contexts

The MENA region is far from monolithic; each nation has crafted its social protection system according to its resources, culture, and priorities. In Gulf monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, oil revenues enable generous subsidies—for fuel, electricity, and water—and programs like Saudi Arabia's Citizen's Account, which provides financial aid to households to offset rising energy costs. These countries also offer substantial pensions to public sector employees, though such benefits are typically reserved for citizens. Migrant workers, who constitute up to 80% of the workforce in some Gulf states, are largely excluded, often lacking access to health insurance or basic protections.

In contrast, countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt rely on more traditional social security frameworks, primarily covering formal sector workers. In Egypt, for instance, only 30% of the workforce benefits from health insurance, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021). In Morocco, the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) provides family allowances, yet these reach only about 20% of eligible families in certain regions. Compensation for occupational illnesses exists in theory but is often underfunded, particularly in high-risk sectors like construction, where accidents are common but rarely officially recognized.

In conflict-afflicted countries such as Syria and Yemen, social protection systems have collapsed. Prior to the war, 40% of Syrians had access to public health insurance; today, this figure has plummeted to below 10% (World Bank, 2023). In such contexts, international humanitarian aid—

cash transfers or food rations—often fills the void. In Yemen, approximately 5 million people depend on these programs, while in Jordan, the National Aid Fund supports 200,000 households—a commendable effort, yet insufficient given the scale of needs, particularly for refugees.

2- A Coverage Still Severely Limited

Despite these initiatives, social protection remains a privilege for many in the region. According to the World Bank (2023), 60% of the MENA population lacks access to formal social protection, whether health insurance, pensions, or unemployment benefits. Informal workers, who account for up to 70% of the labor force in countries like Egypt and Morocco, are largely overlooked. Women, youth, and rural populations are particularly vulnerable. In Tunisia, for example, only 15% of women in the informal sector benefit from health insurance, compared to 50% of men in the formal sector (ILO, 2022).

Persons with disabilities fare no better. In Morocco, the Allowance for the Support of Persons with Disabilities reaches approximately 100,000 beneficiaries, less than 10% of those eligible (Ministry of Solidarity, 2023). Unemployment benefits are nearly nonexistent, except in limited cases, such as in Tunisia, where fewer than 5% of the unemployed receive them (ILO, 2021). In Egypt, the Takaful and Karama program aids 3.6 million households—a significant effort, but a mere drop in the bucket for a country of over 100 million people.

3- The Pivotal Role of Social Transfers

Subsidies for essential goods, such as bread and fuel, remain a cornerstone of social protection in several countries. In Egypt, 70 million people benefit from the ration card system, but these programs are costly—1.5% of GDP in 2022 (World Bank, 2023)—and often disproportionately benefit the affluent. In Jordan, prior to the 2018 reforms, 80% of energy subsidies went to the wealthiest 20%. Countries like Tunisia, through the Amen Social program supporting 900,000 households, are shifting toward more targeted cash transfers, though budgetary constraints hinder their expansion.

II- Challenges: Structural and Conjunctural Obstacles

1- Heavy Economic Constraints

In Gulf countries, reliance on oil revenues renders social protection systems vulnerable to market fluctuations. In 2020, the drop in oil prices forced Saudi Arabia to scale back its Citizen's Account program. In non-oil-producing countries like Tunisia, where public debt reaches 90% of GDP (IMF, 2023), governments struggle to fund ambitious social programs. Compensation for occupational illnesses, for instance, is often nominal: in Algeria, less than 1% of injured workers receive adequate compensation.

2- The Burden of Informality and Unemployment

With high unemployment rates, particularly among youth (up to 40% in Tunisia and Egypt), and a dominant informal sector (70% of employment in some countries), social protection systems designed for formal workers exclude millions. In Algeria, only 20% of informal workers have access to health insurance. Women, predominant in this sector, are especially affected: in Morocco, fewer than 10% of them benefit from pensions (ILO, 2022).

3- Crises and Instability

Conflicts in Syria and Yemen have devastated social infrastructure, rendering protection systems nearly inoperative. In Syria, the public pension system, which once covered 1.5 million people, has ground to a halt. In Lebanon, political instability hampers reforms, while refugee inflows—1.3 million Syrians in Jordan and 1.5 million in Lebanon—strain local resources. Programs like Lebanon's Emergency Social Safety Net cover only 30% of refugees' needs (UNHCR, 2023).

4- A Complex Demographic Transition

The MENA region grapples with a dual demographic challenge: a youthful population in Egypt (60% under 30) and rapid aging in Lebanon (12% over 65). This demands versatile systems addressing diverse needs, from education and employment for youth to pensions for the elderly. Yet, pension systems, often in deficit, pose problems: in Tunisia, their shortfall reaches 2% of GDP (IMF, 2023). Disability allowances, though critical, remain marginal, as in Iraq, where only 5% of eligible individuals are covered.

