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für Auswärtige Politik

German Council on  
Foreign Relations

## Socio-Economic Challenges in Morocco: Migration, Education, and Employment - Perspectives from the Region and Europe

Edited by Dina Fakoussa and Laura Lale Kabis-Kechrid





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## Socio-Economic Challenges in Morocco: Migration, Education, and Employment - Perspectives from the Region and Europe

The following working papers were written by participants of the workshop “Promotion of Think Tank Work on Migration and Socio-Economic Challenges in Morocco,” organized by the German Council on Foreign Relations’ Middle East and North Africa Program in the winter of 2017 and the spring of 2018. The workshop is part of the program’s project on the promotion of think tank work in the Middle East and North Africa, which aims to strengthen the scientific and technical capacities of civil society actors in the region and the EU who are engaged in research and policy analysis and advice. It is realized with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office and the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa e.V.).

The content of the working papers does not reflect the opinion of the DGAP. Responsibility for the information and views expressed herein lies entirely with the authors.

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## Introduction

Laura Lale Kabis-Kechrid

Even though the Moroccan king's readiness to introduce reforms in response to the mass protests in 2011 has prevented the kind of radical change occurring in many other countries in the MENA region and has maintained the country's relative stability, Morocco's social peace remains fragile. Social unrest has flared recurrently, most prominently in the Rif region, as socio-economic grievances persist. The country continues to suffer from significant regional disparities, a poor education system, and high unemployment, especially among the young.

Socio-economic deprivation and the perceived lack of opportunities have also been key drivers of radicalization and irregular migration, especially among Moroccan youth. Introducing comprehensive policies to address the country's socio-economic problems is essential for the country's development and stability. This is becoming even more urgent as Morocco is hosting a growing number of migrants and refugees.

It is in the EU's interest to support the Moroccan government in these efforts, not least because it relies on Morocco to control migration flows from Sub-Saharan Africa and conflict zones in the MENA region to the EU. The following paper collection analyzes key aspects of Morocco's migration, education, and employment challenges and provides recommendations for the Moroccan government as well as the international community, particularly the EU.

Migration dynamics, the weaknesses of the education system, and the structural problems of the labor market are not separate challenges but reinforce each other. Morocco ranks at the bottom of international student assessment tests. This is even the case when only considering countries with comparable economic, social, and demographic characteristics. It has a staggeringly high number of people with no or only rudimentary literacy levels. In addition, the mismatch between the skills and knowledge taught in schools and universities, and the skills required by the labor market is a key challenge. This skills gap in combination with the structural weakness of the labor market has led to high youth unemployment and the growth of Morocco's large informal sector.

In 2017, unemployment in the age group 15 to 24 stood at 26.5 percent according to the High Commission for Planning. Regional differences and the drastic difference in the quality of teaching between public and private institutions perpetuate social and regional disparities and impede socio-economic mobility. Even though the Moroccan government has

undertaken several efforts to reform the education system over the past decades, reforms have fallen short.

This edited volume brings together papers written by the participants of the workshop “Promotion of Think Tank Work on Migration and Socio-Economic Challenges in Morocco,” which is part of the DGAP’s project “Promotion of Think Tank Work and Related Institutions in the MENA Region and Europe.” The authors analyze various aspects of the socio-economic and migration-related challenges that Morocco faces and develop policy proposals both for the Moroccan government and the EU. Among the recommendations are the following: In order to ensure that the government’s current initiatives are more successful, a holistic approach to education reform is needed that addresses the different factors impacting the quality of education. This includes a higher quality of instruction by improving teacher trainings, attracting foreign teachers to fill current personnel gaps, and adjusting school curricula and vocational training to better match the skills required by the labor market.

A successful education reform could also provide a crucial part of the solution to Morocco’s other challenges. Improving the quality and inclusivity of the education system would not only increase young people’s chances in the labor market and provide the Moroccan state with a better skilled and more productive labor force but would also help reduce the risks of radicalization and irregular migration. To this end, greater cooperation and knowledge-transfer between the different stakeholders involved in the education sector is strongly recommended. Moroccan civil society in particular needs to be more closely involved in the field of education reform. The Moroccan government as well as the EU should also allow Morocco’s civil society to take part in a more targeted way in decision-making processes regarding migration policies. This would be an important step to address the needs and improve the human rights condition of migrants in Morocco.

In addition, as the EU remains an important partner for Morocco, the authors recommend that European countries evaluate and readjust their support to better address the current socio-economic needs and challenges. This includes improving coordination between the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy and its blending of financial instruments to ensure that it does not only address labor market challenges but tackles its structural problems. While education reform is first and foremost a national issue, European countries like Germany can provide some support through the transfer of expertise within the wider framework of educational cooperation projects.

## The Contributions in Short

*“Formalizing the Informal Sector: Youth Employment in Morocco”*: Saad Aldouri argues that the size and structure of Morocco’s large informal sector represents a key challenge to the country’s economic growth. In addition, the shortage of more secure jobs in the formal economy carries the risk of breeding social unrest. Aldouri emphasizes that the Moroccan government needs to provide viable alternatives to informal employment in order to effectively draw youth from the informal to the formal economy.

*“Money Can’t Buy Labor: Prospects for the Impact of Renewed EU Foreign Policy Instruments in Morocco”*: Francesca Fabbri assesses EU policies to support labor market development in Morocco. The author argues that the structural problems of Morocco’s labor market, such as its non-inclusivity, the large size of the informal sector, and corruption, require better coordination between the EU’s initiatives to blend financing instruments and its European Neighborhood Policy.

*“English and Personnel Exchanges: Education Policy Strategies for Economic Growth and Greater Moroccan Socio-Political Integration in ECOWAS”*: Imru Al Qays Talha Jebri emphasizes the importance of improving English language instruction in Morocco. This would not only increase the employability and competitiveness of its young work force, but also facilitate the country’s regional integration, e.g. into the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.

*“Reforming the Moroccan Education System Through Enhancing Coordination Between Civil Society Organizations and Public Authorities”*: The paper by Rokaya El-Boudrari argues that civil society organizations play a key role in Morocco’s education sector. Yet their experiences and expertise are insufficiently taken into account by the government when designing and implementing reform initiatives. She emphasizes the importance of improved cooperation between the Moroccan government and civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive education reform.

*“In-Service Teacher Training in Morocco”*: In her paper, Khadija Ouadi focuses on the training of teachers as a key element to improving the quality of education in Morocco. She argues that the current education system suffers from the heterogeneity of training systems for teachers, restrictive recruitment mechanisms, and the lack of appropriate in-service training for teachers. The shortcomings of the training system negatively impact the quality of instruction.

*“Learning Through Serious Gaming: Improving Moroccan Higher Education”*: The paper by Benedikt van den Woldenberg focuses on the introduction of new teaching methods to improve higher education in Morocco. He stresses that the current education system in Morocco relies

heavily on teacher-centered teaching, which is not conducive to creating a learning environment that fosters creativity, problem-solving skills and a more contextualized understanding of a given issue.

*“The Role of Extracurricular Activities in Preventing Irregular Migration and Youth Radicalization”*: The paper by Richard Grieco focusses on drivers of irregular migration and youth radicalization in Morocco. Both radicalization and migration are considered to have similar root causes stemming from a perceived lack of opportunities for personal and professional development. Grieco draws on the experience of the Italian NGO Progettomondo.mlal, which has been working in Morocco since 2001 to develop policy recommendations.

*“Moroccan Migration Policy: Education as a Tool to Promote the Integration of Sub-Saharan Migrants”*: Mohammed Ouhemou discusses key challenges of the Moroccan education system that hinder the integration and socio-economic mobility of Sub-Saharan migrants into Moroccan society. He argues that while a policy reform in 2013 has improved their access to the Moroccan education system, language difficulties, the inability of teachers to cater to the specific needs of migrant students, the lack of pre-school programs, and racial discrimination continue to pose significant challenges.

*“Obstacles Facing Asylum Seekers in North-Eastern Morocco”*: In his paper, Jaouad Benaicha focuses on two key obstacles that asylum seekers face in cities like Nador and Oujda in the North-East of Morocco: travel difficulties due to financial constraints, which hinders their ability to complete their official request for asylum with the UNHCR based in Rabat, and violations of their rights under UNHCR protection by local authorities.

*“Building Bridges: Moroccan Civil Society as a Mediator in EU Decision-Making on Migration”*: Ilham Siba assesses the impact of EU migration policies and the mobility partnership signed between the EU and Morocco on migrants in Morocco, highlighting the critical human rights conditions many of them face in Morocco. She emphasizes that Moroccan civil society organizations play a key role in improving Moroccan migration policies and implementing initiatives to foster the integration of migrants into Moroccan society.



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## Formalizing the Informal Sector: Youth Employment in Morocco

Saad Aldouri

### *Summary*

The large informal sector in Morocco hinders economic growth and the country's ability to provide formal employment to a growing youth population.<sup>i</sup> Without managing the informal sector's size and the drivers behind its growth, Morocco may fail to ease youth employment pressures. Tackling skills gaps, worker's rights, and involving youth movements and civil society should be at the core of the search for viable, sustainable solutions.

## Formalizing the Informal Sector: Youth Employment in Morocco

Saad Aldouri

### Morocco's Informal Sector

According to World Bank economist Norman Loayza, the informal sector is “the set of economic units that do not comply with government-imposed taxes and regulations,” which “arises when excessive taxes and regulations are imposed by government that lack the capability to enforce compliance.”<sup>ii</sup>

As in other low-income developing countries, the Moroccan informal sector is characterized by its heterogeneity. Mobile activities relating to trade, such as traditional industries, services, construction and public works, and property, provide many employment activities within the informal sector.<sup>iii</sup>

In terms of qualifications, the education levels of informal sector workers indicate a significant skills gap. Results from a 2010 survey showed that 33 percent were illiterate, 40.7 percent had primary education, 23 percent had secondary education, and three percent were pursuing further education.<sup>iv</sup>

According to one 2015 estimate, the size of the Moroccan informal sector was equivalent to 43 percent of GDP.<sup>v</sup> This startling size reveals both the extent of the challenge facing Morocco, and the impact of the sector's various drivers. As a developing economy, several fault lines exist that are not effectively regulated, and which are exploited by the informal sector. Indeed, part of the difficulty in regulation is due not only to governance shortcomings, but also the large number of employees outside the formal sector, who avoid these regulations out of self-interest.

As in other developing, low-income economies, the informal sector in Morocco has a growing and increasingly important share of output and employment. This is, of course, to the detriment of the formal economy, and makes it difficult to state the true levels of youth employment. Indeed, difficulty in finding employment in the formal economy is commonplace in low-income countries, where employment is often dominated by informal businesses that account for a large share of the workforce, and represent a major source of livelihood for the poor.<sup>vi</sup>

A core characteristic of activity in informal economies is low productivity. The existence of a significant informal sector workforce that lacks essential protections, such as health insurance and pensions, has a

decidedly adverse impact on an economy's labor productivity. Additionally, the fact that formal sector employees tend to earn more than informal sector workers also correlates with the disparity in productivity between the two groups.<sup>vii</sup> Leaving workers unprotected in the informal sector is intrinsically linked to the sector's low productivity and the subsequent impact this has on the wider Moroccan economy. This brings into question the sustainability of such an arrangement, and whether a low-income economy can continue to develop without addressing this disparity.

The drivers of the Moroccan informal sector are multiple. First, tax levels are popularly deemed too high and are therefore difficult to enforce. High taxation relative to national income levels can only contribute towards the amplification of the informal sector and the subsequent reduction of government revenue. The "tax burden" plays a critical role in the size of the informal sector: a one percent increase in personal income tax leads to a 0.11 percent increase in the informal sector.<sup>viii</sup> With the current personal income tax rate at 38 percent, the impact of the "tax burden" is not insignificant, and poses a constant challenge.

Second, corruption undermines adherence to regulations in the formal sector, as many within the informal sector seek to maximize their profits as a result.<sup>ix</sup> Third, like many developing economies, Morocco is increasingly undergoing urbanization, and the formal sector's inability to absorb the increasing numbers of employment-seekers in cities leads them to turn to the informal sector.<sup>x</sup> This is a survival mechanism that further increases pressure on the state to provide more jobs in the public sector in order to help absorb the growing numbers of potential workers in urban environments.

The formal economy in Morocco is mainly comprised of the public and agricultural sectors. Traditionally, the public sector has been regarded as a form of secure, desirable work, and has been a major employer in Morocco and across the Arab world. However, its unsustainability has led to initiatives to reduce public sector employment as a share of total employment. The economic and structural adjustment programs implemented in the 1990s to address high levels of public sector debt led to a squeeze on public sector employment.<sup>xi</sup> This indirectly impacted on the informal sector, boosting its size as the government struggled to reign in its activity.<sup>xii</sup> Increasing arrivals from rural areas, coupled with the reduction in public sector jobs, have produced a growing number of urban dwellers engaged in informal commercial activities. Particularly for male workers, this reflects the shift from agricultural sector work to the services sector, which is taking an increasingly large share of jobs. One of the main challenges is the growth of short-term or temporary employment contracts associated with this trend. Offering short-term contracts is often seen as an easy way to avoid giving workers the full rights and social security guarantees enjoyed by those working full-time in the formal sector. This factor enlarges the informal sector's share of jobs, and can be

mitigated by legislation to prevent employers taking advantage of such arrangements.

Although its market share has decreased due to increasing urbanization, Morocco's agricultural sector still constitutes a relatively large share of overall employment. Increasingly, it is dominated by women in rural communities, as men continue to move to cities and towns in search of more secure employment.<sup>xiii</sup> Agriculture contributes around 15 percent of Moroccan GDP,<sup>xiv</sup> and still retains a decisive year-on-year impact on the growth of Moroccan GDP, such as in 2015, where strong agricultural performance contributed to overall growth. This sector is also associated with higher levels of informality.<sup>xv</sup>

In the light of the gradual decline in informal agricultural work, informal employment in urban environments has grown. Indeed, most informal employment in non-agricultural sectors is urban-based, with seven out of ten informal production units being based in cities.<sup>xvi</sup> The gradual urbanization of the informal sector is indicative of how the wider Moroccan economy is developing, with attempts to diversify revenue streams resulting in a greater emphasis on service sector development. Accordingly, as increasing numbers of young people enter the workforce, their focus will be on finding employment in the growing service sector, which should be targeted for regulation and formalization in order to reduce the informal sector's market share in the medium- to long-term.

