

***Development in border areas as a way to create a free zone - an evaluation study
(Case study Al-Talib Al-Arbi Township El -Oued)***

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Study Summary:

This study seeks to shed light on a topic that receives great attention locally and globally, namely the development of border areas, especially in developing countries. The study focused on the financial aspect of the issue by evaluating development programs and how to manage the spending of the amounts programmed in the state budget

The study also focused on evaluating the efforts of the Algerian public authorities in recent years to break the isolation of these areas and develop them according to the principle of regional justice and improve the lives of their residents in all areas of life, and evaluating the development programs and strategies outlined by the government in this regard.

The case of the municipality of Taleb Al Arabi in the south of the state of El Oued was studied as a model for border areas and how the state is striving to develop it by allocating huge sums and developing vital strategies and projects to establish it as a free economic zone that attracts investors and adopts it as a gateway for importing and exporting local products to African markets and bringing in hard currency to advance the national economy outside the hydrocarbon sector. The study also sought to develop solutions and suggestions to accelerate the wheel of development in these border areas and how to address the obstacles they face.

The study concluded that the development of the Arab student border area with Tunisia is still far from what is hoped for, as it still suffers from weak infrastructure, basic facilities and equipment. It is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the strategic plans of the President of the Republic and double the efforts of the relevant authorities to prepare it and exploit the privileges and strengths of this area to become a free zone capable of attracting investors.

Keywords: Development, development programs, border area, free zone. Economic exchange

Introduction

Like many developing countries, Algeria faces the problem of developing its border areas, especially the southern ones, due to its vast area, as the total area of the Border States in Algeria reached 928,720 km², equivalent to 39%, the distance between population centers, the complex environment of these areas, and the security threats facing residents of the border strip.

The public authorities attach great importance to the development of their border areas by enacting laws and setting programs and strategies to exploit the available potential in all its forms according to the principle of justice in the development of regions with the aim of promoting infrastructure and basic structures, breaking the isolation of these areas, improving the living environment of citizens in all areas of life, creating political stability and reducing threats and risks emanating from the borders.

Within the framework of implementing the instructions of the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, to create free zones in the south of the country, including the Taleb Arabi region in the state of El Oued, where the government has intensified its efforts to transform it into an economic free zone that attracts foreign investment and a pivotal space for development and exchange at the Maghreb and African levels, to win the bet of exporting its local products to African markets, which is what we are witnessing in the implementation of development programs by the local communities of the state.

From this standpoint, the following question comes to mind:

What is the reality of the development of border areas in Algeria - the municipality of Taleb Arabi in the state of El Oued - and what are the efforts made to create it as a free economic zone???

Study objectives

This study seeks to shed light on the development programs outlined by the Algerian government and local communities within the framework of developing their border areas and focusing on the Arab student area in the border state of El Oued with sisterly Tanous, and to evaluate the process of implementing completed and under-construction projects and highlight the impact of this development process on the lives of citizens in this area, and to identify the difficulties facing the authorities in implementing this process. The study also aimed to highlight the intensive efforts made by the Algerian state to create the Arab student area as a free economic zone attracting foreign investment to win the bet of exporting its local products to African markets.

Study methodology: To achieve the study objectives, we relied on the descriptive approach to describe the study variables and extract information from previous studies and research. We also relied on the analytical approach in analyzing and evaluating some data extracted from the Directorate of Local Administration of the state of El Oued.

Previous studies:

1- Study of Ghalem Abdel Rahman "Sustainable development in border areas - Case study of Algeria"

This study dealt with a set of new measures that aim to upgrade border areas and will have significant repercussions on development in border areas, create jobs, double commercial activity in these spaces, and enhance economic integration with neighboring countries. The study relied on the descriptive approach in the theoretical aspect and the case study approach by presenting the reality of border areas in Algeria and the most important problems they suffer from, especially in their development aspect, as well as the mechanisms adopted to address them.

2- Study of Shenhel Hajar, Regional planning strategy to achieve sustainable development and economic efficiency. - The National Plan for Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development (SNAT) as a model

This study focused on answering the problem of how the National Plan for Territorial Planning contributes as a planning tool to the sustainable development strategy on the one hand and to ensuring economic efficiency on the other hand. The study concluded in the end that the national plan stipulated in Law 01/20 on Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development and approved in 2010 is a tool for planning and reorganizing the national territory and ensuring gains, and defines the strategy for planning and developing Algeria for the next two decades, i.e. in the horizons of 2030, where it laid the foundation stone and initial initiatives that allow the link between the various economic and social development activities with the necessity of preserving the environment and achieving its sustainability, so it was necessary to surround it with a set of guarantees that ensure the achievement of its objectives.

3- Study by Belkacem Mimouni and Boujemaa Lahbil "The reality and requirements of development in the southern border areas" This study focused on examining the reality of development in the southern border areas as priority areas in the development projects outlined by the public authorities and highlighting the basic requirements for achieving the desired development in these areas. The study concluded that despite the huge amounts of money directed to achieve the development goals of the southern border areas, the reality reflects this, as they remain far from the desired goals, especially in view of the education and health sectors, which face a major shortage in terms of meeting the needs of the population, which negatively affects development in these areas. Therefore, the highest priority must be given to these two sectors and focus on improving them by developing a strategic vision that covers all the shortcomings that threaten stability, including the stability of the workforce.