III- Toward a More Inclusive Social Protection: Concrete Pathways

1- Reforming Subsidies for Better Targeting

Universal subsidies, costly and inequitably distributed, must give way to targeted cash transfers. Jordan has led the way with its National Aid Fund, which reduced energy subsidies by 2% of GDP while supporting 200,000 households. In Egypt, biometric databases for the Takaful program have cut leakages by 20% through better beneficiary targeting.

2- Integrating the Informal Sector

To include informal workers, innovative solutions are essential. In Morocco, the CNSS's micro-insurance programs could cover 500,000 workers by 2026, while universal health insurance has already reached 10 million people since 2021. Such models could inspire countries like Egypt, where informality prevails.

3- Strengthening Institutions

Robust institutions are the cornerstone of effective social protection. This requires training civil servants, building reliable data systems, and enhancing coordination with NGOs and international partners. In Jordan, collaboration with the World Food Programme enabled aid distribution to 500,000 refugees in 2023. Public-private partnerships, as in Tunisia for health insurance, could further expand coverage.

4- Investing in the Future: Health and Education

Sustainable social protection hinges on investments in education and health. In Egypt, the Takaful program has boosted school enrollment by 15% in rural areas since 2015. In Morocco, mandatory health insurance now covers 70% of the population, up from 30% in 2010 (Ministry of Health, 2023). These efforts reduce long-term vulnerabilities.

5- Responding to Crises

Faced with recurrent crises, MENA countries must develop adaptive systems. Emergency cash transfers in Lebanon supported 1.2 million people between 2019 and 2023. Such mechanisms could be bolstered by international funding, such as the $1 billion allocated by the World Bank to MENA social programs in 2023.

Conclusion

Social protection in the MENA region stands at a crossroads. Progress is evident, with the rise of cash transfers and expanded health coverage, but challenges remain formidable: rampant informality, political crises, budgetary constraints, and demographic shifts. The figures speak volumes: 60% of the population lacks formal protection, pension systems teeter on collapse, and unemployment or occupational illness compensations are virtually absent. Yet, hope endures. Through bold reforms, strengthened governance, and digital technologies, MENA countries can build more inclusive and resilient systems, capable of reducing poverty and promoting shared prosperity.

Yet, hope endures... MENA countries can build more inclusive and resilient systems, capable of reducing poverty and promoting shared prosperity.

The Tribe Resilience in the Libyan Conflict

by Dr. Mostafa Kharoufi, *Sociologist, Geographer and Political Scientist*
Expert vetted by the United Nations Crisis Bureau and the UNFPA

After four decades of oppression, the Libyan people was able to rise and to change its fate on February 2011. The Libyan revolt was civil in nature, and the revolutionaries' demands focused on their desire to put an end to Muaammar Gaddafi's dictatorship. Major protests and violent clashes were bloody and ended with the killing of Gaddafi on October 20, 2011. Since his death, contradictions between domestic political forces, as well as interference by external parties, suggest that the post-Gaddafi era is complex and tense for the foreseeable future.

Libya saw the rebel militias and political actors with tribal proclivities turning on each other in a mosaic of turf wars. Since 2012, flare-ups of violence are witnessed in western and southern Libya also left many dead, as fear and insecurity continued to reign, and groups were left to themselves to vie for resources. In addition, full-scale civil war came, when Islamist parties had sharp defeats in elections the United Nations had supervised, in the hope of bringing peace to the country. Insecurity has undermined efforts to build functioning political and administrative institutions and facilitated the expansion of armed militias within Libya and the wider region.

Although there were some positive developments, including successful elections in July 2012, these were overshadowed by mounting violence that stunted efforts to establish functioning political institutions. Violence is taking multiple forms, ranging from tribal disputes over territory and trading routes, to conflicts with alleged regime holdouts, to score settling, federalist maneuvering, and jihadist efforts to generally destabilize the country.

Such context is creating a political and security vacuum that affect Libyans at all levels and in all areas of the country. State institutions had already been hollowed out during Gaddafi's final years, and they quickly disintegrated soon after the start of the revolution. Today, Libya is de facto split in two: what remains of the Jamahirya in Tripolitania and Fezzan, on the one hand; Cyrenaica where there is no longer any state order, but popular committees, Islamist groups and armed gangs controlling pieces of territory. But this is leading to others, resulting in areas under tribal control such as Afghanistan or Somalia. Libya today is thus in a very precarious situation, as are conditions in the broader Sahel and Maghreb regions.