## Youth Employment

With youth comprising around 44 percent of Morocco's working population and approximately thirty percent of the total, an awareness of youth employment trends is central to understanding how jobs in the informal sector can be "formalized." In 2016, youth unemployment in Morocco stood at around 20.5 percent,<sup>xvii</sup> which is also part of broader issues linked to poor social and economic inclusion.<sup>xviii</sup>

Additionally, the dynamics between employment and changing demographics often pose their own unique challenges, not least that of transition into work. Assaad and Levison argue that the transition into employment – and subsequently adulthood – is now more protracted, extending beyond the ages of 15-24 to the 25-29 age bracket.<sup>xix</sup> Evolving youth employment trends mean that conventional understandings and definitions are changing in response to a multitude of social and economic challenges. In Morocco, employment is linked both to the ability of the labor market to provide enough jobs, and the disparity between what young people are taught and skills the labor market demands.

Youth unemployment in Morocco is often linked to poor levels of education: around eighty percent of young people have not completed secondary education.<sup>xx</sup> The Haut-Commissariat au Plan (HCP) estimated in 2015 that 27.9 percent of young people were not in employment, education or training,<sup>xxi</sup> detrimental in the medium-long term for both

general employment and engagement in the formal economy. With the labor force growing two percent annually from 2000-2014, Morocco has suffered from its inability to match that growth with an equal growth in formal sector jobs.<sup>xxii</sup> This also results in young people turning towards the informal sector as part of the “coping economy” which, while addressing some short-term imperatives, is not sustainable. Opportunities for further development and finding pathways into the formal sector are essential. As of 2012, 88 percent of employed youth worked without contracts, many of them in the informal sector.<sup>xxiii</sup> The social impact of failing to provide more secure jobs cannot be underestimated, and is one of the factors behind the social unrest that has flared intermittently in Morocco since 2011.

The poor socio-economic background and education levels of many young people provides an insight into the skills gap they face when trying to seek formal-sector employment. As Morocco’s economy develops according to global trends, the country is increasingly adopting more technology. The highly-specialized skillsets required to participate in such an economy must be replicated so that education and skills trainings are tailored to match labor force needs. This, together with capital deepening, would help explain the widespread perception of a skill shortage in Morocco.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In 2015, the Moroccan Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs produced a national strategy for employment which focused policy around four main factors: promoting job creation among businesses; increasing the standard and value of human capital; reinforcing labor market mediation; and the development of an effective labor market governance framework.<sup>xxv</sup> Seeking to increase employability and promoting more inclusive policies seem to be an appropriate starting point, but this must be coupled with sustained support from the Moroccan government.

## Recommendations

- *Creating viable jobs within the formal economy through an increase in jobs on the emerging markets*

As part of the efforts to reduce the informal sector’s influence on the country’s GDP, a core objective should be to create viable jobs within the formal economy. Clamping down on employment within the informal sector without providing viable alternatives is a threat to stability and development. There are opportunities to create more jobs in emerging markets, such as those in the digital and renewables sectors, following heavy investment from the government.

- *Increasing productivity within the labor market*

The informal sector’s unproductive characteristics pose an obstacle to economic growth. Measures to combat this could include: adapting the skills of the labor force to new technologies (especially in relation to the digital economy); streamlining state bureaucracy; and tackling corruption.

- *Guaranteeing workers' rights in the formal sector*

The influx of workers to urban environments has generated a rise in informal sector employment in cities. Guaranteeing workers' rights in the formal sector will incentivize workers to commit to employment within it.

- *Engaging youth movements and civil society groups*

To reach a viable restriction of informal sector growth, key stakeholders within Moroccan society should be engaged, not least youth movements and civil society groups. Frameworks and campaigns should be created within which stakeholders – youth movements and civil society groups – can feed into the policy process to find inclusive and sustainable solutions, and thus ultimately develop better-informed policies.

- *Ensuring the implementation of reform initiatives to address the skills gap*

Formal sector employment often requires high vocational skills, something not necessarily catered for in the Moroccan education system. Implementing reforms to address the skills gap in Morocco should be a major priority going forward. The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs' plans allude to initiatives that are being put in place, and which policymakers must ensure are carried out. The application of educational resources should therefore also be more targeted to provide the required skills, alongside efforts to ensure widespread literacy.

- *Providing development opportunities to facilitate entry into the formal sector*

Youth policies in Morocco should be more holistic when addressing the formalization of the informal sector. Education and vocational training must be accessible and meet the formal sector's standards. Providing more development opportunities to facilitate entry into the formal sector is an important policy imperative that would help retain and cultivate human capital in Morocco.

- *Reforming legal and administrative structures to reduce barriers to formal sector employment*

In a policy environment that effectively discourages formal employment, making it costly and bureaucratic for employers, informal opportunities are often presented as short-term solutions. Encouraging formal employment through small and medium-sized businesses has often been mentioned as a solution, but such efforts are undermined by the resistance of legal and administrative structures. Solutions to youth employment therefore extend beyond education reform to include labor market and other reforms.



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## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> According to the conventional definitions used by international financial institutions such as the World Bank, “youth” is defined as the ages between 15-24. See Leila Rafei, “Where in the world are young people out of work?” World Bank, 6 August 2014 <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/where-world-are-young-people-out-work>> (accessed November 14, 2017).
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- <sup>iii</sup> Fazl Boukhriss, “Informal Labor: Morocco,” Arab NGO Network for Development <<http://www.annd.org/cd/arabwatch2016/pdf/english/15.pdf>> (accessed March 20, 2018).
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid, p.159.
- <sup>v</sup> Outhmane Bourhaba and Hamimida Mama, “An Estimation of the Informal Economy in Morocco,” *International Journal of Economics and Finance* 9 (2016), p. 145.
- <sup>vi</sup> Brian McCaig, “Why developing countries should create more formal jobs,” World Economic Forum, August 5, 2015 <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/why-developing-countries-should-create-more-formal-jobs/>> (accessed June 17, 2018).
- <sup>vii</sup> Diego F. Angel-Urdinola and Kimie Tanabe, “Micro-determinants of Informal Employment in the Middle East and North Africa Region,” World Bank, SP Discussion Paper No. 1201, January 2012, p. 22 <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/843621468275089806/pdf/665940NWP00PUB0Box365795BOSPDP01201.pdf>> (accessed June 17, 2018).
- <sup>viii</sup> Bourhaba and Mama, “An Estimation of the Informal Economy in Morocco,” p. 145.
- <sup>ix</sup> For more information on the levels of corruption in Morocco and links to financial gains, see Transparency International, “People and Corruption: Middle East and North Africa Survey 2016” <[https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/people\\_and\\_corruption\\_mena\\_survey\\_2016](https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/people_and_corruption_mena_survey_2016)> (accessed April 9, 2018).
- <sup>x</sup> Bourhaba and Mama, “An Estimation of the Informal Economy in Morocco,” p. 145.
- <sup>xi</sup> Kaylee Steck, “The Future of Morocco’s Informal Economy,” *Fair Observer*, August 27, 2016 <<https://www.fairobserver.com/region/middle-east-north-africa/future-moroccos-informal-economy-74001/>> (accessed November 10, 2017).
- <sup>xii</sup> Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe, “Micro-determinants of Informal Employment,” p. 3.

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- <sup>xiii</sup> Daniela Marotta, Paul Prettitore and Paolo Verme, “Gender Inequality, Structural Transformation and Growth: The case of Morocco,” World Bank, December 2015, p.8.
- <sup>xiv</sup> “Morocco – Agriculture Sector,” United States Department of Commerce, October 25, 2017 <<https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>> (accessed November 11, 2017).
- <sup>xv</sup> Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe, “Micro-determinants of Informal Employment,” p. 22.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Boukhriss, “Informal Labor: Morocco,” p. 160.
- <sup>xvii</sup> “Morocco Youth Unemployment Rate,” YCharts, July 1, 2017 <[https://ycharts.com/indicators/morocco\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_rate](https://ycharts.com/indicators/morocco_youth_unemployment_rate)> (accessed October 29, 2017).
- <sup>xviii</sup> According to the Haut-Commissariat au Plan, ‘youth’ employment refers to those aged 15-24. Haut-Commissariat au Plan et la Banque mondiale, *Le marché du travail au Maroc: Défis et opportunités*, November 2017 <<https://www.hcp.ma/file/195496/>> (accessed June 17, 2018).
- <sup>xix</sup> Ragui Assaad and Deborah Levison, “Employment for Youth: A Growing Challenge for the Global Economy,” Minnesota Population Center Working Paper 2013-17, University of Minnesota, May 2013, p. 3.
- <sup>xx</sup> Sustainable Development Department, “Kingdom of Morocco: Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation,” World Bank, June 2012, p. ix.
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- <sup>xxii</sup> Uri Dadush, “Moroccan job market issues, and labour trends in the Middle East and North Africa,” Bruegel website, December 7, 2017 <<http://bruegel.org/2017/12/moroccan-job-market-issues-and-labour-trends-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/>> (accessed February 23, 2018).
- <sup>xxiii</sup> “Kingdom of Morocco: Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation,” World Bank, page x.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Uri Dadush, “Moroccan job market issues.”
- <sup>xxv</sup> Martin Rose, “The Higher Education Trap,” *The World Today*, Chatham House, February 2018 <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/higher-education-trap>> (accessed March 15, 2018).

## Money Can't Buy Labor: Prospects for the Impact of Renewed EU Foreign Policy Instruments in Morocco

Francesca Fabbri

### *Summary*

The European Union supports Morocco in targeting challenges related to deep-seated socio-economic issues and in particular to the fragilities of its labor market. As the EU increasingly resorts to blending instruments to support these efforts, streamlining the reform agenda will be a key element in ensuring the impact of these funds. For this reason, a broader spectrum of EU policies and instruments will need to be taken into account, and coordination between them will be crucial for coherence and effectiveness.

## Money Can't Buy Labor: Prospects for the Impact of Renewed EU Foreign Policy Instruments in Morocco

Francesca Fabbri

The 2011 Arab uprisings were fueled by the quest for political freedom and civil liberties, as well as socio-economic grievances that exacerbated existing discontent. While the protests and unrest led to major political changes and setbacks in other countries, the Kingdom of Morocco seems to have preserved relative stability.

Yet the reality is more complex. As recent demonstrations in the Rif region<sup>i</sup> and Jerada<sup>ii</sup> have shown, public dissatisfaction is growing in some of the poorest areas of Morocco.<sup>iii</sup> Triggered by separate incidents of workers' deaths, protests rapidly moved from seeking justice on single issues to a wider outcry over socio-economic conditions. Morocco has the highest level of inequality of any country in North Africa,<sup>iv</sup> where regional disparities are rising, cronyism and corruption are widespread, and unemployment remains high, especially among youth. These and other socio-economic issues demonstrate the lack of both sustainable, more inclusive growth,<sup>v</sup> and reform implementation. More generally, as in other North African countries, correlations can be drawn between high unemployment rates, especially among youth, and civil unrest. This is particularly true for a country where the capacity to generate educational<sup>vi</sup> and employment opportunities, and avenues for political participation,<sup>vii</sup> is limited.

Nonetheless, the EU considers Morocco a bulwark of stability and a reliable economic partner in a region increasingly plagued by disorder. Against the backdrop of increasing destabilization in Morocco's social fabric and labor market, it is imperative to analyze what the country's precise needs are, and whether EU policies can effectively contribute through its current set of instruments and policies. More specifically, the EU has re-framed its foreign policy to pay greater attention to the resilience of states and societies in its neighborhood and, at the same time, has recently devised programs and instruments to increase private sector participation in development, aimed at stimulating growth and job creation.

### Obstacles to Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Morocco's Labor Market

As illustrated by the recent unrest, Morocco is facing issues that arise from its development model. Protests in various parts of the country have called for improved living conditions, job creation, and a decrease in social

marginalization. The macroeconomic situation has been evaluated positively by the International Monetary Fund,<sup>viii</sup> with low but positive growth rates of around four percent for 2017. However, growth indicators cannot provide a full picture of the country's well-being, and macroeconomic growth has not translated into an inclusive employment dynamic with stable jobs. The unemployment rate reached 10.6 percent in the third quarter of 2017 (up from 10.4 percent in the third quarter of 2016), and remains high among youth (29.3 percent).<sup>ix</sup> More concretely, Morocco's precarious labor market is characterized by its dual and non-inclusive nature, which indicates a rather negative perspective for the country's development.

One of the main negative features of Morocco's labor market is its non-inclusivity: young people and women are not sufficiently integrated. While the participation rate of men resembles that of countries with similar economic levels, women's participation is particularly low at only 23.6 percent, less than a quarter of the active female population. On a positive note, the rate of youth enrolment in education has almost doubled, which may imply a future increase in skills. For instance, between 2000 and 2015, the share of those without a diploma in the 25-24 age group decreased from 34 percent to 22.8 percent, and from 39.2 percent to 13.3 percent for those aged 15-24.<sup>x</sup> However, youth unemployment is on the rise. One of the main causes is to be found in the labor market's difficulties in absorbing this population group.

Moreover, job creation measures have not yet been sufficient in absorbing the growth of the working-age population. On the one hand, employment in the formal sector is concentrated in the hands of established large enterprises, and especially in the manufacturing sector. On the other, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face many constraints, including corruption, low-skilled labor, low competitiveness, high labor costs, and informal sector competition, all of which decelerate their growth and reduce their ability to create jobs. A poorly functioning labor market and the absence of lawful economic opportunities are likely to make illicit, informal economic activities more attractive. In fact, the Moroccan labor market is characterized by the preponderance of informality. Only half of male workers are salaried, and nearly half of all workers are unpaid family workers. Growth in the rural non-farm sector is slow, and most service sector jobs are concentrated in traditional low-productivity services.