4- Ben Allal Belkacem et al.'s study "The role of free zones in attracting foreign direct investment (the case of Algeria)" This paper aimed to study the Algerian free zones and to know the real reasons behind the cancellation of the "Bellara" Jijel free zone. It concluded that the most important reason for its cancellation was the lack of integration of the components for establishing and succeeding free zones.

Study structure: To answer the study's problem and to cover all aspects of the subject, the study was divided into three main axes as follows:

First: General concepts about development, border areas and their advantages

Second: Development in border areas (strategies, programs and plans, components, obstacles and threats...).

Third: Developing border areas in Algeria as a way to create free zones (*Al-Talib Al-Arbi Township* is a model)

First: General concepts about development, border areas and their features.

1) The concept of development in economic thought (Talem Ali, 2016, pp. 97-98)

First, the difference between development and growth in economic thought must be clarified, as development differs from growth due to the nature of the differences between them. Development is broader than growth and is of great importance in the activity of economists around the world, especially in developing countries. Therefore, it was necessary to address economic development, as economic development was defined as: "Comprehensive modernization and construction that leads to increased rates of economic growth while ensuring the balance of this growth and its continuity for a long period of time in order to meet the needs of individuals and achieve the greatest possible degree of social justice for the benefit of the poor class without harming the environment or resources."

Regional planning (Hajar, 2020, pp. 201-202) is: an organizational process for human and economic geographical features at the regional level, i.e. by developing a plan and standards that take into account natural conditions, human resources and economic resources.

2) The definition of the border area and its characteristics is (Rahman, 2021, pp. 94-95): "The area extending from the border line separating two neighboring countries to a specific depth within the territory of each of the two countries", or it is the area directly adjacent to the borders of the country and represents the rear of the border line agreed upon between the countries, and in some cases the depth and area of these areas between the two countries are determined on both sides of their borders according to a joint agreement.

Second: Development in border areas

1) Strategies for developing border areas: (Rahman, 2021, p. 96)

The development of border areas depends on many approaches and formulas to preserve the residents of these areas from displacement or dependence on some work that would provide them with illegal incomes that harm the country's economy, such as smuggling, drug trafficking, etc., and we mention among these strategies:

A: Agricultural development strategy in border areas:

Relying on the agricultural sector in the development process of border areas represents an important entry point to improve the standard of living and increase farmers' incomes, through the involvement of the banking system in the financing process, as well as the insurance system in protection from various agricultural risks, and this may create job opportunities and a means for the individual to cling to his land.

B: Industrial development strategy:

Industrial policy plays a fundamental role in development, so that the state can encourage the establishment of industries in these border areas. Industrial policy must focus on achieving balanced development between different regions. In this regard, small industries are more suitable for the conditions of border areas, as they create employment opportunities that are compatible with simple production techniques, especially in countries that lack capital and encourage small and medium enterprises.

C: National strategy for the preparation and development of border areas:

Algeria seeks to develop a development approach that aims to raise the ceiling of the aspirations of the peoples and residents of these areas by creating the appropriate conditions to achieve a decent life, and saving them from becoming easy prey for extremist networks and cross-border crime. The Algerian national policy for the preparation and development of border areas has been strengthened, within the new institutional context that characterized:

- The public authorities' approval of the national plan for the preparation of the territory for the horizons of 2030: Law 10-02 dated June 29, 2010
- Law 10-01 dated March 2, 2016 including the constitutional amendment.
- In addition to the government's action plan for September 2017 aimed at intensifying development efforts in border areas.

The national border strategy includes ensuring the appropriate distribution of the population, economic activities and infrastructure across the entire national territory, within a sustainable development logic. The challenge of this strategy lies not only in accompanying the most dynamic regions, but also in ensuring the

integration of remote geopolitical spaces that suffer from a delay in development.

2) Development plans and programs: (Abdullah & Mohamed Samir Ayad, 2022, pp. 159-161)

The Algerian government has developed many development programs, some of which are national, some of which are sectoral, and others are local, in addition to economic development programs that support the local development process, including:

A-: National development plans and programs: Among these plans and programs, there are

A.1: The National Plan for Territorial Development (Horizons 2030) Law No. 10-02 of June 29, 2010): It is a working map that ensures strategic planning at the level of the country's territory, according to which the state decides on three basics related to the demographic challenge linked to the population and the challenges of the labor market, the economic challenge linked to the competitiveness and qualification of the regions in conjunction with the establishment of the World Trade Organization, and the ecological challenge that requires The necessity of preserving natural and cultural capital in light of the situation of scarcity and turbulence of water and soil, where ministerial sectors, local groups, national and local institutions are committed within the framework of the plan's directives to respect the rules of the national plan and work to implement their projects and plans in a manner consistent with the plan's directives.

The implementation of the plan for the horizons of 2030, which the public authorities seek to make one of the basic objectives for the development of all regions of the region within the framework of modernization, is based on four guidelines, represented in the sustainability of resources, especially water and soil, in addition to creating a kind of dynamic balance between the regions and creating attractive and competitive conditions for them and achieving regional equity.

