

3 HEALTH STATUS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

3.1 Health Status Indicators

Overall, the health status indicators of the Moroccan population improved markedly during the last fifty years. However, despite considerable efforts, maternal mortality showed no considerable change in the past decade. The results of the last investigation on the population and the domestic health (EPSF, 2003-2004) give an indication of maternal mortality of 227 for 100.000 live births. Studies revealed an important gap between the urban and rural districts: 187 in urban areas vs. 267 in rural areas. Similarly, the under-five mortality rate remained the same (37%) between 1997 and 2003, rising to 40% for the period 1999-2003, with neonatal mortality is posing a major problem.

Table 3.1 Indicators of Health status

| Indicators | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2002 | 2004 |
|--|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| Life Expectancy at Birth (in years) | 63.48 | 65.75 | 67.65 | 68.35 | - |
| Infant Mortality Rate (/1000) | 66.00 | 51.00 | 41.00 | 39.00 | 40.00 |
| Under five Mortality Rate (/1000) | 85.00 | 61.00 | 46.00 | 43.00 | 47 |
| Maternal Mortality Ratio (/ 100,000 live births) | 332 | 228 | - | - | 227 |
| Percent Normal birth weight babies: | - | 96(92) | 96 | 97 | - |
| Prevalence of stunting/wasting: | - | 9(92) | 8.9(97) | - | - |

Source: Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office Data base: reports from member countries

3.3 Demography

Table 3.2 Demographic indicators

| Indicator | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2002 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Crude Birth Rate | 31.16 | 26.70 | 21.90 | 21.25 |
| Crude Death Rate | 8.42 | 7.08 | 5.90 | 5.80 |
| Population Growth Rate | 2.04 | 1.76 | 1.64 | 1.60 |
| Dependency Ratio | 0.74 | 0.65 | 0.58 | 0.57 |
| % Population <15 years | 39.80 | 37.17 | 34.65 | 33.46 |
| Total Fertility Rate | 4.01 | 3.42 | 2.89 | 2.75 |

Demographic patterns and trends

Arabic is Morocco's official language (it is the "classical" Arabic of the Qur'an, literature and news media), and with the distinctive Arabic dialect, is the most widely spoken language in Morocco. Approximately 10 million Moroccans, mostly in rural areas, speak

Berber, which exists in Morocco in three different dialects (Tarifit, Tashlehit, and Tamazight), either as a first language or bilingually with the spoken Arabic dialect. French, which remains Morocco's unofficial third language, is taught universally and still serves as Morocco's primary language of commerce and economics; it also is widely used in education and government. Many Moroccans in the northern part of the country speak Spanish. English, while still far behind French and Spanish in terms of number of speakers, is rapidly becoming the foreign language of choice among educated youth. As a result of national education reforms entering into force in late 2002, English is taught in all public schools from the fourth year on.

Moroccans are ethnically Arab and/or Berber, a vast majority (98.7 %) Sunni Muslim, with a small local Jewish minority accounting for .02 percent of population. Most people live west of the Atlas Mountains, a range that insulates the country from the Sahara Desert. Casablanca is the center of commerce and industry and the leading port; Rabat is the seat of government; Tangier is the gateway to Morocco from Spain and also a major port; "Arab" Fez is the cultural and religious center; and "Berber" Marrakech is a major tourist center.

Education in Morocco is free and compulsory through primary school (fundamental course until age 15). Nevertheless, many children (particularly girls in rural areas) still do not attend school. The country's literacy rate has remained 50% for some years, reaching as low as 10% among girls in rural regions. Morocco has about 230,000 students enrolled in 14 public universities. The oldest and in some ways the most prestigious is Mohammed V in Rabat, with faculties of law, sciences, contemporary arts, and medicine. Karaouine University, in Fez, has been a center for Islamic studies for more than 1,000 years. Al-Akhawayn, in Ifrane is a private university, founded in 1993 by King Hassan II and late King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. It is an English-medium, American-style university comprising about 1,000 students.