As a result, Libyans are forced to resort to their communal and local identity-based networks to ensure their security and survival. In this situation of government ineffectiveness or absence, tribes have become more prominent and in some areas even more powerful than formal actors. Given their prominence among the Libyan population, they have been both a central element of, and an obstacle to, the Libyan state formation process. The uprising of 2011 which symbolize the appearance of a national Libyan polity was in fact mobilized and organized along tribal lines. Across the country,

tribes and armed groups stepped in to fill the vacuum. Almost all Libyan families armed themselves and tribal communities became militarized. Moreover, the resilience of pre-modern tribalism and its relationship with political elite in Libya is recently raised at the regional level.

The present paper helps to understand tribes role and dynamics in the socio-political situation as they seem to be a major theme of discussion and analysis during and after the ongoing civil war between belligerents. In light of the growing uncertainty in Libya, it is important to contextual tribal dynamics in understanding current events - and the possible course of future ones-, to address problems of national importance. These dynamics are viewed in the context of Libyan society lacking the formation of a real civil society, political parties and autonomous organizations, where many Libyans are forced to resort to tribal connections in their everyday life.

Observers of the political practices and rationales as well as different conceptions of power, rule, and also legitimacy occur that Libya has the deeply rooted tribal system, and never functioned as a centralized state but as a tribal system headed by a dictator[1]. These observers[2] deduced "that tribalism in culture and the tribe as an institution will continue to exert influence on socio-political interactions and on individual and group identities in Libyan society". They argue that local and regional tribal and extended family politics play a key role in this setting by creating order according to their specific logics of action[3].

Tribes in Libya: Influential actors on the political scene

A brief historical overview on Libya's political life shows that Libyan tribes are playing a major role which cannot be understated in determining the future shape of Libya. Historians, scholars and experts have already showed the role of tribes in Libyan society, giving examples of the entanglement of tribes and politics, starting from their fight against Ottoman, and later Italian colonialism with many Libyan tribal members sacrificing their lives in this war[4].

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[1] Al Ahram Online, Libya: troubled History, Thursday 23 Jul 2020

[2] Youssef Mohammad Sawani. – "- Post-Qadhafi Libya: interactive dynamics and the political future. – Journal of Contemporary Arab Affairs, Center for Arab Unity Studies, January 2012, pp. 1-26

[3] Thomas Hüsken. - Tribes, Revolution, and Political Culture in the Cyrenaica Region of Libya, in Local politics and contemporary transformations in the Arab World. –Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013 pp. 214-231

[4] One example of resistance was presented by eastern Arab tribes who had been brought together under the leadership of a Sufi order led by the Senussi family. These tribes fought bitterly against Italian rule in the interwar period, which gave the impetus to the foundations of Libyan nationalism and played a vital role in the integration of tribal society and national cohesion of modern Libya. E. E Evans-Pritchard.- "The Sanusi of Cyrenaica", Journal of the International African Institute, Vol 15, n 2, April 1945, pp. 61-79

This political and cultural legacy (which is found to different degrees in the political configuration of other Arab countries), was powerful in strengthening Libyan nationalism and leading to the revival of a strong attachment the clan and tribe. Memories of this period have not yet faded, and an appreciation of this background is essential in understanding present-day Libya. Also, the majority of Libyans continue to depend on their tribes for protection, secure their rights, and find employment, which all depend on the strength of the tribe or the degree of closeness or loyalty to the ruling regime. Yet, this sense of belonging to a community is not necessarily incompatible with other identities.

The tribe (qabila) in Libya should not be understood as a relic and static social structure but rather as ever-changing entity which can include a wide range of social organizations. And "tribalism and its meaning for Libyans, though, has evolved over the centuries, initially in response to outside powers and more recently to internal circumstances".[5] Observers identified more than 100 tribes and clans across Libya, divided across three main ethnicities: Arab, Berber, and African. Historically, most tribes are descendant from two largest and influential Arab tribes originated from the Arab Peninsula, the Bani Sulaim tribe that settled in Cyrenaica, the eastern coastal region of Libya, and the Bani Hilal that settled in western Libya around Tripoli[6]. Families that have bound to one another through marriage, geography and trade have equally been considered as new tribal groups, creating distinction and hierarchies amongst the tribes and between them.