As for evaluating the cost of the national plan, its cost cannot be evaluated, as the stakes are high and the most important thing for this plan is that it be applicable, and for that reason it must: be consistent in its diagnosis, its problem and its basic choices; be financeable. (Hajar, 2020, p. 215)

For this reason, Algeria must move from a rentier economy based on hydrocarbons and public expenditures to internal growth based on a revolution-creating economy. This choice imposes itself and must be built, as is the case in all countries, on technological development and global competition. (Hajar, 2020, p. 216)

A.2: The National Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development is a special mechanism aimed at promoting the technical, financial and regulatory framework with the aim of achieving modern and efficient agriculture through the conservation, protection and rational use of natural resources.

A.3: The Master Plan for the Development of Water Resources and the National Water Plan include a comprehensive assessment of the monitored water resources, including alternative resources, especially wastewater treatment, seawater desalination and reclaimed resources, and an assessment of water needs based on the objectives of developing the sector in the long term. As for the National Water Plan, it is concerned with diagnosing the water sector according to its use in quantity and quality, and the existing water structures, as well as the institutional and organizational aspects related to this activity.

B- Economic development programs supporting the local development path. We mention among these programs:

B.1: Economic Recovery Support Program 2001-2004 A development program for which a financial envelope of approximately 525 billion dinars, approximately 7 billion US dollars, was allocated before its final financial envelope became estimated at approximately 1.216 billion dinars, equivalent to 16 billion dollars, after adding new projects to it and conducting evaluations of most of the previously programmed projects.

B.2: Supplementary Program to Support Economic Growth 2005-2009 Economic Program Supplementary to the Economic Recovery Program, allocated an amount of 150 billion dollars, aims to support economic development, develop basic facilities and raise the standard of living of the population

B.3: The five-year development program 2010-2014 falls within the dynamics of national reconstruction, extending from 2010 to 2014 with expenditures estimated at about 21.214 billion dinars, equivalent to 286 billion dollars, allocated to two main parts: the use of major projects currently being implemented, particularly in the railway, road and water sectors, with an amount of 9.700 billion dinars, equivalent to 130 billion dollars, and the second part: new projects with an amount of 11.534 billion dinars, equivalent to 156 billion dollars.

B.4: Economic Growth Consolidation Program: This is represented in the five-year development plan for the period from 2015 to 2019, for which the state has allocated about 22.1 billion dinars, equivalent to 280 billion dollars, aiming to achieve a growth rate of approximately 7 percent with prospects of 2019.

C: The border areas development program includes the border areas of 12 states and three delegated states (before the new administrative division) and 57 municipalities, divided into nine (09) border areas, which are: the eastern coast, the eastern hills, the western hills, the eastern highlands, the western highlands, the southeast,

the great southeast, the great south and the southwest. The area of the border areas is 1,323,395 km², equivalent to 42% of the country's area. With a border line of 6,343 km distributed as follows:

Table No. 01: Shows the length of the border strip of the Algerian state with neighboring countries

Border	Length in km
Algeria's borders with Morocco	1601 km
Algeria's border with Mali	1376 km
Algeria's border with Libya	982 km
Algeria's border with Tunisia	965 km
Algeria's border with Niger	956 km
Algeria's border with Mauritania	463 km
Algeria's border with Western Sahara	42 km

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The regional planning policy also seeks to achieve an appropriate distribution of population, economic activities and infrastructure, taking into account the specificities of each region, as well as ensuring balance, fairness and attractiveness across all areas of the national territory within the framework of sustainable development. This strategy is based on supporting equipment and facilities in border areas, supporting the establishment of economic activities, supporting the breaking of isolation and facilitating movement in border areas, and supporting the development of cross-border relations.

D: Decentralized or local programs: These include in particular the following:

- Sectoral development plan PSD.
- National development plan PCD.

E: Special programs for the southern regions and the high plateaus: The southern states benefited from the operations recorded within the successive five-year development programs within a program launched in 2006 (the special fund for the development of the southern regions) from the state budget allocations within the limits of 2% of the oil tax revenues and the budget allocations granted annually within the framework of the special program for the development of the southern states.

3) Multidimensional development obstacles in the Algerian border regions (Leila Madani & Salma Bouriah, 2021, p. 68)

The development process in the border regions faces a set of obstacles and challenges, whether natural or human, which may hinder the achievement of sustainable development to facilitate the attraction of investments, including:

3.1: The problem of defining the border regions: The strategic location of Algeria and the vastness of its land borders 6343 km² and its sea borders 1600 km², despite the fact that they make them pivotal areas for development and exchange on The Maghreb level, the African level, and even the Mediterranean Basin level, however, hinders the issue of defining border areas due to the multiplicity of spaces and the difficulty of determining the effectiveness of investment in one of these spaces over another, especially in light of the conflict of interests within these spaces with neighboring countries, and the lack of the absence of an effective strategy to develop exchanges with these countries, and the continued reliance to a large extent on oil revenues as a primary source of national income without there being a real direction to diversify the national economy on the ground.