These issues become even more problematic in certain areas of the country as Morocco faces nationwide economic and development disparities as well as cronyism and corruption. Economic growth over the past fifteen years has succeeded in bringing down the overall poverty rate from 8.9 percent of the total population in 2007 to 4.8 percent in 2014.<sup>xi</sup> Most remarkably, almost nineteen percent of Morocco's agriculturally dependent rural population still live in poverty or are in danger of doing so. These poverty rates are thought unlikely to change with such slow

economic growth and persistent economic inequality within the country, although a convergence between regions in terms of development has begun. Recent protests in Al Hoceima and Jerada have again shed light on the dramatic state of some of the poorest regions, and how the lack of wealth redistribution is interlinked with social unrest. Moreover, the Moroccan government recognizes regional disparities and the need for investment and development, but has also stressed that it is difficult to get investors to invest in poor and remote areas rather than richer coastal ones.<sup>xii</sup>

### The Moroccan Labor Market: The Need for Reform and the Social Contract

What is clear is that policy alone will not be able to solve the above-mentioned challenges quickly, but can contribute to the mitigation of the labor surplus that characterizes the country's labor market. The current labor code in Morocco entered into force in 2004 to conform to international standards, and could be further reformed. More specifically, in the context of a dual and informal labor market, the labor code does not appear sufficient to regulate the above-mentioned issues.

One main feature of the current legislation is that it does not allow for a coherent social dialogue since small businesses, especially family businesses, are largely absent from representative bodies, whether they are employers or workers. For instance, the General Confederation of Enterprises of Morocco (CGEM) is the main employers' organization with 88,000 members and affiliates, but represents only about fourteen percent of employers in the country, most of whom come from medium and large companies.

Furthermore, some categories of workers remain outside any legal protection, most notably maids working in private individuals' homes and employees in traditional handicrafts. In Morocco, approximately half of total employment is informal or vulnerable, while the other half is regulated by the formal rules governing the labor market. In addition, the labor code does not address certain areas usually covered by this kind of legislation, such as vocational training, social security, health protection, the mutual insurance system, occupational accidents, occupational diseases, and trade union organization for civil servants.

At the same time, the discontent expressed in recent protests has targeted the Makhzen regime's rampant corruption, poor governance, and appropriation of national resources. Generally speaking, the economic activities of elites associated with the King have not been addressed, and are largely or deliberately ignored by the media.

## Resilience in the EU Southern Neighbourhood and the Renewed Focus on Blending Finance

The EU maintains a close relationship with Morocco through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), reinforced by the country's advanced status. At the same time, over the past two years, the EU has revised its external policies and related instruments to better target the causes of instability in the MENA region, and to promote peace and friendly relations in areas close to its borders. The revised ENP and the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) clearly reiterate these purposes.<sup>xiii</sup>

These recent documents have reframed EU foreign policy and recognized more explicitly that socio-economic and political instability threaten states and societies in most MENA countries, underpinning the EU's efforts to support value-based democratic transition, economic prosperity, and political stability. In particular, resilience has been introduced as a guiding concept of EU foreign policy, as a means to enhance prevention and early warning, and as a long-term investment in good governance, stability, and prosperity.<sup>xiv</sup> Concurrently, Morocco has been indicated as one of the countries where deeper relations will be pursued,<sup>xv</sup> through the negotiation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), and closer strategic and political consultations.

In parallel, three recent dynamics have informed new approaches in EU foreign policy-making, mostly in terms of combining different sources of finance for development and growth. The first was the publication of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>xvi</sup> and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,<sup>xvii</sup> which called for a stronger private sector role in global development. This led the EU and its member states to consider ways to implement this approach more concretely in their policies. Secondly, EU policy circles are expressing a growing interest in economic diplomacy and the use of public support to help businesses internationalize. Finally, the migration crisis in Europe, the subsequent adoption of the European Agenda for Migration, and the related new Partnership Framework with third countries, led to the emphasis on the "root causes of migration" in new policies and instruments. Among these root causes, the lack of growth and jobs in some key regions was identified as playing a central part in driving migration flows towards Europe.

As a result, a European External Investment Plan (EIP) has been launched, based on the assumption that classical development assistance was insufficient in addressing the lack of growth and jobs in regions closer and more interconnected to the EU. Public support had to be complemented by a new model of private sector participation. The EIP was then devised to create a single, more coherent framework for existing investment facilities, while seeking greater efficiency in sourcing private finance to stimulate reform and growth. It is articulated around three pillars: mobilizing investment through a new guarantee under the

External Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD); stepping up technical assistance to develop projects and help mobilize higher investments; and improving the business environment by stimulating political and economic dialog and reform.

The EIP aims to reverse the widespread economic trends of reduced Foreign Direct Investment and high unemployment, particularly among youth, across Africa and in the EU neighborhood, thus serving broader efforts for stability and prosperity in the region.

## EU Policies and Morocco's Labor Market

As the EU seeks to use these policies and instruments to support Morocco in addressing its development problems, the EIP aims to create jobs and growth. Generally speaking, private investment financing is directed to increase the rate of capital accumulation in developing countries. As capital accumulation is expected to raise real wages and reduce poverty, the EIP could provide added value in Morocco's quest to reduce its high poverty rate. However, previous analyses<sup>xviii</sup> have revealed that growing capital accumulation has not led to productivity gains, reduced poverty, or helped increase wages in Morocco, where structural unemployment and underemployment seem to be linked to difficulties in adapting to changes in the global economy.

In fact, the challenges of the Moroccan labor market refer to a broader spectrum of issues related to the growing socio-economic grievances underscored by recent protests. While non-inclusivity, difficulties in absorbing the growing labor force, and high levels of informality characterize the national labor market, the issue of regional disparities complicates the picture. Furthermore, problems related to governance, and in particular the need to reform the labor code, as well as widespread corruption and cronyism can only to be addressed through political dialogue aimed at a broader renegotiation of the social contract.

Moroccan policy-makers and the EU need to examine these and other issues in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. For the same reason, the focus on investment for development is certainly useful to address labor market challenges, but cannot be used as a means to solve its structural problems. More specifically, there is a need to consider how the blending initiatives can be better coordinated with European Neighbourhood Policy projects and initiatives to target the key reform needs in Morocco. At the same time, trade and mobility agreements also form part of the policy spectrum that the EU and its Moroccan partners can take into consideration to address the labor market problems.

The current Single Support Framework of the European Union to Morocco<sup>xix</sup> also identifies some of these problems among the main priorities in planning the partnership for 2014-2017, and will certainly reiterate their importance in the next support period. In this context, the Single Support Framework identifies the need to "promote sustainable

and inclusive growth in favor of Human Development,” closely interlinked to “reinforcing democracy and governance.” However, as for other countries in the Mediterranean, the EU has rarely failed to be more player than payer. Most of all, in the growing gap between government – including the monarchy – and citizens, the EU’s efforts to support social justice in Morocco seem to be lost. While many Moroccans view the EU’s engagement with Morocco positively, the EU is often seen as a partner of the regime.<sup>xx</sup> These challenges are further complicated by the fact that relations with the EU have recently been marred by Morocco’s reaction to two rulings at the European Court of Justice regarding agreements on trade and the Western Sahara.

All in all, what seems to be most needed in Morocco is a rethinking of the development model, involving a new social contract that places social justice at the core of economic measures aimed at attaining economic growth. In aiming to better support Morocco as a partner and help the country preserve its stability, the EU needs to take this into account in its foreign policy agenda and implementation.

## Recommendations

More could be done to avoid further destabilization and social conflict in Morocco. Both Moroccan and EU policy-makers still have the time and the tools to address the above-mentioned issues. Most importantly, a broader approach and focus on social justice and inequalities, as well as on good governance, should drive efforts on both sides.

- *Prioritizing in EU-Morocco relations*

When the EU’s political dialogue with Morocco resumes after the current hiatus, and which seems to be the case according to officials on both sides,<sup>xxi</sup> socio-economic issues will need to be placed strategically at the forefront of future relations. The allocation and disbursement of funds through existing instruments and their implementation will certainly continue to play an important role in funding the Moroccan economy, but business as usual should be avoided. The current framework of revised policies at the EU level provides the basis for recalibrating the engagement with Morocco and placing greater emphasis on resilience. In the specific context of blended finance, activities within the third pillar of the EIP will need to be closely coordinated with the programming of ENP instruments to ensure a focus on reform, and particularly on good governance.

- *Adjusting reform priorities*

The reform agenda will need to prioritize social justice in economic planning, reforming the labor code, making markets more contestable, and accelerating governance and business climate reforms, as well as other actions to accelerate growth. Additionally, measures to enhance job creation in the service sector will need to be considered, as this sector seems to be a larger job creator than the manufacturing industry.

- *Rebalancing regional development*

Another path of action should be to channel investment to more deprived regions by enhancing the private sector participation, especially in those sectors and SMEs that account for the bulk of job creation in Morocco. This is particularly relevant to the implementation of European policies and blending initiatives, and the potential contribution of the EU to Morocco's labor market.

- *Enhancing mobility*

Further paths of action should be identified for more advanced mobility and visa deals, where labor migration could be regulated and contribute to the country's growth through further remittances. Moreover, investment in education is needed not only for long-term benefits, but also to address the skills mismatch between educational levels and existing job market demands.

- *Ensuring better governance*

Reform should be directed at creating mechanisms of accountability that would check the power of the monarchy and rationalize policy-making.

- *Balancing the effects of the focus on migration and Africa*

As the EU is currently reviewing its budget for the period 2021-2027, questions remain concerning where the EU's political focus will lie, and how instruments will be modified accordingly. If migration takes the upper hand in Europe's concerns, this might entail detrimental effects on the broader development agenda, including that for the European Neighbourhood. At the same time, negotiations on the EU's new relationship with African, Caribbean, and Pacific nations may also impact on relations between Europe and North Africa. More generally, because of Morocco's recent return to the African Union, a more integrated African dimension may provide opportunities for the country in economic and geopolitical terms, but how it will impact on relations with the EU is yet to be seen. As the EU prepares for both sets of negotiations, it will need to examine the effects that its focus on migration and the African dimension may have on Morocco and North Africa in general, especially bearing in mind the Maghreb region's lack of integration. The EU should ensure that the focus on curbing migration flows does not overshadow or even undermine long-term priorities for development in Africa, and the opportunities that greater economic integration and mobility entail for the continent as a whole.

All in all, as the EU places greater emphasis on the concept of resilience in its closest neighborhood, policies and instruments have been revised to address growing socio-economic challenges. Morocco, a traditional partner perceived as a bulwark of stability, is not exempt from these risks. While the EU recognizes the need to support the country in facing these challenges, it also needs to ensure the coherence and coordination of its policies to engage with Morocco in a wider encompassing effort to reform.



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## English and Personnel Exchange: Education Policy Strategies for Economic Growth and Greater Moroccan Socio-Political Integration in ECOWAS

Imru Al Qays Talha Jebril

### *Summary*

Morocco's education reform includes the introduction of English as a language of instruction at earlier stages. However, there is a severe shortage of personnel who can teach English throughout the educational system. In line with Morocco's greater regional integration into the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, Morocco can utilize its geopolitical advantage to establish personnel exchanges from West Africa and beyond to import English-speaking teachers, in exchange for exporting its own French-speaking instructors. This would fill the gap in the country's own educational system, at the same time as increasing regional cohesion, geopolitical and economic ascendancy, and socio-cultural understanding.

## English and the Personnel Exchange: Education Policy Strategies for Economic Growth and Greater Moroccan Socio-Political Integration in ECOWAS

Imru Al Qays Talha Jebril

### Morocco's Educational System

Morocco's educational system is outdated and losing prestige. Not only does the country rank among the last in most international learning assessments (PIRLS and TIMSS)<sup>i</sup> of pupils at primary, secondary, and higher levels, it also suffers from structural issues pertaining to language barriers, low school retention rates, gender disparity, and the mismatch between university instruction and job market demands. Moreover, the current migration of (mainly) West Africans hoping to reach Europe has created the unforeseen consequence of large numbers of new arrivals wanting to settle in Morocco, where they find it difficult to adapt in linguistic and socio-cultural terms, secure decently-paid jobs, or enroll their children in regular public schools.

Morocco is seeking to aggressively reform the educational sector. Despite the lavish spending, mostly on salaries – in 2016, Morocco spent DH45.8bn(€4.19bn) on education, around 26 percent of the national budget<sup>ii</sup> – it falls short of having a consistent, long-term strategy to address structural discrepancies, personnel shortcomings, archaic teaching methodologies, and language diglossia, where Darija (the Moroccan dialect) is the native language, school classes are taught in Arabic, and French is used in higher education. The 2017-2018 World Economic Forum report places Morocco 120th out of 137 countries in terms of quality of education.<sup>iii</sup>

### English as a Path to Change and Growth

According to the 2014 census, 18.9 percent of Moroccan households speak English in some shape or form.<sup>iv</sup> This figure surprised several observers, as Morocco has traditionally been a bastion for “La Francophonie,” or the French-speaking elite in general. However, Moroccans have recently realized that French is no longer the sole trajectory for development or provider of job opportunities, and that even French scientific materials are increasingly being published in the global lingua franca. English thus now represents a tool, and a new path for Moroccan economic growth and geopolitical goals. Yet it is not taught extensively in schools, and English-language instruction remains very meager compared to French or Arabic. First of all, this is due to the lack of coordinated efforts by the Ministry of Education and localities to fully integrate English into the educational

system. English teachers are scarce, and are usually hired by private entities that pay much higher salaries than the public sector. Second, the country has not yet established a law to make English an official, or even semi-official language of the country (it is worth noting here that French is neither, but is still used as the main language of business). Therefore, Morocco needs to transform its educational system into an English-language system, which would make the country's human capital more competitive and more international. This would also bring the benefit of making Morocco's integration in ECOWAS smoother, enabling it to juggle between Francophone and Anglophone countries within the bloc, as well as opening the domestic market to attract English-speaking multinationals, so that they can find better human resources to meet their needs.