However, many of the tribal groups, far from being homogeneous groups located in a unitary area, seem to be networks of people who live far from each other and barely (if at all) know the identity of their tribal leaders. This communal organization has even allowed Libyans to maintain links with neighboring countries: Egypt and Tunisia, which played previously important roles towards polarizing loyalties of the Libyan Bedouin tribes[7]. It is also important to stress that only a few tribal groups (around 30) are truly influential, and have dominated the political and social scene for decades. Based their constituency and geographical position, most leading tribes are the following:

- Warfala is the largest tribe in the country due to its number and geographical presence. It is the dominant tribe of Tripolitania (west of Libya), with members spread across different Libyan cities, but considering Bani Walid as its home base. Warafla is characterized with strong, deeply rooted bonds of tribal loyalty and solidarity[8]

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[5] Peter Cole with Fiona Mangan. – Tribe, Security, Justice and peace in Libya today, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2016, p. 3

[6] Ibn Khaldoun. – Al Muqaddimah. – Text in Arabic

"وانظر إلى ما ملكوه وتغلبوا عليه من الأوطان من لدن الخليقة, ... ,أفريقية والمغرب لما جاز إليها بنو هلال وبنو سليم منذ أول المئة الخامسة وتمرسوا بها لثلاث مئة وخمسين من السنين" ...المقدمة, الفصل السادس والعشرون ص. 288

https://www.noor-book.com/-pdf

[7] Such was the case prior to the arrival of the Turks, whereby Mamluk Egypt politically influenced the large tribes of East Libyan (Cyrenaica Tribes). Tarek Tarek (2016) Tribe and state in the history of modern Libya: A Khaldunian reading of the development of Libya in the modern era 1711–2011, Cogent Arts & Humanities, 2016,https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1183278

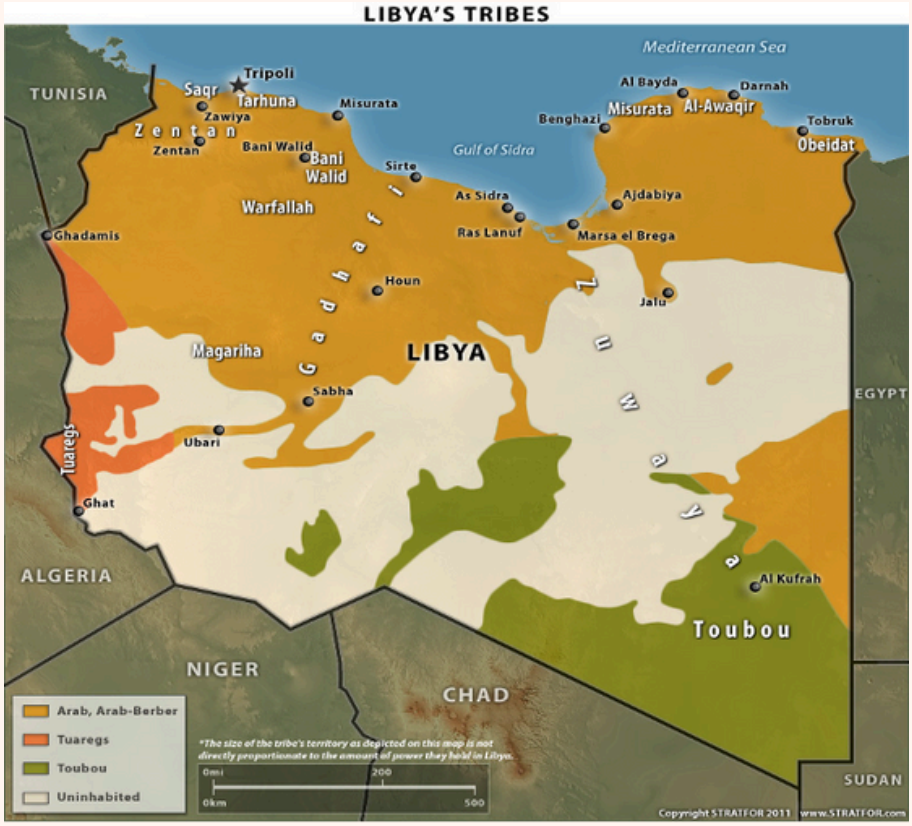
[8] Tarek Ladjal. - Tribe and state in the history of modern Libya: A Khaldunian reading of the development of Libya in the modern era 1711–2011. - Mediterranean politics, May 2016, pp

- Magarha: the second most populous of Libyan tribes, inhabiting the southern regions of Wadi al-Shati and Sebha;
- Zintan: concentrated in the Nafusa mountains region in the western part of Libya (some 150 km to the South West of Tripoli). Most of its members belong to the Amazigh minority. The tribe has become a stronghold of post-Gaddafi Libya
- Obeidat: One of the most powerful tribes in Cyrenaica region (around Tobruk). One of their dominant groups is Sa'da, whose members settled in the region in the eighteenth century. Their territories span from Derna to the Imsa'id border crossing with Egypt. Five groups in the Tobruk region are especially significant: The dominant Sa'da, Al-Mnaffa. the Msika and the Ulum, and Al-Qut'an who inhabit the region spanning the modern Egyptian border[9].
- Zawiya: located in the oil-rich southeast;
- Qadhadhfa: Gadhafi's own tribe, among eight tribal groups of Sebha, the original inhabitants of the Sabha oasis are a collection of minor tribes collectively called the Fezzazna: Awlad Bu Saif, Awlad Sulaiman, Hasawna based to the north of Sabha,Magharha, based in Birak al-Shati'.
- Tebu. A Saharan ethnic group who live across southern Libya, northern Chad, and northeastern Niger. The Tebu have its own language and cultural norms.
- Tuareg. A Saharan Berber ethnic group spread across the Maghreb and Sahel, including southern Libya, Mali, Niger, and Algeria. Traditionally nomadic pastoralists, many Tuareg are now seminomadic. They have their own language and cultural norms.