3.2: Environmental and geographical obstacles: Most border areas are characterized by the harshness of nature and some geographical features that affect the spatial characteristics of the regions, where the dry climate predominates and they have a desert character, the vastness of the regions and the extreme geographical variation, the mountainous masses of the Hoggar, the Saharan Atlas, the Great Eastern Erg, the Erg Chech, the Guidi, and other geographical features that hinder the development process, in addition to the encroachment of sand, floods, technological risks, caves, the repercussions of radioactive effects, the danger of locusts, and the droughts that North African countries experience in general..., and other reasons that lead to the encroachment of the population and their lack of stability in the shadow of that harsh nature. In addition, we mention some

environmental threats as follows: (Rahman, 2021, p. 101)

A: Water pollution

Water quality pollution has become a serious phenomenon in most Arab countries, as water pollution is a major obstacle facing those concerned with water resource management, not only for surface water, but also for groundwater. The water situation in Algeria has many economic impacts, as the lack of this vital resource affects agricultural and animal production and economic development in general.

B: The problem of land degradation and desertification in Algeria

Desertification is a global problem that many countries suffer from all over the world, and Algeria is one of these countries in which desertification is a major problem that affects the future of agriculture and development in the country. The phenomenon of desertification transforms vast fertile and highly productive areas into areas poor in plant and animal life.

A: The waste problem in Algeria:

As for the waste problem in Algeria and its economic impacts, the improper disposal of waste and its dumping on a large scale has led to the emergence of a state of environmental degradation and the loss of economic opportunities, as these losses constitute 0.3% of Algeria's gross domestic product.

The waste recycling sector is marginal and not sufficiently exploited, but it has strong potential in the field of investments and job creation. The waste collection and recycling activity is mostly characterized by being an unstructured activity, and the participation of the private sector remains limited to this day.

3.3: Human development obstacles in border areas (Leila Madani & Salma Bouriah, 2021, p. 70): These areas face a set of development obstacles that threaten human lives, including:

- The remnants of French colonialism in Algeria: Many border areas still contain millions of anti-personnel mines planted by the French colonizer despite Algeria's independence and securing its borders since 1962, in addition to the effects of nuclear radiation resulting from French nuclear tests in the desert. The changes and unstable situations in neighboring countries have also led to an increase in the consequences of various asymmetric threats.

3.4 Security Obstacles and Threats: (Leila Madani & Salma Bouriah, 2021, p. 70)

Algeria's border areas have witnessed extensive smuggling with its neighbors, especially Tunisia, Morocco, and even Libya, before the Arab Spring revolutions and the deterioration of the international situation in Mali, which led to the creation of a parallel economy that constitutes a source of livelihood for the residents of the border areas, considering smuggling a good job opportunity in light of the high unemployment rate and at the same time a source of access to basic goods, especially the smuggling of fuel, food, and copper..., and smuggling has become chronic as a result of the existence of an "implicit alliance formed between smugglers and local authorities that blurs the distinction between what is legal and illegal and erases points along the border between Algeria and Tunisia, and facilitates circumventing the state's general policy in an organized and sustainable manner.

Among the cross-border security challenges that have come to take the border areas as a headquarters for their activity, we find terrorism and organized crime. If the terrorist seeks to achieve political goals, then the crime The organization aims to achieve economic and financial goals, which makes the government's strategy hostage to the security aspect at the expense of the development aspect of these areas. However, we find that Algeria has strongly confronted these threats in the past.

4) Development components in border areas (Belkacem Mimouni & Boujemaa Lahbi, 2021, p. 160):

Among the most important components of development in border areas, we mention

Infrastructure: projects are considered one of the most important components of development, as they are an important factor in attracting investments and contributing to achieving sustainable development

Education: is considered the basis of human development, which is one of the most important components of comprehensive and sustainable development, as the qualified human element is the one who can carry out an economic and social renaissance.

Health: is considered one of the most important components of achieving development according to the United Nations 2030 program, as a healthy and sound society is more capable of achieving comprehensive and

sustainable development, and the available health structures are considered one of the most important components of maintaining health.

Third: Developing border areas in Algeria as a way to create free zones

1) Definition of free zones (Belkacem & other, 2019, p. 86): Free zones are defined as an area of land in the host country that is allocated and determined by its value outside the customs area, and are dealt with from the point of view of foreign trade as if they are foreign, and are allowed to freely trade and trade goods (import, export, storage and processing of goods), manufacturing and services without restrictions or fees or customs duties or other taxes in force within the scope of the zone.

2) Objectives of free zones (Nagham Hussein Nehme & Raghad Muhammad Najm, 2023) in the following, will summarize the most important objectives of the free zone

- Attracting foreign direct investment, Act as "pressure valves" to alleviate the unemployment rate on a large scale, Support a broader strategy for economic reform, Act as experimental laboratories for the application of new policies and approaches,
- Reconstruct and develop some areas and regions or increase urban growth in some relatively backward regions in order to find a kind of social and economic balance between them and other regions,
- Establish industrial production projects whose primary objective is export.
- Increase the state's foreign currency earnings

3) Characteristics of free zones (Belkacem & other, 2019, p. 86): Free zones have several characteristics, including:

- The specific geographical area of the free zone.
- The free zone is customs-free from the rest of the state's regions.
- The free zone is isolated from the rest of the regions of the host country, and the free zone may be isolated by walls or through ports.
- It controls the process of entry and exit from it, or determines its borders administratively.
- The free zone is subject to the full sovereignty of the host country.
- Most countries grant customs and tax exemptions by establishing free zones in their regions, and they vary from one region of one country to another, and the goal is to attract foreign and local investments.