Furthermore, English could play a major role in improving the quality of research and instruction at all levels. If teachers can master the language, they will be able to keep up-to-date with the latest educational materials, pedagogy, and instructional research. Moreover, greater use of English could also increase the diversity of academics who come to Morocco to conduct studies or research, and at the same time increase the prestige of the country's universities, encouraging Moroccan academics to publish in the same language commonly used by most prominent scholars. In addition, it would allow Moroccans to rely less on the French market, and expand industries such as business outsourcing or manufacturing to trade with countries that use English for business. In that sense, a greater focus on English would give a competitive advantage to students, businesses, and researchers in Morocco, and allow the country to become a multilingual bridge between the Francophone and Anglophone worlds, using that same diversity to establish a more diverse economic ecosystem that can sustain clients from both. If Morocco is to become an African financial hub, and a country endowed with human capital able to successfully work together with European, African, Asian, and Latin American interests, English (and, to a lesser degree Spanish) ought to be an integral component of the educational system, as well as a cultural tool to change attitudes and abilities within government, civil society, and the business world.

## Recommendations

- *Set up mutual exchanges of teachers from West African countries*

Morocco should establish links with ECOWAS member countries to set up personnel exchanges of teachers, education specialists, and professors from West Africa, who can teach the sciences and humanities in English. In turn, this will increase the Moroccan population's proficiency in English, and create a healthy exchange of skills within the regional bloc. In return, Morocco can send its own French-speaking teachers to Anglophone countries, including Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Therefore, as well as providing a competitive edge, this could also be a tool for regional and global geopolitical alignment and

growth. Businesses and individuals in Morocco would greatly benefit from more business opportunities, including tourism, and would seek to achieve the proficiency in English enjoyed by, for example, Austrians, Norwegians, and Germans. In that sense, English is a globalizing factor, and the only way for Morocco to advance economically and realize its full geopolitical potential at the crossroads of Africa and Europe, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This exchange of human resources will further foster south-south cooperation, and help decrease the racist prejudices Moroccan students may have against Sub-Saharan African teachers.

- *Increase scholarships for African students*

The number of scholarships granted to African students (35,000 since 2005)<sup>v</sup> should be increased to enhance Morocco's soft power and diplomacy in the region.

- *Morocco should pursue education reform which is sensitive to the region's history, culture, and economies*

Greater cultural sensitivity should be reflected in Moroccan curricula and textbooks. Increasing the knowledge of these countries will help rapprochement with the native populations, and would encourage Moroccans to identify as West Africans, rather than simply as Arabs, Berbers, or North Africans. This would create a dynamic in which Moroccans and ECOWAS populations could invest in each other's economic space, promoting greater knowledge of local practices, and fostering entrepreneurship between countries in the region. Educational reform and an English-language overhaul of the country's educational system represent an opportunity not just for Morocco, but also for mutual co-development in the region.

- *Foster diversification of educational outcomes and language specializations within schooling*

Morocco is currently fashioning itself as a financial, trade, and logistical hub within Africa. The success of this endeavor depends on whether the country can train its human capital in English, thus becoming a hub for African linguistic and cultural diversity. Through the diversification of educational outcomes and language specializations within schooling, the diglossia of languages that currently exists in Morocco can be seen as a strength rather than a weakness. In fact, instead of focusing on making one language more important, or granting official status to other languages or dialects (such as Soussiya, Tarifit, Tachelhit, or Darija), Morocco needs to create an educational system that can cater to all the linguistic diversity the country has to offer, be it Arabic, French, Spanish, English, or even Portuguese and Wolof. Morocco's strategy should be based on the fact that the more languages the people speak the better, which would translate into a diaspora with stronger ties to a larger pool of potential markets, and a pool of human capital that is able to deal with a wide variety of clients speaking and trading in the different languages



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within our region. While proximity to Portugal and Spain can also foster linguistic ties, Morocco could bring about more change by playing to its existing strengths, using Berber, Arabic, and French throughout West Africa.

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## Reforming the Moroccan Education System through Enhancing Coordination between Civil Society Organizations and Public Authorities

Rokaya El-Boudrari

### *Summary*

Efficient reform of the Moroccan educational sector requires enhanced coordination between civil society organizations (CSOs) and public authorities. This can be achieved through the creation of a commission dedicated to education, and composed of local educational NGOs. This commission must adopt a participative approach, engaging all stakeholders, from NGOs to public authorities.

## Reforming the Moroccan Education System through Enhancing Coordination between Civil Society Organizations and Public Authorities

Rokaya El-Boudrari

In 2012, the Haut-Commissariat au Plan (HCP, the public body in charge of surveys and statistics) conducted a survey to determine which forms of welfare could positively impact living conditions in Morocco. Education unequivocally emerged as a priority for 78 percent of Moroccans, ahead of proximity to schools (58 percent), medical coverage (49 percent), proximity to health facilities (38 percent), and the quality of health services (36 percent).<sup>i</sup>

These results indicate how Moroccans have become increasingly aware of the importance of education, especially in a country where social inequalities are entrenched, where democracy is still at an early stage, and where there are no (or very limited) natural resources on which to rely.

Having reached the conclusion that no strategic economic sector - including industry, logistics, and tourism - could develop without educational reform, Moroccan governments have put several strategies in place over the past two decades. They began devoting a significant portion of public expenditure to education: in 2011, these expenditures represented 6.3 percent of national GDP. By comparison, this indicator was significantly lower during the same period for the European Union (5.1 percent), North America (5.2 percent), and Latin America (4.7 percent).

However, all indicators show that the Moroccan educational sector is on the edge of collapse, with four out of five students close to illiteracy according to the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS),<sup>ii</sup> and between 100,000 and 400,000 students quitting school early each year. The challenge today therefore is not to inject more cash into the machine, but rather to improve the “return on investment” rate.

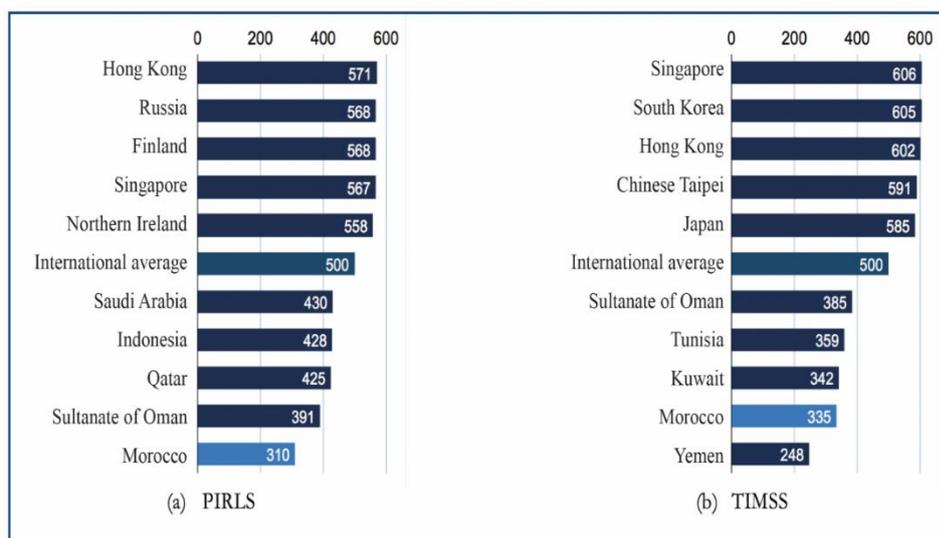
### A Deficient Educational System

Despite the several reforms of the past twenty years, the quality of Moroccan education has remained strikingly deficient, as underlined by several international studies such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), or PIRLS.<sup>iii</sup>

The Moroccan educational system ranks particularly poorly in these studies, even when compared to countries with similar economic, social,

and demographic characteristics. In 2011, the PIRLS study revealed that 79 percent of Moroccan students’ literacy was below the low benchmark, meaning that four out of five students are close to illiterate. This rate was 76 percent in mathematics, meaning that three out of four students have no knowledge in this field.<sup>iv</sup>

Analysis of primary school students<sup>v</sup> highlighted their poor performance and the numerous dysfunctions of the educational system, including inequality between regions, genders, and public and private systems, and an increasing number of drop-outs (400,000 per year).



Morocco’s ranking in reading and mathematics (OCP Policy Center, 2016)<sup>vi</sup>

The weaknesses of the educational system in Morocco are also illustrated by the astonishing figure from the National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy (ANLCA): approximately 10 million men and women are still illiterate, representing 25 percent of the Moroccan population.<sup>vii</sup>

The social impact of these realities is dramatic. Indeed, educational deficiencies that start at primary school continue throughout the student’s education and professional life. In fact, studies have shown that the failing educational system directly impacts on the unemployment rate (which, in 2010 reached 14.8 percent for those aged 15-34, and 16.7 percent for those aged 15-24),<sup>viii</sup> as well as impacting poverty, illegal immigration, delinquency, extremism, and so on.

### The Strong Involvement of CSOs in the Educational Sector

One of the most important stakeholders in the educational system are civil society organizations, who mainly focus on three issues. The first is easing access to preschool education: in 2015-2016, only 43 percent of Moroccan children aged four to five were enrolled in preschool, with only 27.9 percent enrolled in rural areas.<sup>ix</sup> The Fondation Zakoura Education, Al Jisr, Care, and many other NGOs have developed various approaches to

tackle this issue. Second, CSOs work to prevent students from dropping out of school: 53 percent of students enrolled in middle school continue to high school, and less than 15 percent of first grade students are likely to graduate from high school.<sup>x</sup> Organizations such as Kane Ya Makane and Fondation Sanady have developed innovative approaches to keep students in school through artistic activities and learning support. Third, CSOs propose alternatives to dropping out, where an estimated 100,000-400,000 students leave school every year, many of whom do so early on and without obtaining qualifications. Specific programs help reintegration into school where possible, or provide vocational training and work-readiness preparation. These programs are run by, among others, L'Heure Joyeuse, Al Ikram, and the Fondation Orient-Occident.

It has long been recognized that while CSOs play an important role in development, they have not, to date, been significant players in strategic discussions, and their views and recommendations are not taken into account in public decisions and reforms.

The experience of the past twenty years has shown how many “strategic reforms” by successive Moroccan governments, costing billions of dirhams (43 billion, according to the Moroccan Court of Auditors<sup>xi</sup>), have failed because of numerous deficiencies, including governance problems, quality of the curricula, and lack of educational innovation.<sup>xii</sup>

One of the greatest obstacles commonly reported by field operators is the lack of coordination between stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), public schools, NGOs, funding bodies, teachers, students, and families. Unofficially, the MoE tends to regard CSOs as competitors or subcontractors, and rarely as partners who share the same motivations and goals. A further impediment is rooted in the wide variety of CSOs and their difficulties in creating networks and collectives to act as qualified and recognized partners, making it difficult for the MoE to communicate and coordinate with civil society. Despite being important actors in Morocco, CSOs are relatively young organizations with limited human, material, and financial resources. Although they play an important role in the field - notably by testing innovative approaches - they do not have the required organizational, economic, or functional resources to share their best practices and replicate them on a wider scale.

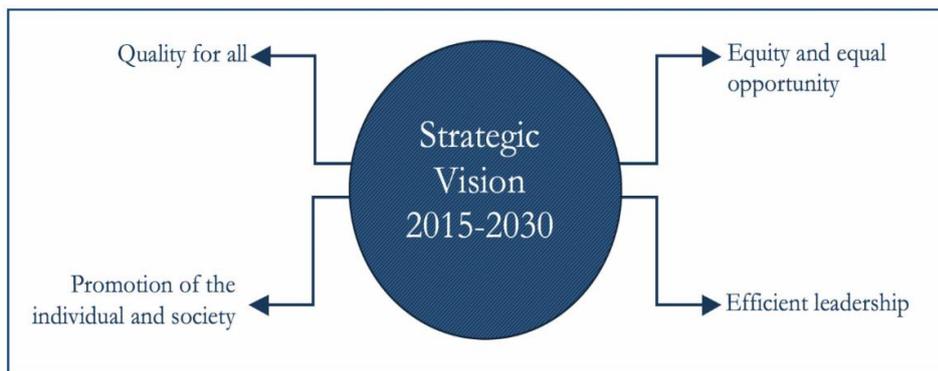
The following two examples illustrate the difficulties arising from a lack of coordination between stakeholders. The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) financed a project aimed at capacity-building for various stakeholders in education, a significant part of which consisted of NGOs providing training to the MoE. This initiative was wholly rejected by the Ministry, which led to the project's failure. Second, Atfale, a Moroccan NGO specialized in education, put in place a specific program dedicated to pre-school education, which was to be implemented nationally by the MoE to provide various NGOs with a standardized set of pedagogical tools. This initiative was soon aborted due a lack of

coordination between the NGOs and the Ministry during the program’s elaboration process.

### 2015-2030 Strategic Vision: Poor Integration of CSOs’ Experience

In 2015, the need to implement ambitious educational reform - driven by social and economic crisis - led the MoE to adopt a new strategic vision proposed by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS).

The CSEFRS is a consultative body in charge of advising and assessing public policies pertaining to education, training, and scientific research. This new vision provides several recommendations, including the integration of preschool at the primary level, the implementation of tutoring, the establishment of libraries, and the revision of curricula and teaching methods.



*The four areas of the strategic vision 2015-2030 (OCP Policy Center, 2016)<sup>xiii</sup>*

Despite being quite innovative, this strategic vision had several flaws. First, the reforms did not sufficiently build on NGOs’ experiences in the educational field concerning, for example, the fight against illiteracy, the need for educational and learning support, and pre-school education. Second, there were no specific mechanisms in place to replicate NGOs’ experiences on a wider scale, to compile and analyze their achievements, or to highlight best practices. Last, there was a lack of support from the Moroccan government to help NGOs develop their activities.