[9] Larcher Wolfram. - Libya's Local Elites and the Politics of Alliance Building. – Mediterranean politics, October, 2015, pp 64-85

Tribes dynamics in conflict situation

Although the tribes role seems to be reduced since 1969 (as Gaddafi was opposed to the tribal framework during the beginning of his reign), their cultural and social weight remains very important[10]. They nevertheless successfully sought to develop the logic of a clan State (pertaining predominantly to the Al-Gaddadfa tribe[11]). Their influence in Libya is extremely important, since with tribal affiliation is considered with regards to obtaining employment in Libya's General People's Committees, as well as in the country's security apparatus…



Since 2011, Libya is noticing a collapse of central authority and the fragmentation of the political landscape and territory. Since 2014, Libya is almost divided into two competing polities : Interim Government and a House of Representatives in the east and a General National Congress with the Salvation Government in the west. Observers argue also that today's Libya is more fragmented and lawless than ever, as the country "is no longer a tribal system headed by an eccentric dictator" but a country with no centre, with battling tribes, confused foreign alliances, overrun with arms and mercenaries.

Different Libyan actors coalesced into two warring camps making competing claims to legitimacy and authority, but neither was able to prevail. A competition for power is engaged between these actors, and successive Libyan governments have struggled to assert control amid the proliferation of rival political parties exerting nuisance power and preventing the re-establishment of central government control. These multitude of actors are mostly organized at the local level, and their influence derived from control over local territory and the ability to speak for local constituencies: cities, tribes, ethnic groups or regions.

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[10] The leadership of the Magariha tribe acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Gaddafi and his regime for securing the return of one of the tribe's members, Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, from prison in Britain after he was convicted of being behind the Lockerbie bombing
[11] Tarek op cit, p. 11

North Africa

Highly Contrasting Levels of Development

by Driss Guerraoui, *President of the Open University of Dakhla-Morocco*

While taking into account that Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya have been facing acute political, economic, social, security, and stability issues for over 20 years, which have conditioned their economic and social performance and the development of their infrastructure, the results achieved by the five North African countries in these three areas are highly contrasting.

1- Economic Indicators:

Regarding the GDP growth rate between 1980 and 2023, Morocco saw this rate multiply by approximately 5.5, reaching $141.1 billion USD in 2023, the highest rate compared to Algeria and Tunisia, with GDP growth rates of approximately 4.1 and 4.5, respectively. The case of Mauritania, with a growth rate of 7.3, is explained by the very low GDP level, which was around $1 billion USD in 1980 (World Bank, 2023).

Regarding the Global Competitiveness Index, the ranking of Maghreb countries in 2023 among the 141 countries evaluated is 85 for Algeria, 68 for Morocco, 138 for Mauritania, and 93 for Tunisia (estimates based on World Economic Forum trends). For the Doing Business ranking, among 190 countries in terms of ease of doing business, the rankings are 155 for Algeria, 185 for Libya, 53 for Morocco, 150 for Mauritania, and 78 for Tunisia (World Bank, 2024). Regarding governance, measured among other things by the level of corruption, according to Transparency International data for 2023, the ranking among 180 countries is 97 for Algeria, 172 for Libya, 70 for Morocco and Tunisia, and 141 for Mauritania.

In terms of new communication technologies, the percentage of internet users relative to the population in 2023 is 49.5% for Algeria, 22.1% for Libya, 63.2% for Morocco, 20.4% for Mauritania, and 54.7% for Tunisia (ITU, 2023). Regarding global security, measured by the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants, the rates in 2023 are estimated at 1.3 in Algeria, 2.7 in Libya, 1.1 in Morocco, 9.5 in Mauritania, and 2.9 in Tunisia (UNDP, 2024).

The consequence of these performances related to the general business environment is the strengthening of Morocco's attractiveness compared to other North African countries.