4) Benefits achieved from foreign investment in free zones (Nagham Hussein Nehme & Raghad Muhammad Najm, 2023, p. 134) The most important benefits provided by foreign direct investment in free zones can be summarized as follows:

- Training local workers.
- Establishing scientific relations between branches of foreign companies and local centers for scientific research and development.
- Branches of multinational companies provide the needs of national companies.
- Competition between branches of multinational companies and national companies.
- Supporting the balance of payments in the host country.

5) The Algerian state's efforts to develop border areas to create free zones:

The great efforts made by the state to revive and support fair and sustainable economic development in parallel with preserving social gains are evident to us all, as

- Algeria seeks at the Maghreb level to expand areas of cooperation, especially with the countries that share its borders (Tunisia, Libya) by concluding a number of security agreements and involving local actors, as the Minister of Interior, Local Authorities and Urban Planning, Mr. Ibrahim Murad, signed on January 30, 2024, and his Tunisian counterpart, the roadmap for the first session of the bilateral committee for the development and promotion of Algerian-Tunisian border areas, which includes practical mechanisms for the advancement of the border areas of the two countries.

- Algeria also took the initiative to propose a development project for a trans-Saharan road linking Mali, Niger, Chad, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, reaching Algeria and from there to Europe, which is a step towards enhancing the ties between the countries of the region and activating the development path between African countries rich in natural and even human resources. (Abdullah & Mohamed Samir Ayad, 2022, p. 155)

- The Minister of Interior, Local Authorities and Urban Planning, Ibrahim Murad, also stressed before the Finance and Budget Committee of the National People's Assembly the most important measures included in the 2024 Finance Bill, related to his sector, highlighting the mobilization of additional financial resources for the benefit of local communities to support social and economic development. He stressed the distribution of credits according to seven programs related to public freedoms and the movement of persons, support for local communities, territorial planning, national security, civil protection, national transportation and public administration. (Agency, 2024)

- Algeria has also sought in recent years to develop a comprehensive development strategy based on regional integration between various neighboring countries to contribute to the advancement of the commercial and economic aspect in anticipation of the launch of free zones and making them an important economic and commercial hub that will enable Algeria to obtain many privileges. - Where a new administrative division was adopted through the regional organization law and the creation of ten southern states to push local development as well as push neighboring countries to keep pace with Algeria's pace and achieve many twinnings between the various Border States and between the two parts of the countries surrounding Algeria. (Boughrara, 21/02/2024)

From this standpoint, local groups contributed in the field of achieving development and addressing the concerns expressed by citizens, through two important programs to support development, which are: (Website of the Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities, s.d.)

• **The program to support the social and economic development of local groups (formerly municipal plans).**

With the issuance of Organic Law 18/15 relating to financial laws, which established a new system and new rules relating to financial management (not known before it, Law 84/17) relating to financial laws, which affects all sectors, functions and areas in the state, including those relating to local and municipal groups, as it is applied at all central and local levels. Subsequently, the Ministry of Interior, Local Groups and Urban Planning established, within the ministerial portfolio allocated to it, a sub-program to support the social and economic development of local groups within the special program to support local groups. This sub-program includes decentralized activities at the state level to support the economic and social development of municipalities.

It is worth noting that a financial envelope of 110 billion DZD has been allocated under the title of the Social and Economic Development Support Program for Municipalities for the year 2023, which has been distributed entirely to the states, based on a set of criteria, in particular the number of municipalities in each state, the area of each state, the municipalities' self-financing capacity, the population, and the size of the program being implemented.

• **Development programs funded by the Solidarity and Guarantee Fund for Local Authorities.**

The Solidarity and Guarantee Fund for Local Authorities is a financially independent public institution of an administrative nature under the supervision of the Minister of the Interior and Local Authorities. It is considered an institution guaranteeing tax resources that enables it to provide assistance. It was created by issuing Executive Decree No. 14-116 dated 03/24/2014, which was previously called the Joint Fund for Local Authorities. It has many tasks, most notably contributing to the comprehensive development process of local authorities. It also helps eliminate financial disparities facing local authorities and always seeks to improve solidarity among them. During the years 2023 and 2024, a total amount of 229.25 billion DA was granted from the budget of this fund under the title of the Equipment Department, from which 58 states benefited, of which 200 billion DA was distributed to the various states;

-During the year 2023, states and municipalities were able to register 6,437 projects;

- For the current year 2024, a financial envelope of 100 billion DA was allocated from the Solidarity and Guarantee Fund for Local Authorities, which allowed the registration of 5,380 projects;

- The various figures cited reflect the importance of the development gains achieved in accordance with the directives and instructions of President of the Republic Abdelmadjid Tebboune, and in accordance with a participatory approach that opens the space for proposals to all actors.

6) The reality of the development of the border area in the state of El Oued (municipality of Taleb

Larbi)

The state of El Oued is located northeast of the Algerian desert, 630 km from the capital of the country and is bordered to the east by the Republic of Tunisia, to the west by the states of El Meghair and Toufert, to the north by the states of Tebessa, Khenchela and Biskra, and to the south by the state of Ouargla

The state of Taleb Larbi is considered a border area with sister Tunisia, affiliated to the state of El Oued in the Algerian Republic. It is located in the northeast of the state capital, 80 km away from it. Its former name was the municipality of Bououroua, then its name was changed to the name of the martyr of the Algerian revolution, Taleb Larbi Qamudi.