During a roundtable meeting in February 2018 on the theme of civil society’s role in combatting the school dropout rates,<sup>xiv</sup> all NGOs in attendance confirmed the need to exchange field experiences and lessons learnt, so as not to “reinvent the wheel.” They also highlighted their frustration at not being able to scale up their programs, even when they could provide evidence of their effectiveness.

## Recommendations

- *Establish a commission dedicated to the education sector*

The latest Moroccan constitution of 2011<sup>xv</sup> granted civil society a greater role in both local and political governance through its involvement in institutional decision-making processes. The 2011 constitution proposed the creation of an Advisory Council on Youth and Associative Action (CCJAA), which would oversee the expansion of young people's and associations' participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political development of the country. This Council could specifically work on the educational sector under the NGOs' purview, since it is supposed to advise on associative action. A Commission dedicated to education and composed of local educational NGOs could take charge of this mission. To succeed, this Commission would have to maintain constant communication with the various stakeholders; implement an objective evaluation process; and offer specific assistance or training to NGOs to help them document their practices as precisely as possible, from the identification of needs to process implementation.

- *Implement a participatory approach*

For the strategic vision 2015-2030 to reach its objectives, a truly participatory approach is necessary. This approach must draw primarily from field experience, and mainly from the NGOs, which represent a critical link in the educational value chain, and whose innovative approaches are crucial for any ambitious yet realistic reforms. The latter is demonstrated by NGOs' adaptive management, their inclusive approach (involving parents, teachers, the MoE, other NGOs, and private companies), and their focus on project evaluation, which is a prerequisite from any fund provider. It is therefore necessary to establish an efficient mechanism which would help to: identify the best practices implemented by NGOs, and share them with the most relevant stakeholders; accompany stakeholders in the replication process, either by NGOs or public authorities (the MoE); and evaluate the impact.

Stakeholders must act pragmatically, which means that public bodies such as the MoE and schools must undergo a change of mentality, especially in terms of bureaucracy and decision-making. The various stakeholders must also undertake all necessary efforts to provide the Commission (or the Council) with the most relevant information. This means that NGOs may need to follow training modules which can be put in place and supervised by the above-mentioned Commission. The Commission must also build on the work of other institutional bodies, such as the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), the Council on Higher Education (CSE), and the HCP, and try to involve them wherever they can make a useful contribution.



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## Notes

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<sup>v</sup> PIRLS 2011, see endnote ii.

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<sup>xii</sup> Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation, de l’Enseignement et de la Recherche Scientifique, “La Mise en œuvre de la charte nationale d’éducation et de formation 2000-2013.”

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibourk, “Learning Achievement in Morocco,” see endnote iv.

<sup>xiv</sup> Round table “Binatna#1: Rôle de la société civile dans la lutte contre l’abandon scolaire,” organized by the Wassila initiative to understand NGOs’ needs and orientations regarding strategic reform 2015-2030.



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<sup>xv</sup> Articles 12 and 33, Morocco's Constitution of 2011,  
<[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco\\_2011.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011.pdf?lang=en)> (accessed July 10, 2018).

## In-Service Teacher Training in Morocco

Khadija Ouadi

### *Summary*

While education in Morocco has been subjected to several reform strategies since 2000, these attempts have yielded few results, and the quality of schooling in Morocco has declined to the students' detriment. Although teachers' skills can directly impact on achievement levels, due to financial and organizational obstacles, teachers in Morocco receive rarely in-service training to maintain and enhance their skills. Through the introduction of a decentralized system to manage teacher training, in addition to digitalization through e-learning, the Ministry of Education could ensure regular trainings for all teachers irrespective of their workplace, and without affecting the normal delivery of courses.

## In-Service Teacher Training in Morocco

Khadija Ouadi

Nelson Mandela once said: “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” Education can build or destroy a society; yet despite various efforts to create an educational system for all, the quality of Moroccan schooling is in question.

In a 2013-4 UNESCO report on learning and teaching quality in 85 countries, Morocco ranked among the 21 worst educational systems in the world in terms of learning.<sup>i</sup> These poor results were earlier confirmed by the international comparative assessments Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), where in 2011, almost 79 percent of Moroccan students in the fourth and sixth grades tested below the low benchmark, while this rate was 76 percent in mathematics.<sup>ii</sup> This means that three out of four students have difficulties in mathematics and reading. This alarming situation is the result of various abnormalities in the educational system.

As cited in a report by the Moroccan Supreme Education Council (SEC),<sup>iii</sup> twenty percent of students are taught by teachers who had not received any kind of training in the subjects they deliver (mostly Arabic, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and earth sciences). Moreover, 58 percent of teachers spend a great amount of time disciplining pupils at the expense of teaching. In addition, sixty percent of teachers had not benefited from any in-service training during the past five years.

Moroccan education is based on a bureaucratic, centralized, and concentrated system. Education management is one way: top-down. Teachers, who represent the lowest level of the management pyramid, are the only ones in direct contact with students, while curriculum planning is dictated by the Ministry. Inspections are carried out by regional delegations according to the Ministry directives. In other words, teachers are regarded as the deliverers of a curriculum and pedagogy chosen by the central administration and implemented for all students, regardless of regional disparities, urban/rural factors, and students’ varying levels and ways of understanding.

In contrast, we might consider the example of the Finnish educational system, which is regarded as one of the best educational systems in the world. The country has maintained its top ranking in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 2001. One key reason for this success is the priority given to teacher training and autonomy. This combination of professionalism and trust in Finnish education management stands in stark contrast to Morocco.

## Training and recruitment of teachers in Morocco

### *Initial teacher training*

In Morocco, teacher training is provided by three different institutions: the Regional Pedagogical Centers (CPRs), the Ecole Nationale Supérieure (ENS), and the Faculty of Education Sciences (FSE).

The current organization of initial teacher training reveals problems essentially linked to institutional overlaps and conflicts. For example, the CPRs recruit future teachers for preschool, a mission that the FSE also carries out. Moreover, while the CPRs operate under the tutelage of the National Ministry of Education, the ENS and FSE are supervised by universities. In addition, the CPRs and ENS have undergone several reforms over the two past decades, in terms of tutelage, missions, and selection criteria, which concern entry requirements for teachers. These requirements continually change from a high school diploma, a two-year university degree, to a Bachelor's degree. Besides, teachers at CPRs receive pedagogical training, while ENS teachers are trained in their field according to a BMD (Bachelor's-Master's-PHD) system.

In other words, teachers are trained under several systems and with different entry requirements, which has led to heterogeneous teacher profiles with gaps in the levels of education and diverse training.

### *Recruitment requirements*

The selection process for trainee teachers includes a preselection based on a merit order, a test, and an interview.

This process allows a limited number of teachers to be recruited. According to a report by the Supreme Court of Audit,<sup>iv</sup> schools face a shortage of teachers, with a 62 percent lack in urban areas (10,318 teachers) and 38 percent in rural environments (6,382 teachers). This shortage has also led to the reduction or even suspension of the teaching of certain subjects, or the teaching of courses by non-specialized teachers, contract workers, or trainees who are insufficiently trained.

### *In-service training in Morocco*

Offering regular in-service trainings to teachers is considered to have a positive impact on their conduct and practices at the classroom, and also helps with the implementation of educational reforms, as teachers constitute the interface between educational management and implementation.

The national charter of education by the Ministry of Education<sup>v</sup> states that each education and training officer, whatever his/her mission or the level at which s/he teaches, should benefit from two types of continuing education and requalification sessions: short annual maintenance and skills update sessions, lasting around thirty hours; and advanced

requalification sessions, taking place at least once every three years. However, these requirements concerning the frequency of in-service training are not applied.

Conventional in-service training is rarely held due to various reasons. First, Morocco has almost 226,000 public sector teachers throughout the entire kingdom. While some work in urban areas and big cities, others are in rural and enclave areas. Traveling to training is difficult and costly to manage, while bringing trainers to the teachers' locations is not a viable solution for schools in remote areas with only one or two members of staff.

Second, according to the World Bank, the pupil/teacher ratio averages out at 25:8,<sup>vi</sup> which is high in comparison to other countries: in 2015, the European Union's pupil/teacher ratio was 13.<sup>vii</sup> In the absence of trainee replacements, the physical absence of teachers attending training on schooldays affects students directly. Furthermore, in the absence of a compulsory training note from the Ministry, teachers do not volunteer for training unless it takes place nearby, due to marking commitments, courses preparation, and exhausting working hours (36 hours per week for primary school teachers, and 24 hours per week for college and high school teachers).

Third, the logistics behind training management require the allocation of a considerable budget, estimated by the Ministry of Education to be €44 million per year, in order to reach the assigned goals of the 2015-2030 national strategy.

## Recommendations

- *Implementation of E-learning for teacher training*

Distance, time, and budget problems can be effectively reduced with the introduction of e-learning on teacher training courses.

This scheme would benefit not only public sector teachers, but also those in the private sector, since the curriculum and its administration are almost the same.

The starting budget for an e-learning solution to serve teachers throughout Morocco is €2 million. This budget is calculated as follows: 0 MAD for the free, open source Learning Management System (LMS); 1,500,000 MAD for the installation and personalization of the LMS; 200,000 MAD for developing e-learning courses; 5,000 MAD for the server; 150,000 MAD for maintenance; 100,000 for communication and change management; and 100,000 MAD for the development of a mobile learning extension.

- *Decentralization of the management of conventional trainings*

It is also recommendable to decentralize the management of conventional trainings to ensure better time management and an adjustment of content based on regional differences and needs.

The Ministry of Education's regional delegations would be well suited to ensure the management of in-service training, because they have the advantage of proximity, they bring together teachers facing similar conditions within a region, and they have qualified administrators who can manage the organization of in-service training.

The annual planning of in-service training can be implemented by the Ministry. Yet, it should include facultative training subjects in addition to mandatory ones, which each delegation can modify according to the needs of schools and teachers of the region it manages.

Annual reports should be sent to the central entity in charge of in-service training, which should be monitor the in-service trainings and make recommendations to continually improve the quality and content of delivered trainings.

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## Learning Through Serious Gaming: Improving Moroccan Higher Education

Benedikt van den Woldenberg

### *Summary*

As in many other MENA countries, higher education in Morocco is characterized by a strong focus on “chalk and talk” methods of instruction. Among other shortcomings,<sup>i</sup> this often leads to students rote-learning information required for tests rather than developing a contextualized understanding of a problem at hand, its stakeholders, and their goals and constraints. This skill is required across the labor market, from cooperating and negotiating, to navigating frameworks with a variety of different institutions at play. The serious gaming approach can be used to teach such multi-actor dynamics and refine the understanding of complex issues.

## Learning Through Serious Gaming: Improving Moroccan Higher Education

Benedikt van den Woldenberg

The Moroccan government has identified the education system overall – from elementary schools to universities, from curricula to the quality and quantity of teachers – and the gap between taught skills and content and labor market demands in particular as key areas in which action is required. Several indicators have demonstrated that this skills gap has been a significant problem for years. Moroccan youth are faced with labor market opportunities insufficient in both quantity and quality: the labor force participation of those aged 15-29 is lower than that of those aged 30-64. The overall unemployment rate, gender inequalities, and the educational gap all feed into this state of affairs.<sup>ii</sup> Meanwhile, the number of students enrolled in tertiary programs has risen dramatically from 10.16 percent in 2000 to 28.14 percent in 2015,<sup>iii</sup> increasing the pressure on the government to find and enact solutions. The government thus began implementing an educational reform program under the auspices of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision of Reform, which seeks to tackle these issues, defining three key principles for improving education: equity and equality of opportunity; quality for all; and promotion of the individual and society. In doing so, the government recognizes these principles as interrelated, in particular when considering larger challenges: the quality of education and the number of years in school are preconditions for the successful integration of youth into the country's labor market, and avoiding high unemployment in this age group.<sup>iv</sup>

One key target is to improve the ability of educational institutions and their curricula to match their programs to the skills required on the labor market. Among the most important, interrelated skills are:

- Problem-solving skills: employers require workers to be able to identify problems, gather the relevant information, and develop possible solutions and implement them;
- Innovation and creativity: a high number of skilled positions require the worker to be able to think ahead and reflect on established procedures to contribute to ongoing improvement;
- Applying knowledge and skills in real-world settings: the ability to put learned content into practice is crucial. Rather than relying on predefined cases, employees need to be able to extract methods from case studies in order to be able to apply them in various contexts.

The 2015–2030 Strategic Vision of Reform contains a total of 23 key levers,<sup>v</sup> four of which are directly related to the skills listed above:

- Equality 6* Provide education and training institutions with a level of supervision, quality, and equipment, and a capacity for support in line with the demands of fairness and equal opportunities.
- Quality 1* Upgrade the professions of teaching, training, and management: the first precondition for any improvement in quality.
- Quality 4* Develop a diversified, open, effective, and innovative pedagogical model.
- Promotion 1* Match learning and training with the needs of the country, the careers of the future, and employment capacity.

To date, the implementation of the reforms appears to be proceeding apace. The new government, in place since April 2017, has merged the two key ministries in this field: the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Education and Training, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Two state secretaries have been appointed, focusing on higher education and vocational training respectively. Although a recent reshuffle – the replacements in late 2017 of the Minister of Education and the State Secretary of Vocational Training – has put a temporary damper on the overall course of action, it has not derailed the reform plans.

## Gaming Means Learning

One method that could promote the achievement of these four levers is serious gaming, also referred to as gamification or simulations. Serious gaming is an approach that offers experiential learning. In other words, previously acquired theoretical and historical “textbook” knowledge can be used practically in a simulated environment with other students. This method directly tackles the four levers of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision of Reform named above.

Games always carry aspects of learning. In order to perform well in board games like chess, Scrabble, or Risk, the player must showcase a set of skills. Knowledge, strategizing, foresight, and interpersonal communication and cooperation are all part of the equation. Serious gaming can consist of different modes, ranging from small scenarios to multi-day simulations.<sup>vi</sup> Such exercises may include card games, board games, or simulations using web-interfaces, with numerous possibilities in between. For example, in the context of international relations, simulations often focus on a specific body (e.g. the UN Security Council), a set of actors (the members of said body), and a defined topic (e.g. an interstate conflict). The most prominent simulation of this kind is arguably Model United Nations.