2- Infrastructure Development:

Regarding infrastructure, the port quality index, which ranges from 1 for countries with poorly developed ports to 7 for those with highly developed ports, places Morocco among developed countries in this area with an index of 5.1, while this index is 4.4 for Italy, 5.2 for France, 5.3 for

Portugal, and 5.6 for Spain; the global average ranges between 4.2 and 5.1 in OECD member countries. For other Maghreb countries, this index is 3.5 for Algeria, 3.4 for Tunisia, 2.7 for Libya, and 2.7 for Mauritania (World Bank, 2023).

The same observation applies to the Logistics Performance Index for 2023, which evaluates the quality of commercial and transport infrastructure and ranges from 1 for low quality to 5 for high quality. In this regard, Morocco ranks first among Maghreb countries with an index of 2.45, followed by Algeria with 2.43, Libya with 2.27, Mauritania with 2.28, and Tunisia with 2.12 (World Bank, 2023).

Regarding roads, in 2023, Morocco is ranked by Global Economy among the top five African countries with high-quality roads out of 38 countries. Algeria is ranked ninth, Tunisia nineteenth, and Mauritania second to last.

In terms of airports, the 2024 World Airport Awards by Skytrax rank Singapore-Changi Airport first for the tenth consecutive year, followed by Tokyo-Haneda and Doha-Hamad International. In Africa, the ranking is dominated by South African airports (Cape Town, Durban King Shaka, and Johannesburg). For the Maghreb, Moroccan airports in Marrakech (5th) and Casablanca (9th) appear in the African Top 10. No other North African airports are included.

Still in the area of infrastructure, two "success stories" achieved by Morocco should be highlighted: the Tangier-Casablanca High-Speed Rail Line and the Tangier Med Port. These two achievements give Morocco an edge in maritime and rail transport in the Mediterranean and Africa. At the same level, with the ongoing construction of the Dakhla-Atlantic Port, set to be completed in 2029, Morocco's southern provinces are poised to become a true international hub, connecting the Africa-Europe-Atlantic and Asia regions via the Middle East, paving the way for what could be called the "Dakhla Route."

3- Social Indicators:

Regarding social development indicators, the youth unemployment rate (15–24 years) in 2023 is estimated at 22.5% in Algeria, 38.0% in Libya, 19.0% in Mauritania, 34.5% in Tunisia, and 17.5% in Morocco. The proportion of the population living in multidimensional poverty is estimated at 48.0% in Algeria, 32.0% in Libya, 75.0% in Mauritania, 54.0% in Tunisia, and 1.5% in Morocco (UNDP estimates, 2023).

However, despite these performances, the ranking of Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) remains unsatisfactory compared to Algeria and Tunisia. In 2023, this ranking, established by the United Nations based on a comparison of 189 countries, is 80 for Algeria, 89 for Tunisia, 112 for Libya, 120 for Morocco, and 160 for Mauritania (UNDP, 2023). This underperformance of Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya is mainly due to their insufficient results in education and health, despite the progress made by these countries in recent years.

Amel Association as a Social Movement: From Humanitarian Action to Structural Uplift or Humanitarianism as Resistance:

Amel Association and the Architecture of Social Change

by Dr. Kamel Mohanna, *Founder and President of Amel Association International, Liban*

Since its founding in 1979, Amel has stood not merely as a humanitarian organization, but as a progressive social movement rooted in the struggles of people for justice and dignity. It emerged during a defining historical moment, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with a bold vision to pioneer a new model of social engagement: one that transcends service provision to transform the very fabric of society.

The broad presence of Amel centers across Lebanon, particularly in areas most scarred by the civil war, carries both symbolic and strategic weight. This distribution was no coincidence; it was a deliberate effort to overcome the geography of conflict and fragmentation by drawing an alternative map grounded in solidarity, justice, and human connection. Amel's mission is carried out through participatory fieldwork, driven by a predominantly young team, 80% of whom are women and girls, comprising both full-time staff and volunteers, many serving as leaders within their own communities. Amel is, above all, a space for nurturing leadership and building collective resilience.

Throughout history, social movements have emerged as turning points in shaping societies, from 19th-century liberation struggles to the civil, feminist, and environmental rights movements of the 20th century, and the transnational digital movements of the 21st. These movements have been interpreted through various theories: from classical theories focusing on psychological dynamics, to resource mobilization theory emphasizing organization and resources, and new social movement theories highlighting identity and culture.

Within both the global and Arab contexts, Amel's emergence stands as a living embodiment of this broader historical trajectory. It began as a spontaneous response, led by myself alongside a group of volunteers and supporters, to the devastating consequences of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the collapse of state institutions, and the erosion of solidarity. Yet what started as an urgent reaction soon evolved, guided by Amel's founding vision, into a comprehensive social movement, one with a clear agenda for change and practical tools to help build a more just and equitable society.