The mayor of Taleb Al Arabi also explained that he will benefit during the year 2024 from 14 urban development and planning projects and others awaiting approval, distributed across the various neighborhoods and villages of the municipality, a number of projects related to the road network, a project to connect a number of new residential complexes to the sewage network and urban planning of the neighborhoods, a public lighting project, and projects to improve primary schools. The following table shows the amounts granted to the various municipalities of Taleb Al Arabi within the framework of the development support program

Table No. 02: Amounts granted to municipalities in the Arab Student District within the framework of the Social and Economic Development Support Program for the year 2023 and 2024, suspended in October 2024

Amounts by municipality Scope of intervention	(DZD) 2023 Amounts granted for the year			(DZD) 2024 Amounts granted for the year		
	Ben Ghachaa	Dour – Elmaa	AL-Taleb Arbi	Ben Ghachaa	Dour – Elmaa	AL-Taleb Arbi
Agriculture and irrigation	35849000	4091000	35789000	65701000	11909000	34155000
Education and training	18317000	7113000	18275000	6199000	/	/
Social and cultural infrastructure	26673000	55210000	36670000	27718000	89171000	32375000
Economic and administrative establishments	44995000	21363000	/	24148000	32900000	35500000
Storage and Distribution	/	/	/	9352000	/	/

Source: Directorate of Local Administration of the Wilaya of El Oued

From the table, we note that within the framework of developing the Arab Student District as a border area with three municipalities: Ben Qacha, Douar El Ma, and Arab Student, the state of El Oued, through the implementation of the social and economic development support program for the year 2023, allocated a financial amount of 304,345,000.00 DZD, embodied in 40 operations, and an amount of 369,128,000.00 DZD for the year 2024, embodied in 43 operations.

It is noticeable in this table that the amounts granted to the municipalities of the Arab Student District within the framework of this program were somewhat large and increasing compared to the years 2023 and 2024, which explains the interest of the public authorities in developing these areas and seeking to break the isolation and prepare this region to provide the requirements of living for the individual and encourage him to live and work in these areas as a way to attract foreign investors.

7) Future development projects for the development of the Arab Student District: The following table shows the costs of the various projects that were studied by the local groups for the development of the Arab

Student District in its three municipalities.

Table No. 03: List of proposed neighborhood development projects that can be implemented at the level of the Arab Student District according to the sectors

Sector	Number of development projects	Financial cost
Local Administration	10	1 192 000 000,00
Vocational training and education	05	776 000 000,00
Energy and Mining	06	1 299 000 000,00
Water Resources	09	1 573 000 000,00
Education	07	1 570 000 000,00
Tourism and traditional industries	01	70 000 000,00
Youth and Sports	07	334 000 000,00
Forests	04	352 500 000,00
Industry	02	935 240 000,00
the environment	06	890 000 000,00
Agriculture	09	594 000 000,00
Social Solidarity	01	4 000 000,00
Culture and Arts	08	1 424 385 000,00
Public works	09	8 435 000 000,00
Taxes	01	360 000 000,00
Housing	04	260 000 000,00

Source: Directorate of Local Administration of the Wilaya of El Oued

From the previous data, we conclude that the public authorities are continuing to plan for major development projects in the Arab student circle in the near future and are seeking to provide financial resources to cover these projects. They have proposed 89 development projects in 16 sectors at a total cost estimated at 20,069,125,000.00 DZD, divided among the various sectors as shown in the following table, which shows us the costs of the various development projects and in the various sectors scheduled to be implemented after 2024. The largest amount has been allocated to the public works sector with 09 projects to improve the infrastructure and modernize roads to break the isolation of remote areas and facilitate movement.

8) Privileges of establishing a free zone in Taleb El Arabi

In the context of implementing the instructions of the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, aiming to create free zones in the south of the country, Tindouf and Timiaouine (Bordj Badji Mokhtar Province), Tin Zaouatine (In Guezzam Province) and Taleb El Arabi (El Oued Province),

The state and local communities have intensified their efforts in the province of El Oued to prepare and develop the Taleb El Arabi region to make it a free economic zone, in order to win the bet on exporting to African markets. What encourages them to do so is Algeria's geostrategic location among neighboring countries on the one hand, and its availability on the other hand of vast fertile areas prepared for agricultural investment, in addition to its availability of a huge stock of groundwater.

The province of El Oued also has a huge wealth of many products, especially agricultural products with wide consumption, such as early vegetables and fruits that record a surplus in production, especially dates.

Among the privileges that encourage the implementation of this vital project is the presence of a seaport close to the Arab Student Crossing Gate in the Tunisian state of Gabes, about 250 km away, for exporting and importing products across the Mediterranean.

Among the most important vital projects that are considered a gain for the state and the south as a whole:

- **Cargo station at the international airport Mujahid Abdelkader Al-Amoudi** (www.aps.dz, 2023)

The state benefited from a cargo station at the international airport "Mujahid Abdelkader Al-Amoudi" in the municipality of Qamar (14 km north of the state capital), which is a ready-to-use logistics facility to be a base for launching export activities towards African, European and Asian markets.