Serious gaming combines the three dimensions described below;<sup>vii</sup> the exact simulation or game used can be tailored towards defined learning goals, factual knowledge, and soft skills.

- Cognitive: gaming can improve participants' factual and contextual understanding of the matter at hand;
- Behavioral: participants enhance their soft skills, such as public speaking, negotiating, finding compromises, working in teams, time management, and being able to properly prioritize;
- Affective: by immersing themselves in the exercise, participants are exposed to a much more realistic depiction of specific situations they might encounter in their professional careers.

Across disciplines, it is crucial to develop a close understanding of multi-actor environments and decision-making processes, as well as the overall skills of collaborative problem-solving and contextualizing knowledge and methods. The skill sets taught at university level need to include these components to prepare students for the labor market, and allow them to match their skills necessary for a successful career.

Students who participated in simulations stressed time and again that the experience was crucial to their later professional success. Being able to put acquired factual knowledge into action in an arena where mistakes have no real-life consequences has proven highly useful. When evaluating simulations, participants regularly emphasize that they gained a much deeper understanding of the complexity of the issue discussed, and the vast majority would recommend taking part in such an exercise to their peers.

## Recommendations

- *Embedding serious gaming in curricula*

Serious gaming can help Morocco meet the challenges as described above. Ideally, gaming elements would be included in regular course schedules towards the end of Bachelor's and Master's programs. Class sizes should be no larger than thirty students, and participation should be mandatory. There are two reasons for this: first, placing gaming on the curriculum establishes it as an essential element of education, rather than a one-off or sporadic practice. Second, if such an exercise were voluntary, with potential extra costs and time commitments, participation would most likely be uneven, due to the discriminatory effects of various personal circumstances.

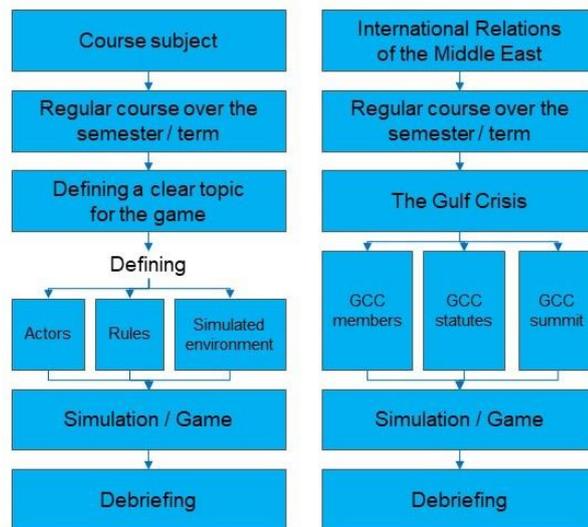


Figure 1. Including serious gaming into a course structure: template and example

A semester in Morocco typically spans sixteen weeks, comprises three modules, and includes at least 360 hours of course work. Usually, the most productive and targeted approach to serious gaming is to offer a regular course on the topic introduced throughout a semester, which finishes with a simulation. This ensures that students are sufficiently familiar with gaming and can engage with it properly. However, simulations may also make sense at the beginning or during the semester or module, if the goal is to highlight the complexity of an issue, with a subsequent class session to clarify.

While mandatory, students' participation and performance should not be directly linked to grading. That is, a certain outcome, such as achieving a predefined goal, is not only difficult to assess, but also has a negative impact on the overall flow of a serious gaming exercise and the experience of participants.

- *Introducing serious gaming as method: teacher training*

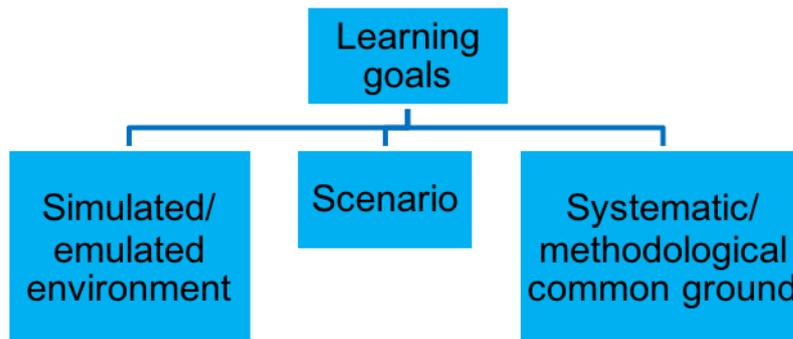


Figure 2. Important aspects in the planning and conceptualization of a serious gaming exercise

The serious gaming approach can successfully be introduced to lecturers and academic staff at Moroccan universities by training teachers on-site to create multipliers and reach as many students as possible in a relatively short amount of time. Such trainings should follow the “no one size fits all” approach, where the emphasis is on the method rather than a prepared simulation. Teachers should receive a customizable toolkit, reflecting the focus on multiple, repeatable forms or opportunities. This can be achieved either by running a one- or (preferably) two-day workshop, depending on teachers’ familiarity with the method. The workshop addresses how to create a tailored simulation, and the necessary technical and logistical points to consider.

Such workshops should touch on least on four aspects crucial to their success: the need for thorough preparation; an introduction of the actual content; the simulation itself and all its logistical aspects; and an interactive and comprehensive debriefing and evaluation.

- *External support and cooperation*

As serious gaming is part of some – albeit too few – curricula at German universities, external experience can be provided. Enhancing Moroccan higher education is primarily a domestic effort, yet external partners such as Germany can nevertheless play a constructive role within the framework of wider educational cooperation projects:

- The German Academic Exchange Service’s German-Arab Transformation Partnership should include more improved teaching methods, including serious gaming, in its development and funding for educational cooperation. It should suggest or incentivize the integration of serious gaming into any curricula of joint degree programs, for example.

- The Federal Ministry of Education and Research should expand its activities with Morocco, adding programs for educational cooperation in addition to the existing research-focused ones. The Ministry should also foster projects with Morocco in the area of Education and Institutions of Higher Learning, as it does with Tunisian partners. Serious gaming should be a focus of this.
- The budget for cultural relations and education policy (AKBP, financed mostly by the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Education and Research) has increased continuously over recent years, and stood at €1,767 billion in 2016, an increase of sixteen percent since 2010.<sup>viii</sup> The CDU-SPD “grand coalition” has stated in its coalition agreement that this trend is to continue, offering the possibility of enhanced cooperation between Germany and Morocco in the field of higher education, involving serious gaming. Some of these funds should be used to finance educational cooperation programs that foster the provision of serious gaming to teachers at Moroccan universities.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> For a brief overview, see Aourraz, “Rachid: Education Policies in Morocco: Can the Government Fix What It Broke?,” *Arab Reform Initiative*, October 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> World Bank, “Kingdom of Morocco. Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation,” 2012, p. 12.

<sup>iii</sup> See the World Bank data <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?end=2015&locations=MA&start=1971&view=chart>> (accessed June 19, 2018).

<sup>iv</sup> For a thorough analysis, see European Training Foundation, “Morocco. Education, Training and Employment Developments 2017,” 2018.

<sup>v</sup> See European Commission, “Overview of the Higher Education System: Morocco,” February 2017, pp. 35-36.

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## The Role of Extracurricular Activities in Preventing Irregular Migration and Youth Radicalization

Richard Grieco

### *Summary*

The Moroccan government faces great challenges from young people's clandestine migration to Europe, and the risk of radicalization they constantly face due to societal weaknesses, from widespread illiteracy to unemployment. To implement effective policies to tackle these two phenomena, three activities developed by the Italian NGO Progettomondo.mlal over several projects can serve as best practices. They include extra-curricular creativity and socialization activities to stimulate the students, and scholastic modules on self-esteem, anger management, and citizenship education to reduce the risk of radicalization. A broader (and possibly national) use of similar approaches would support young people by making them realize their value, and by clarifying the risks that irregular migration and radicalization constitute to their lives and broader society.

## The Role of Extracurricular Activities in Preventing Irregular Migration and Youth Radicalization

Richard Grieco

Moroccan social reality has been undergoing immense change. The country has been a land of emigration and transit - mostly for sub-Saharan migrants - for decades, but has now also become a land of final destination. Its geographical position, the 2008 global economic crisis, and the recent tightening of European migration policies are among the reasons behind this change. Morocco is therefore currently facing several issues not dissimilar to those experienced by European countries. Irregular migrants can face violence from national security forces and legal impediments due to the country's delayed adoption of refugee status laws.<sup>i</sup> Emigration remains central in the country's political and social discourse too, in terms of migrants' remittances, for example, and the challenges faced by the diaspora in Europe. Morocco also has to confront the re-integration of returnees, high levels of unemployment and illiteracy, young people's detachment from society, and the radicalization path that some of them follow. Indeed, more than 2,000 young Moroccans have joined terrorist movements in the last few years, and 45 percent of young people admit to having visited jihadist-inspired websites.<sup>ii</sup>

### The Root Causes and Extent of Migration and Radicalization in Morocco

Morocco has recently experienced rapid economic and social growth. The effects of the changes it has undergone - and to some extent is still undergoing - can be easily seen in the region of Béni Mellal-Khénifra, which has the highest rate of migrants leaving for Europe, and exemplifies the phenomenon of rapid urbanization taking place all over the country. The region has always been among the poorest areas of Morocco, causing thousands of men and women to leave for the city of Béni Mellal from surrounding rural areas.<sup>iii</sup> Urbanization created a new series of social issues, which led to international emigration. The flows are representative of Moroccan migration, which began in the 1950s and 1960s, with a circular migration that would supply Europe with the workforce it required. During the 1970s and 1980s, migrants' families started leaving Morocco to reunite in Europe, causing migration to become permanent. After the Schengen Treaty came into force, and the European Union as we know it today was created, migration became mostly irregular, causing political issues within the Union itself and enormously increasing the risks migrants faced in reaching it.<sup>iv</sup> The demography of Morocco and the region in general was highly affected by such flows, which impacted population growth rates. For example, from 1994-2004, the population

growth rate of Béni Mellal was 0.9 percent, while the national growth rate was 1.6 percent.<sup>v</sup>

Such internal and transnational changes have produced another effect: migrants now not only come from disadvantaged rural areas, but also from the middle class. Driven by feelings of precariousness and uncertainty, and the lack of structures and future professional and social opportunities, educated young people look for opportunities abroad. The concept of “social poverty,” which has been observed and reported throughout the country, further needs to be considered when dealing with migration.<sup>vi</sup>

The subject of migration has been, and partially remains, a taboo in Morocco, relegated to the private sphere, in which relatives’ stories and desire for personal and social emancipation depended on a distorted perception of European cultural values and lifestyles. Therefore, younger generations approach the subject without sufficient knowledge or the capacity to critically analyze the risks and disadvantages of such a choice. The risks include being trafficked, arrested, deported, and finding a reality in the destination country that does not match up to ideals created in childhood. This distorted image of migration has spread at both the “popular” and institutional levels, with public bodies working on social agendas or political programs for young people lacking information on irregular migration, and the ordeals that clandestine migrants, and especially minors, have to endure to enter the EU.<sup>vii</sup>

In addition to the desire for personal and professional realization abroad, other factors explain young people’s aspiration to emigrate: perceived exclusion from the community; high unemployment; a lack of professional organizations; and poor conditions in the job market.<sup>viii</sup> Thinking of themselves as losers, young people start seeking different forms of personal realization that can help sedate their feelings of frustration and exclusion. The difficulties encountered in realizing their life goals, together with the lack of alternatives, feed their sense of desperation and failure, which can easily be channeled into hate and anger. Extremist groups exploit these feelings and use them to make young people feel less insignificant, part of a bigger “plan” and of a community, and paradoxically treat them as heroes when they follow directions.<sup>ix</sup>

### Migration as the Answer to a Perceived Lack of Opportunities for Personal and Professional Realization in Morocco

A 2007 academic research, developed in collaboration with the University of Mohammedia and based on a representative sample of youth in Béni Mellal, has shown that the desire to migrate develops early, during preadolescence (that is, between the ages 10-12). Around seventy percent of the young people interviewed declared that their aim in life was indeed to migrate, even if that meant irregular migration. The interviews revealed

an in-depth knowledge of irregular migration channels, and a lack of knowledge of legal migration or locally available opportunities.<sup>x</sup>

Although the idea of migrating often originates during middle or high school, the curriculum agreed upon by the Ministry of Education, or the extracurricular activities it encourages, do not include any sessions dedicated to the issue.<sup>xi</sup> This highlights the need to reform the educational system, so that it is aligned with the specific circumstances of the country and the current requirements of the job market. As the 2012 World Bank report “Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation” shows, almost half of those aged 15-29 in Morocco are unemployed and/or do not regularly attend school.<sup>xii</sup> Their motivation and willingness to challenge themselves is therefore constrained by an outdated educational system, which leaves space for one solution alone: seeking personal and professional realization overseas, by any means.

### Exposure to the Risk of Radicalization

The 2017 study conducted by Lahcen Aalla and Marina Lovato using a sample of 93 young people showed a concrete risk of radicalization due to a lack of educational structures that promote social integration, freedom of communication, and expression. The researchers selected the sample from the areas of Rabat-Salé and Khouribga, and the region of Béni Mellal-Khénifra, to examine religious radicalization and possible ways in which youth are radicalized. The vast majority of the sample presented a fairly high level of education: 65 percent were attending university, and ten percent were in high school. One of the most interesting findings was a progressive detachment from the family unit as a moral and religious point of reference. The interviewees reported relying on teachers and educators, or on the internet (rather than their families) to discuss and understand contemporary social, political, and religious issues. When asked whether they had ever consulted a jihadist website, 45 percent said yes, of whom 84 percent said it was out of curiosity, nine percent wanted to discover the “true religion,” and seven percent wanted to discover their personal path.<sup>xiii</sup>

This data is alarming, especially when considering that similar studies conducted in Europe reported that people recruited via the internet had initially accessed jihadist websites out of curiosity. Moreover, the study illustrates the perceived lack of educational prospects, and great concern for the future, not only in terms of acquiring financial independence, but also of satisfying the need for social engagement. Despite their desire for interaction, numerous respondents admitted to perceiving the social and cultural diversity of foreigners as a threat to the integrity of Moroccan moral and religious customs.<sup>xiv</sup> This data is of great importance, as it may indicate an increase in the levels of intolerance and racism in the country.