Amel and Social Change Movements: Theoretical Roots

Experience has shown that genuine social movements do not arise in a vacuum, but at the intersection of urgent need, collective will, and historical momentum. In this light, Amel stands as a vivid embodiment of new social movement theory, which emerged in the late 20th century to expand the scope of activism beyond economic demands, embracing questions of identity, justice, and liberation.

Through a vision that fuses relief with development and humanitarian action with social justice, Amel has become a collective force grounded in the everyday needs of people, an engine for reshaping social and political relationships. It is a living illustration of Alain Touraine's theory of "cultural transformation," where humanitarian engagement becomes a platform for cultivating new forms of collective consciousness that transcend sectarianism and clientelism.

At the Core of Amel's Philosophy

Amel has consistently upheld the motto of "positive thinking and continuous optimism" in a landscape often marked by pessimism, inertia, and scattered energies. As a civil institution, it delivers social, health, legal, and culturally enlightening programs, anchored in a deep commitment to the human citizen, rejecting sectarianism, and embracing both national and pan-Arab dimensions.

Within both the national and Arab contexts, Amel serves as a "resistance mechanism" against social marginalization, poverty, injustice, and deepening inequalities, including the divide between rich and poor, as well as against the surrender of dignity by those who are most marginalized. Amel's methodology is rooted in what we call the "three Ps":

- **(Principles) the institution believes in.**
- **(Positions) it takes to express those principles.**
- **(Practices) that ensure sustainability.**

At the heart of Amel's mission lies the unwavering defense of human dignity, every human being's dignity. This principle is the cornerstone of all belief in human rights: the recognition that every person, by virtue of their humanity alone and regardless of affiliation, is entitled to a set of rights that must be upheld in all circumstances. These rights are not bestowed by any authority; they are inherent, born of dignity itself.

To protect this dignity is to affirm each individual's freedom and sovereignty over their body, choices, and life path. It means empowering people, physically and intellectually, as Amel's programs strive to do, so they may shape their own future, free from dependency or subjugation.

Pillars of the Roadmap to Achieve the Mission:

- **Working with popular communities, as there is no democracy without development.**
- **Commitment to just causes, foremost among them the Palestinian cause.**
- **Struggling against double standards, especially between East and West.**
- **Fighting for fair distribution of wealth, nationally and globally.**

- **Building a state of social justice where the public sector oversees the private, and humanitarian organizations complement government shortcomings, becoming a pressure force for policies that serve marginalized communities.**
- **Protecting the environment and confronting climate change, which threatens the planet's future.**

Criticism is Easy, Art is Difficult

What sets Amel apart, beyond its rights-based and humanitarian vision, is its steadfast commitment to carefully crafted operational principles that shape its internal dynamics and its engagement with society. Amel is not simply a provider of programs or a responder to crises; it operates through a deliberate, structured approach designed to ensure both the effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions.

Building common ground in fractured societies requires foundational skills, chief among them attentiveness and responsiveness to others in the pursuit of shared understanding through dialogue. Yet today, public discourse is often dominated by self-aggrandizement, the demonization of others, and a tendency to accuse rather than empathize. Self-critique is largely absent, giving way to individualism, fragmentation, and a weakened collective spirit. Energy is too often expended on narrating reality rather than transforming it; slogans are echoed without earnest follow-through, while real progress is stifled by an "all-or-nothing" mindset that hinders compromise and collective action.

In response, Amel adopts a set of rules shaping institutional dynamics and relations with people, reflecting its deep belief in human capacity for change and cooperation:

- Trust in people. Experience determines whether this trust is well-placed, but the aim remains cooperation and developing others' potential.
- Love for people. This builds common ground and generates empathy and compassion. Dialogue helps us understand complex issues, and responsiveness to others reflects human richness. Human collaboration potential exceeds what institutions allow. Lack of mutual understanding should not prevent engagement. We can build meaningful connections rather than seeing others as mere reflections of ourselves.
- Access to sufficient information (data) about any topic being addressed.
- Clear planning for every issue tackled.
- Recruitment of competent personnel to implement the plan.
- Evaluation and adjustment of the plan based on field experience.

From Aid to Action: The Empowerment Strategy

Amel views every human not as a passive recipient of aid, but as an active agent of change. Guided by this belief, it has embraced a gradual empowerment approach, focusing on the most marginalized populations through initiatives in health, education, child protection, and women's empowerment. Every Amel center and mobile clinic serves as a hub for social mobilization, grounded in the conviction that dignity is not bestowed, it is earned through awareness, organization, and collective action.

This methodology draws on Resource Mobilization Theory, which asserts that the success of social movements lies in their ability to effectively harness both human and material resources. In this context, Amel is far more than a service provider; it is a living laboratory for constructing a more just and equitable society.