The cargo station in its first phase covered an area of 598 square meters with a total annual capacity estimated at 3,000 tons, and it has cold rooms with an annual cargo capacity estimated at 150 tons, before it was expanded to 650 square meters, which raised its annual capacity to 8,700 tons.

This project, the first of its kind in the south, enables agricultural investors to export their agricultural

products to global markets. It is an important step to strengthen export mechanisms that will contribute to giving a new breath to the national economy.

• **Development and preparation of the Taleb Arabi border crossing -**

The land border crossing, inaugurated in June 2019, in the Taleb Arabi municipality bordering Tunisia (84 km east of El Oued Governorate), is considered one of the most important vital facilities that El Oued Governorate has benefited from, within the framework of the public authorities' strategy aimed at developing the southern border regions. It also represents the largest land crossing center in the Maghreb countries, and represents the economic, tourist and cultural front of the country, given its importance in activating the development movement. It will open new and promising horizons in the areas of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the tourism and economic fields, which are inevitably developed by the common cultural and social dimension between the two countries.

- The decision to qualify the land border crossing to become a commercial crossing and a free trade zone is considered a consecration of the strategy adopted within the framework of strengthening decentralized economic cooperation between the two countries (Algeria and Tunisia), and to embody the outcomes of the recommendations of the partnership agreement in the field of import and export through the Arab Student Land Gate, as it is considered a platform for exporting local products, especially agricultural ones, and manufacturing industry products. (echoroukonline, 2019).. This crossing will also help promote tourism in the state and the rest of the country's states, which are rich in natural elements that qualify them to become tourist areas par excellence, especially those covered by elements of tangible heritage, not to mention traditional industries.

Table No. 04: Shows the proposed projects for the development of the border crossing at Taleb Al Arabi in the state of El Oued

Type of Operation	The allocated amount is (DZD)	Source of funding and type of program	Its developmental impact
Purchase a fixed scanner	500.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Facilitating the inspection process of commercial vehicles and containers
Rehabilitation of crossing structures and improvement of its configuration	50.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Improving the general conditions of the center
Completion of a bypass road of 800 km	13.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Facilitating the movement of heavy trucks
Deep well completion and equipment	52.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Providing potable water for human use and irrigation.
Purchase and install surveillance cameras around the perimeter of the crossing, inside and outside	20.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Monitoring and maintaining public security and protecting people and property.
Buy a mobile scanner	350.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Facilitating the inspection of vehicles and passengers, combating smuggling operations,
Purchase of 04 four-wheel drive ambulances for the Arab Student and Water Roundabout units	720.000.000.00	Border Areas Development Program	Rapid intervention to rescue people and property in sandy areas
Purchase of 06 school buses for the benefit of the municipalities of Taleb Al Arabi, Douar Al Ma and Ben Qacha	90.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Covering the needs of municipalities in the field of school transportation, improving the conditions of care for school students.
Follow-up and completion of an external corridor for heavy weights at the Arab Student Border Center	90.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Encouraging trade with neighboring countries, ensuring the movement of heavy trucks through the crossing, and supporting

			exports outside the hydrocarbon sector.
Completion of a secondary civil protection unit in Taleb Al Arabi	180.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Rapid intervention to rescue people and property
Completion of a mobile unit for the judicial police at the Arab request BMPG	200.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Maintaining public security and protecting people and property
Completion of 03 customs control centers	450.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	Border control and protection of the national economy
Completion of passages for vehicles and passengers at the border center in Taleb Al Arabi	70.000.000.00	Decentralized sectoral program	-
Completion of a customs border post in the valley	330.000.000.00	-Decentralized sectoral program	-

Source: Directorate of Local Administration of the Wilaya of El Oued

Through the data obtained from the local administration of the state of El Oued, we see that the border crossing development project has been allocated within the supplementary program to support growth previously, a financial envelope estimated at 872 million dinars to study and complete several accompanying wings (entry and exit procedures center, customs and police administration, executives' residence, tourist guidance center, honorary hall, inspection warehouse, detention warehouse, scanner device, etc.), which will open new and promising horizons in the areas of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the tourism and economic fields that are inevitably developed by the common cultural and social dimension between the two countries, which are the areas of cooperation addressed by the provisions of the partnership and cooperation agreements between El Oued (Algeria) and Tozeur (Tunisia).

Through the table, we see that after the economic and financial studies of the project, other projects have been proposed with huge amounts awaiting approval to continue the development process.

- Despite the efforts made by the public authorities to develop and develop the border areas and break the isolation of these areas and improve the lives of the individual, and despite the huge projects that the Arab student region has benefited from, and the qualitative leap that the region has witnessed In recent years, however, the development process of this region is still weak and stagnant due to the weak pace of completion of these development projects, and their failure to materialize as planned, and the failure to study the gradual development and start with basic life projects, as it is not possible to start completing the huge land border crossing and talk about import and export and attracting investors and trade exchange, and the citizen in this municipality finds it difficult to move between neighboring municipalities or to go to the state capital to meet his simplest needs that are supposed to be available in the same region, and this is due to the isolation of this region from neighboring regions and the lack of transportation means to a large extent and the long distances between residential complexes, which negatively affects the reality of development.