To conclude, the study demonstrates that poverty does not determine radicalization by itself, but together with a lack of educational and work-related opportunities, and social protection shortcomings, poverty can

certainly lead young people down this path. It is crucial to highlight the fact that both migration and radicalization originate from the same social weaknesses, although there is no single, linear reaction to the challenges that Moroccan youth face. Working on these societal root causes, as well as on individual and psychosocial needs, has proved to be a useful tool in preventing both phenomena.

### Best Practices and Lessons Learned from Progettomondo.mlal

Progettomondo.mlal is an Italian NGO, established in 1966 and operating in Morocco since 2001, initially only in the region of Béni Mellal-Khénifra (at that time Tadla-Azilal). On the international level, it promotes human rights by focusing on sustainable development, the correct functioning of the justice system, responsible migration towards Europe, and global education. In Morocco, it focuses on women's and children's rights, literacy, and access to education. Over the last few years, it has started specializing in the prevention of radicalization and the integration of returning migrants, including those from sub-Saharan countries.

In order to address the country's educational weaknesses, the Moroccan Ministry of Education implemented a Plan d'Urgence (Urgency Plan) in 2009. The Plan encouraged the establishment of school clubs, developed by volunteer teachers to monitor existing educational needs and then elaborate extracurricular activities accordingly, by promoting young people's active citizenship. With time, each club began focusing on specific issues, such as human rights, environmental protection, and health issues.

Given Progettomondo.mlal's experience in these areas, and the opportunity school clubs represented to improve the Moroccan educational system, the NGO promoted several related actions. Specifically, teachers managing the human rights-focused school clubs were selected to collaborate with the NGO to prevent irregular migration.

### *The Educational Curriculum on Migration and Radicalization*

In the context of the project "Enfants en voyage," a Pedagogical Unit (PU) composed of European and Moroccan education, psychology, and psychopedagogy professionals developed an educational curriculum on migration and radicalization. Divided into different sections, the curriculum promotes students' integration into Moroccan society, improves their knowledge of contemporary debates, and provides them with an array of legal channels and local alternatives that could contribute to the reduction of clandestine and child migration. The curriculum's success among students, partners, and institutions encouraged Progettomondo.mlal to adapt it for reuse in several current projects, including "Radicalisme: non merci," a pilot project to prevent radicalization through innovative services, such as youth mentoring, and intercultural dialogue.

The curriculum includes sessions on aspects of the self. Participants' personalities and identities are valorized to reinforce their self-esteem and develop their empathy. Given that these personality traits also facilitate the management of inter- and intrapersonal tensions, specific attention is devoted to the management of emotions, and especially anger management, which is of vital importance in the fight against radicalization. Application of the curriculum has shown that to properly address radicalization, citizenship education and cohabitation must also be included. Participants must fully understand group dynamics to recognize when these are transformed into a form of control over the individual. In such a situation, the feeling of being integrated into a group ceases to act as leverage for personal development, and is instead transformed into a cage in which individuals' subjectivity is absent.

The development of the "self" is combined with active work on migration. This includes informational sessions, such as on the risks of irregular migration, as well as activities focused on reconstructing relationships between the students and their reality of belonging: family, community, and local institutions. The goal is for adolescents and young people to develop the ability to critically analyze their own migration plan in the light of a full understanding of the opportunities that Morocco offers. Any curriculum aimed at preventing irregular migration needs to encourage a critical analysis of the migratory desire by providing a balanced perception of current life plans and available alternatives, and channeling the idea that realization in one's own country does not need to be perceived as a form of personal failure.

### *Training Animators and Teachers*

The Pedagogical Unit also led an innovative training for animators and teachers, in which participants tested first-hand the educational program and activities they would later pass on to students. The training focused on developing and strengthening specific skills, and included relevant theoretical knowledge of migration, especially in relation to young people, and a section on revisiting, renewing, and sharing good educational practices through group-work and workshops. Participants were taught inter-generational communication techniques and to promote encouraging attitudes, laying the ground for a positive relationship with students based on trust and understanding.

### *The Media Library*

The project "Enfants en voyage" supported the creation of a dedicated environment in the form of a media library, which allowed young people to join activities that develop their creativity and social skills. Students aged 12-19 were free to debate several topics, including minors' migration, and could share their dreams and ambitions with trained animators. The educational program comprised a three-level strategy of action:

- a) individual: working on students' self-esteem, the acceptance of differences, and self-perception in a group dynamic;
- b) collective: encouraging group work and the acceptance of related norms; and
- c) social: considering public spaces as interesting and dynamic environments.

The general objective was for the animator to be perceived not as an authority figure, but as a facilitator who could encourage interventions and stimulate confrontation. This represented an innovative approach, given that migration has long been considered extremely sensitive in both the private and educational spheres. This approach allowed students to express their opinions and participate with ease. The animators and teachers also ran information and counseling desks on legal migration and alternatives to migration, where students could discuss their aspirations and receive advice on the best way to realize them. Such desks also provided practical information on the bureaucratic procedures necessary for those who wanted to emigrate legally (including study or work visas, contacts with embassies, and so on), and offered concrete help in filling out forms.<sup>xv</sup>

The social animation activities developed in the media libraries proved extremely useful. They included role play, theater and art classes, group exercises, debates, movie screenings, and presentations. The project reached thousands of people, with more than 64,000 adolescents making use of the 97 media libraries over 28 months. More than 2,500 adolescents benefited from the new educational curriculum. A project evaluation reported that eighty percent of participants could answer most of the questions on minor migration and its risks correctly, while all respondents viewed the activities as inspiring and important. More than fifty animators and 300 teachers were trained in the curriculum, and school club and counselling desk management. Moroccan institutions and educational associations also evaluated the experience positively, and were keen to continue. Finally, the project's outreach influenced and inspired even greater numbers than those directly involved<sup>xvi</sup> - including three events, eight contests, 100 podcasts and thirteen reportages - raising the visibility not only of the project itself, but also the issues at stake.

## Recommendations

- *Using social-proximity tools*

Social-proximity tools, activities implemented “in the field” and aimed at young people, can induce positive behavioral changes and have a long-lasting impact on the country's social and economic conditions. Extending such tools at the national level, for example by making use of the existing 1,000+ schools clubs, would amplify the positive effects they have had in Progettomondo.mlal's past projects.

- *Introducing an educational curriculum on migration and radicalization*

Activities that address young people's self-esteem, their emotions, and personal values, as well as providing practical information on migration-related opportunities and dangers, have proved to be effective and highly appreciated. Social and educational change can be based on similar combinations of psychological assistance with information sessions. Moreover, integrating the education program through extracurricular activities has proven important in preventing students from dropping out of school.<sup>xvii</sup>

- *Fostering active collaboration between civil society, public, and private actors*

Marginalized individuals and groups must receive support to prevent them from making dangerous choices, such as adhering to extremist ideologies or leaving the country without first comprehending the risks. The complicated interlinkage of societal and economic issues that spark irregular migration and radicalization requires the active collaboration of civil society, public, and private actors to prevent further crisis and alleviate a difficult social situation.

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## Notes

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## Moroccan Migration Policy: Education as a Tool to Promote the Integration of Sub-Saharan Migrants

Mohammed Ouhemmou

### *Summary*

In 2014, Morocco initiated a legalization campaign aimed at regulating the status of thousands of irregular Sub-Saharan migrants. Pioneered at the regional level, it marked an historic shift from a security-driven to a human rights-based approach to migration. The official discourse accompanying the policy announcement posited integration as a major objective. Government officials repeatedly stated that the policy sought to regulate the status of migrants, and to develop mechanisms to promote their integration and socioeconomic mobility. However, in practice, the new policy lacks practical policy instruments that can facilitate integration. In order to tackle these issues, a number of recommendations are made: the provision of language support programs for migrant students, and channels to facilitate communication between parents and educators; the establishment of additional funding mechanisms to finance independent educational and cultural support programs; the implementation of in-service training programs to enable teachers to cater to the specific needs of migrants; the revision of textbook content in terms of racial and cultural sensitivity; and the provision of necessary means to encourage the work of school clubs and other activities that can promote contact and communication between native and migrant students.

## Moroccan Migration Policy: Education as a Tool to Promote the Integration of Sub-Saharan Migrants

Mohammed Ouhemou

In 2013, Morocco announced a new migration policy. In a joint communiqué released by the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Justice, the King called for a “new vision for a national migration policy that is humanist in its philosophy, responsible in its approach, and pioneering at the regional level.”<sup>i</sup> This statement marked an end to the security-based policy adopted in the 1990s. It also came after Morocco was subjected to intense international criticism over its treatment of Sub-Saharan migrants. Moreover, the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH) also issued a brief report, in which it recommended that the government “establish a policy of integrating said refugees and their families, in terms of housing, health, schooling, training, and employment.”<sup>ii</sup>

By 2014, the country had launched a large-scale documentation campaign with which the government sought to “legalize” the status of thousands of migrants by granting them residence cards. In late 2014, the country adopted its National Strategy for Migration and Asylum, which the Ministry of Migration has described as a “humanitarian and comprehensive policy.”<sup>iii</sup> The new national integration policy seeks to promote the integration of migrants using a set of tools, at the apex of which is education.

### Access to Education: Pre- and Post-2013 Policy Reform

Prior to the launch of the National Migration and Integration Policy in 2013, the access of Sub-Saharan children to Moroccan schools was governed by the ministerial circular N77 (issued in 1996, and modified in 2005). According to this circular, children wishing to register needed to provide a list of documents, including a birth certificate, and documents demonstrating their educational record. Yet this proved challenging for many undocumented children, and for the children of refugees and asylum seekers unable to provide such documents. In 2013, the Ministry of Education issued a new circular, No. 13-487, on the access of migrant students to the country’s educational system. It mentioned specifically the “integration of foreign pupils originating from the countries of the Sahel and Sub-Sahara in the Moroccan educational system,”<sup>iv</sup> thus marking a radical shift from the old discourse that did not recognize

educational integration as an issue. Most importantly, the new circular has limited the bureaucratic and administrative obstacles that have long prevented migrants from accessing education. Parents wishing to register their children need show no more than basic documents, such as an identity card, documents demonstrating any previous educational record, and a copy of the residence card, if available.

This 2013 ministerial circular represents a leap forward in facilitating the access of migrants, and more specifically Sub-Saharan migrants, to the Moroccan educational system. However, other persistent problems have remained unaddressed, which hinder the advancement and educational attainment of Sub-Saharan migrants, and consequently their integration into the country's social structure. These problems include the languages of instruction, and inadequate teacher training whereby teachers cannot cater for the specific needs of migrant students, all exacerbated by the lack of pre-school programs.

### Languages Spoken at Home, and Their Impact on Integration at School

Language difficulties also play a major role in hindering the involvement of parents in school life and following the progress of their children. However, migrant parents still show higher rates of involvement in their children's education than native ones. Language problems limit migrant parents' access to the educational system in the same way they also prevent access to other services, such as health care. The National AIDS Control Program and the National Institute of Hygiene of the Ministry of Health noted in a survey that due to communication difficulties, most Sub-Saharan migrants seek medical treatment via private doctors and NGOs instead of public institutions.<sup>v</sup>

Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco come from various countries and different socioeconomic backgrounds, and speak a wide array of languages. Major distinctions exist between Francophones from countries such as Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso, and Anglophone migrants from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leon, and the Gambia. However, neither group is homogenous; they include people with different mother tongues, including Igbo, Hausa, Bambara, Songhai, Wolof, and many others.

A child's first exposure to language is with the mother. Although most Sub-Saharan women are active economically, and are highly creative in making their living, their command of Darija (the Moroccan dialect) is limited. Moreover, the fact that migrants live together in densely-concentrated residential areas means that they have limited contact with natives, and extended contact with fellow migrants. In fact, some migrants make their living exclusively through contact with other migrants. Migrants' entrepreneurial activities are limited not only by the lack of business skills and difficulties in accessing financial resources, but also for historical reasons dating back to the era when the

government adopted highly restrictive detention and deportation policies against irregular migrants, a period often labeled in media reports somewhat exaggeratedly as the “war against migrants.”<sup>vi</sup>

Although children acquire basic language skills through their daily contact with native children outside the school context, such interactions depend on each family’s particular conditions, including social status, place of living, and income levels. Migrant children thus enter a vicious circle where limited contact leads to low command of the language. The latter leads to social isolation and finally contributes to and perpetuates limited language competence. It may even render these children anxious and stressed, which can contribute to behavioral problems and lower achievement. In the early 2000s, the Ministry of National Education initiated some very efficient measures relating to extra-curricular activities - circulars N167 and N42 - long before migration and integration became hot topics in the country. Yet they can also be applied to migrant students.

Circular N42 promotes active school life, and encourages the establishment of clubs within school. Such measures have promoted good learning and interaction between students, and reduced behavioral problems.<sup>vii</sup> Indeed, some skills, such as communication, socialization, team working, and networking, cannot be learned in the classroom. In fact, extra-curricular activities and school clubs have other benefits not exclusively related to immigrants, such as a decrease in behavioral problems.

Empirical research shows that students who do not speak the language of the host country perform less well than those who do.<sup>viii</sup> Studies also demonstrate that contact with native peers is often the fastest way to learn the host language. In other words, lack of contact undermines language and communication skills, and in turn, limited communication skills can undermine contact. In many cases, the lack of contact is grounded in negative and discriminatory social perceptions. Consequently, initiatives from the Ministry of National Education, such as the “national competition on migration,” represent a positive contribution.