Social Protection: A Humanitarian Lens and a Tool for Transformation

Social protection must not be seen solely as a technical safety net but as a reflection of a society's view of humanity. When humans are ends, not means, protection becomes a liberating act that reinforces dignity and justice.

Historically, social movements have been the guardians of this vision, advocating labor laws, health guarantees, and social security through workers', feminist, and community struggles. Protection is not a gift from authority, it is a right earned through organization, awareness, and pressure.

Amel sees social protection as central to its mission, not merely through service provision, but by building a participatory social system where responsibility is shared between the state, civil society, and local communities to guarantee basic dignity and justice for all.

Resisting Disintegration: Protection as a Liberatory Act

In a world marked by social fragmentation, war, and excessive globalization, Amel's experience restores the meaning of solidarity. Development, in Amel's view, is not technical improvement but collective liberation from the grassroots.

By protecting vulnerable groups, women, children, migrant workers, and the elderly—Amel rebuilds the social safety net and redefines the relationship between the individual and the community. It is a movement resisting social disintegration, fostering belonging and nurturing citizens who actively shape their own futures.

Amel invites us to view social protection as a unifying national project, not exclusive to the state or humanitarian organizations but requiring all sectors (public, private, and community-based) to cooperate. Protection must go beyond service delivery to include policy change, expanded justice, and investment in knowledge to diagnose inequality and propose fair, sustainable solutions.

This demands a holistic approach linking individual rights with collective choices, local action with global vision, and field practice with academic analysis—transforming protection from crisis management into a driver for social renaissance. That is why the Amel model is a transformational horizon that can be adapted and expanded to uplift communities worldwide—where the human is not a problem to be solved, but the solution itself.

Amel as a Social Conscience for Justice

Amel is part of a long tradition of Arab and global social movements that resisted oppression and marginalization, seeking to rebuild society on foundations of justice and equality. In an era of shrinking public space and hollowed-out democracies, Amel insists on restoring the essence of the social contract: that people are agents of their own fate, not passive recipients of decisions.

In a world dominated by individualism and market logic, Amel represents a moral voice restoring the human conscience, not through slogans but through the cumulative impact of committed daily action. From care centers in villages, to empowerment in camps, to community dialogues in cities, it builds networks of hope and cohesion.

Amel is not an elitist project, it is a people's movement, standing with them in their battle to reclaim dignity and meaning in a turbulent world. It is not just an organization—it is a living social conscience and a renewed liberation project. It is not an institution—it is a movement for liberation.

A Horizon for the Future

In a time of growing challenges and collapsing protection systems, Amel offers a renewed model of social protection—as a liberatory act and transformative project rooted in and for the people. In a region saturated with sectarianism and division, Amel—under the leadership of a young generation—has redefined protection not as a top-down safety net but as a participatory community process built on people's awareness, capacity for organization, and struggle for justice.

This model does not separate relief from development, nor individual from community—it centers the human in all policies, not as a tool for economic or security agendas but as their purpose.

Each Amel center and every field activity becomes a space for resistance against marginalization and a platform for new consciousness centered on human dignity and participatory citizenship. By combining principles, positions, and practices, Amel has demonstrated the possibility of creating alternative public policy models based on partnership between the state and civil society, and dismantling clientelist and sectarian ties in favor of building a state of care and social justice.

This very path led to Amel's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize and other global awards, due to its pioneering work with refugees, migrants, and all those whose voices are silenced by injustice, not only in the Arab world, but globally. Its branches in the US, Italy, France, and Belgium strive to build a more just world and reorient humanitarian work toward rights-based, not charity-based, action.

But the pressing question now is: How can this model be generalized and developed to uplift entire communities striving to break free from poverty, violence, and deprivation? How can today's tools, technology, research, serve this human project?

Today's world often uses science and technology to dominate and widen gaps, rather than uphold dignity. Amel opens a new horizon, where knowledge is employed not to feed markets or bolster authority, but to protect societies and preserve their humanity.

The future of social protection begins here: with social movements able to renew their tools, seize transformative moments, and propose practical models that balance efficiency with justice, science with conscience, and individual with collective interests. While national visions fade and institutions erode, Amel reminds us that building a just society is not the state's responsibility alone, but a shared duty among all forces that believe the human is the end, not the means.

Conclusion

The President of Amel Association, Dr. Kamel Mohanna, also serves as the General Coordinator of the Arab NGO Network for Development. Amel is a member of most international platforms working to enhance human dignity regardless of identity, and is one of the first organizations from the Global South to expand to the North and beyond, affirming that every human being is the center and foundation, and that commitment to just causes, foremost the Palestinian cause, the most just in modern history—must remain central in a world where human values are retreating under the weight of brutal materialism and the commodification of humanity.

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!

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