- We also notice the weakness of infrastructure, communications and transportation in these isolated areas, the lack of many of the necessary facilities in the region to transform it into a thriving economic zone and the delay in establishing a bank to attract investors and facilitate their transactions.

As is known, the success of free zones is linked to the availability of market forces in terms of good industrial infrastructure of energy, water, gas and communications, in addition to the availability of land and the ownership of that land and settlement in those areas.

Mentioning these shortcomings that the citizen suffers from in these border areas does not mean denying the great efforts made by the state to develop the region, break the isolation and improve the lives of the individual in it.

Therefore, we will present some suggestions with which we conclude the topic that will help accelerate the development process and provide the appropriate environment to attract entrants and make these regions free zones for economic exchange that are flourishing and positively reflected on the lives of the residents of the border strip in the first place and contribute to exporting the surplus of local production and importing what the state needs, thus reviving the national economy away from oil.

Conclusion:

Like many developing countries, Algeria is striving to develop its border areas that previously suffered from marginalization and isolation through the development programs it has embodied in recent years, and this is

what we have seen in the qualitative leap and in all areas of development witnessed by these areas

Within the framework of the priority given by the public authorities to promoting export opportunities towards African markets and enhancing decentralized economic cooperation between the two countries (Algeria and Tunisia), the state of El Oued has benefited from vital projects, most notably the start of establishing the Arab Student Zone as a free economic zone, which is supported by the land border crossing that was inaugurated in 2019, which will open new and promising horizons in the areas of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the tourism and economic fields. It is qualified to be the largest commercial crossing and an export platform in the southern states, ensuring added value to the movement of the national economy away from the hydrocarbons sector, obtaining hard currency and achieving a surplus in the trade balance, which is positively reflected on the residents of the border strip. The state also benefited from a cargo station that has become ready for use at Ghomar International Airport to facilitate the process of exporting fresh agricultural products And perishable products, especially to global markets by air.

In order to accelerate the transformation of the Arab Student Region into a free zone, the local public authorities conducted economic and financial studies for proposed development projects in the same region, awaiting approval, such as the completion of a mobile unit for the judicial police, the completion of an external corridor for heavy weights at the land border post and equipping it with scanners and surveillance cameras along the corridor, and the pursuit of digitizing the customs sector and other projects in order to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of the region's economic and social prosperity and eliminate the security threats facing the residents of the border strip.

In conclusion, we conclude that the issue of developing border areas, especially the southern ones, is a national priority that the new Algerian government must pay attention to in order to facilitate economic dealings with neighboring African and Maghreb countries.

In this regard, we will present some solutions and recommendations that have been proposed in order to develop border areas in Algeria and the Arab Student region in particular and transform them into a free economic zone that attracts foreign investors, including:

1. The necessity of granting privileges to economic operators in free zones, such as exemptions granted to investment projects from all taxes, fees, tax and customs deductions, and providing financial facilities and incentives to investors, such as granting them bank loans with low interest rates.
2. Local authorities must implement a digital information bank project with well-studied technical standards that allow for the provision of information on effective joint investment opportunities between the two countries, encourage bilateral investments, ensure facilities, (www.aps.dz/ar/economie/, 04/10/2024) and activate twinning projects between the two countries, Algeria and Tunisia, and implement them on the ground, due to their positive impact on economic activity in the two countries.
3. Establishing a single window shared by trade, tax and customs departments to bring services closer to exporters and establishing a local branch of the National Agency for the Promotion of Foreign Trade to ensure the provision of assistance and support for the exporter. (Sardok, s.d.)
4. Developing plans and strategies and establishing service investment projects such as banks and transportation, which will facilitate the transfer of hard currency to dealers, thus gaining them great confidence and making these areas attractive for investment through the business climate created by Algeria, which has invested heavily in land crossings, allocated industrial zones and established laws for industrial real estate. (Boughrara, 21/03/2024, s.d.)
5. It is necessary for the government to emphasize the development of security plans and strict procedures on all its borders to prevent any problems that may result from the "chaos" experienced by the border areas.
6. It is necessary for spatial development plans to target three areas at the same time, which are:
 - Infrastructure: by providing transportation and energy, including their requirements through the preparation of roads and various administrative services.
 - Economic development: providing a labor market that encourages innovation, and opening the way for investment in sectors compatible with the potential and nature of the border area, such as tourism, livestock breeding, etc. (Leila Madani & Salma Bouriah, 2021, p. 74)
 - Community development: monitoring cultural transformations due to the border areas absorbing immigrants or even refugees from African countries and the impact of this on the local culture, in addition to providing education and health services.
7. Linking the state to a railway line to transport local goods destined for export through ports or receiving goods destined for export Through the border crossing, the Arab student to the countries.
8. Support external cooperation with the participation of municipal and national authorities as well as economic and social partners across borders and support them for investment, especially in sectors that can achieve success

in those areas (according to the geographical and spatial nature of the border area concerned).

9. Establishing the principles of local governance and pushing the wheel of decentralized development and intensifying cooperation efforts and concluding partnership agreements within the framework of developing the border strip between Algeria and Tunisia in many fields such as tourism, agriculture, health, education, etc. and finding joint solutions that serve the two countries in the long term.

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