This “national competition on migration” is organized in collaboration between the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Migration, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and aims to “highlight values of persistence and positive competition and encourage diversity, cross-cultural exchange, coexistence, and acceptance of others. It also seeks to raise awareness about the issues of migrants and migration among learners.”<sup>ix</sup> Accordingly, students are invited to produce written works, paintings, and short films about migration issues. This is a practice that should be promoted and funded to further stimulate contact and establish commonalities between migrant and native students. However, two factors are lacking that limit the success of the initiative: logistical

support, and information and communication within schools. These two problems must be addressed to guarantee the continuity and success of the initiative.

### The Language(s) of Instruction and Educational Attainment

Various studies, such as Laroui's *Le Drame Linguistique Marocain*, recognize that Morocco's linguistic problem is grounded in diglossia and the subsequent use of different languages and language varieties across different educational levels.<sup>x</sup> For instance, from primary to high school, most classes are taught in a mix of Standard Arabic and Moroccan dialect. Yet an abrupt change takes place in higher education where many disciplines are taught not in Arabic, but rather in French. Consequently, students may fail to make the transition, which in turn contributes to the high drop-out rates at the country's universities. In brief, the linguistic situation in Morocco is so complex that even many natives cannot cope. It is certainly more difficult for non-francophone migrants, and this requires extra language support.

Sub-Saharan children face a particularly challenging and confusing situation in which one language is spoken at home, another one in the street, and two more at school. The language of instruction and the need to cater for the special needs of migrants become more problematic at advanced levels, such as high school. During the three years of high school, the teacher's main task is not to address the gaps and weaknesses in their students' skills and learning, but to prepare them for standard tests. Although the ministerial guidelines stipulated in circular No66 -17 highlight the teacher's duty to start the school year with "evaluation and pedagogic support" sessions, these are rarely integrated into the overall pedagogic program, with "assessment" and "evaluation" often being performed to avoid criticism by school inspectors.

Schools are often judged by the Ministry of Education not for their efforts to assist low-performing students, but rather on how the school as a whole performs in standard tests. Moreover, there is a lack of advanced teaching technologies, especially in the socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods where migrants are most concentrated. All this, coupled with the mismatch between the high number of Ministry-assigned teaching hours and the lower number of actual teaching hours, contribute to the country's much-criticized low educational performance. This has implications not only for the education of migrant students, but also for the country's overall educational policy.

Limited financial resources hinder the establishment of independent educational support programs. Therefore, there is a need to develop mechanisms for granting extra support for schools with large migrant populations. Other countries target school districts in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances. For instance, France's Priority

Education Zone program enables the government to direct additional financial resources to finance programs that encourage and help socioeconomically disadvantaged children catch up with their peers.

### Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training

Morocco has a very sophisticated and theoretically exemplary process of teacher recruitment and training. The process starts with a preselection phase, in which only honors graduates are selected. This is followed by two written and oral tests, one year of pre-service training, and another exit exam. Last, a final year of service requires teachers to pass their “professional competency test.”

The teacher training process in Morocco has been continuously improved over the last ten years. The training philosophy now promotes cooperative and student-centered learning, with an emphasis on training in school legislation, the use of teaching technologies, and state-of-the-art teaching methods and approaches. However, neither existing training program, the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) or the Centre Régional des Métiers de l'Education et de la Formation (CRMEF), exposes teachers to any materials on how to address migrant students or students with a migration background. One major reason for this is that migration – and more specifically the management of migration through public policies – is a relatively recent issue in Morocco.

In its official discourse, the Ministry of Education highlights the importance of continuous in-service training, therefore the introduction of training sessions for teachers in school districts with major concentrations of migrant students would be highly valuable.

### Discrimination and Negative Public Attitudes

Throughout the 1990s until 2013, Morocco’s harsh approach to migration translated into a hostile and discriminatory discourse in the media, law, and regulations. The 2013 reforms marked a historical shift, and initiated a more positive and humane approach. Comparing media and public discourse towards immigration from five years ago with the present clearly shows that a historic change has taken place. In other words, Morocco is doing better than its neighbors when it comes to the fight against discrimination and racism. Although Morocco still detains and conducts deportation campaigns against migrants, this happens on a much smaller scale compared to its neighbor Algeria.

However, Morocco still has much to learn from the experience of other neighbors, such as Tunisia and its fight against racism and discrimination. Currently, the Tunisian parliament is discussing the final technical details of a law prohibiting all forms of racism and discrimination. In Morocco, a draft bill has also been proposed, yet it has unfortunately been shelved in favor of more “urgent” issues. Open public discussion about this piece of legislation is also crucial, since the issue of

racism should no longer be a taboo. After all, negative social reception and public discourse are major hindrances to the integration and upward socioeconomic mobility of migrants. Migrants can only thrive and progress in a receptive and tolerant environment. Such conditions cannot be provided by top-down public policies.

## Recommendations

- *Consolidating the link between public schools and civil society*

While the work of local and international NGOs on migrant educational needs is highly valuable, there is a need to further consolidate the link between public schools and civil society to improve cooperation between the two.

- *Introducing language support programs at pre-school and later levels*

At the pre-school level, language support programs would smoothen transition into school life, and later on, boost students' language skills necessary for more advanced levels.

- *Providing substantial in-service teacher training in school districts with large migrant populations*

Given the lack of materials and content for teaching migrant students in pre-service training programs, in-service training would increase teacher competence and awareness of the need to value cultural diversity and promote cultural sensitivity. The Ministry of Education can benefit from the experience and expertise developed by civil society in this field.

- *Revising textbook content*

Cultural sensitivity needs to be reflected not only in teacher training but also in textbook design. Calls to revise Moroccan textbooks in terms of their extremist content are gaining growing support. The most recent call was raised by the Moroccan MP Omar Balafrej over the content of Islamic Education textbooks which, among other things, promote intolerance towards non-Muslims and encourage strict and extremist interpretations of Quranic text, for instance, equating art and music with obscenity and immorality. Similarly, there is also a need to revise racist or racially insensitive content in textbooks. Hence, statements such as "I have curly hair, I feel ugly, what should I do?" in the first-year baccalaureate textbook should be removed. Such statements reflect discriminatory mindsets and set preconceived beauty standards that are internationally condemned, and have no place in a country that promotes itself as a pioneer within Africa and a leader of African unity.

- *Critically evaluating narratives*

Negative public attitudes about migrants and ethnic minorities cannot be ended by denial discourse and happy-talk, but rather through a

critical evaluation of ideas communicated in textbooks. This also extends to the media, which should adopt an objective and balanced view, instead of shifting between the two extremes of vilifying and praising the Other.

- *Providing extra teaching hours for migrant students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds*

Such policies have proven highly successful throughout the world in allowing students to catch up with their peers, and would certainly prove fruitful in Morocco. Schools hosting migrant pupils need to expand language support programs for Standard Arabic to provide some sort of scaffolding for migrant students, and facilitate their transition from the pre-school stage to primary school and beyond. In this regard, a broader interpretation of the ministerial circular N 113 on the management of “extra educational support hours” can be used to encourage such programs.

- *Focusing on inclusive methods rather than standardized tests*

There is an urgent need to shift from the focus on standard tests, which are typically stressful for both students and teachers, hinder discovery and exploration, and limit creativity and critical thinking. Instead, the focus should be on methods to integrate pupils with difficulties, including migrants.

- *Re-considering the role of orientation officers*

Orientation officers’ contact with students should not be limited to giving school tours or providing brief, annual orientation sessions on preferred streams. Officers should also be more involved in districts with high concentrations of migrant students.

- *Providing funding and support for initiatives such as the “national competition on migration”*

This initiative represents a good practice that facilitates contact and exchange between migrant and native students, yet it requires better funding and support from the ministries in charge to produce the intended effect, and avoid the charge of being simply a publicity stunt. For proper implementation of the ideas and values envisioned in the circular, and an increase in student participation, the appropriate tools and means must be provided by the Ministry of Education.

- *Constructing mechanisms for additional funding for schools with high migrant populations*

Such funding mechanisms can support programs that help migrants integrate with their native peers. After all, it has been empirically proven that the impact of money and resources invested in child education outweighs that spent on adult training.<sup>xi</sup>

- *Further developing platforms such as the online student pathway “Massar”*

Platforms such as the online student pathway Massar<sup>xii</sup> must be further developed to enable parents to access information beyond grades and exam results, and thus communicate better with teachers and administration.

- *Comprehensive and critical assessment*

The CNDH’s “Thematic Report on Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Morocco” is not sufficiently detailed. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive, detailed, and critical report on the weaknesses of current policy, which could initiate a second phase of policy reform.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> “Migration: Royal Instructions Bring a New Vision for a National and Humanist Migration Policy (Release),” Kingdom of Morocco Ministry of Culture and Communication, September 12, 2013  
<<http://www.maroc.ma/en/news/migration-royal-instructions-bring-new-vision-national-and-humanist-migration-policy-release>> (accessed June 30, 2018).

<sup>ii</sup> National Council for Human Rights (CNDH), “Thematic Report on the Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Morocco: Foreigner and Human Rights in Morocco. For a Radically New Asylum and Migration Policy,” Rabat, 2013.

<sup>iii</sup> “The National Strategy on Migration and Asylum,” Minister in Charge of Moroccans Resident Abroad and Migration Affairs, Rabat, 2014.

<sup>iv</sup> “On the Integration of Foreign Pupils Originating from the Countries of the Sahel and Sub-Sahara in the Moroccan Educational System,” Ministry of National Education, Reference no. 13-487), Rabat, October 9, 2017.

<sup>v</sup> Cited in A. Chang, *Politics of Health: The 2013 Integration Policy’s Effect on Immigrant Access to Care*, unpublished independent study, 2014.

<sup>vi</sup> Lasting from the 1990s in response to EU pressure to curb irregular migration, this approach was given further legitimacy in 2003 by the adoption of Law 02.03 regulating the entry and stay of foreigners. It was characterized by summary arrest and mass deportation campaigns against irregular Sub-Saharan migrants, and forced many migrants to limit their contact with natives and concentrate themselves in specific neighborhoods within cities, therefore limiting the prospects of spatial integration.

<sup>vii</sup> See N. Wilson, *Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Students*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Stout (2009); K. Kuhar and J. Sabljic, “The Work and Role of Extracurricular Clubs in Fostering Student Creativity,” *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 4 (2016), pp. 93-104; and E. Massoni, “Positive Effects of Extra Curricular Activities on Students,” *ESSAI* 9 (2011).

<sup>viii</sup> Jan C. van Ours, Yuxin Yao and Asako Ohinata, “The Educational Consequences of Language Proficiency for Young Children,” CEPR Discussion Paper no. DP11183, March 2016; and Suet-ling Pong and Nancy S. Landale, “Academic Achievement of Legal Immigrants’ Children: The Roles of Parents’ Pre- and Post-migration Characteristics in Origin-Group Differences,” *Child Development* 5 (2012), pp. 1543–1559.

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<sup>ix</sup> “On the Organization of the National Competition on Migration,”  
Ministry of National Education, Reference no. 120X17), Rabat,  
December 14, 2017.

<sup>x</sup> F. Laroui, *Le Drame Linguistique Marocain* (Zellige Editions, 2011).

<sup>xi</sup> L. Bartlett, “Access and Quality of Education for International Migrant  
Children,” UNESCO, 2015.

<sup>xii</sup> “Massar” online student platform  
<<https://massar.men.gov.ma/Account>> (accessed June 30, 2018).

## Obstacles Facing Asylum Seekers in North-Eastern Morocco

Jaouad Benaicha

### *Summary*

Due to their proximity to the Spanish enclave of Melilla, Morocco's north-eastern cities of Nador and Oujda have seen a high influx of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries, but also from the conflicts in Syria and Libya. Among other challenges, asylum seekers in this region face two key obstacles: travel difficulties to Rabat, and violations of their rights by local authorities. To tackle these issues, the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs should create a delegation in Oujda or Nador, or cooperate with local NGOs to facilitate the asylum process. In addition, the UNHCR and international community should increase pressure on the Moroccan authorities to comply with international law. Moreover, local authorities need to improve their awareness and knowledge of existing laws, and the rights of asylum seekers.

## Obstacles Facing Asylum Seekers in North-Eastern Morocco

Jaouad Benaicha

Morocco's geographical location makes it a significant destination for thousands of migrants. One of the cities known as a migration hot-spot is Oujda: its location on the Mediterranean border with Algeria makes it a much-frequented passage and destination for thousands of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries, but also Syria and Libya. Similarly, Nador's proximity to the Spanish enclave of Melilla has attracted a large influx of migrants from various countries who gather in the Gourougou forest,<sup>i</sup> or areas like Zghanghan an Beni Nsar, before attempting to cross the border. The distance between Oujda and Nador is no more than 175 kilometers, only two hours by car.

### Obstacles Facing Asylum Seekers in the North-Eastern Regions of Morocco

#### *Travel Difficulties and Financial Constraints Impeding the Asylum Application Process*

One key obstacle faced by asylum seekers in Oujda and Nador is the fact that only one UNHCR bureau exists, and this is in Rabat. During the application process, all asylum seekers must present themselves in person at the UNHCR office. The return journey from Oujda takes over nine hours by train or bus, and costs between 260dh (€26) and 500dh (€50) per person. Moreover, most asylum seekers do not have a place to sleep or eat in Rabat. In the light of these constraints, many asylum seekers lose hope and are thus prevented from completing the process, which would give them the right to move freely in the country, and provide them with better protection from discrimination and exploitation.

Although the Moroccan government in principle recognizes these problems, there is no serious initiative to resolve them. While the UNHCR offers support for pregnant women and minors, it only covers their transportation fees. Local NGOs working on migrants' issues are also aware of these difficulties, and try to help cover asylum seekers' travel costs, but their support is limited and does not extend to accommodation or food. For example, the Al Wafae Association is one NGO that has covered transport costs for a very limited number of asylum seekers, yet because their project was EU-funded,<sup>ii</sup> migrants had to apply for one of the Association's workshops in order to receive funds for travel to Rabat to claim asylum. While this is a positive example of NGO efforts towards migrants, there are still serious obstacles to overcome.

### *Violations of Asylum Seekers' Rights under UNHCR Protection*

All asylum seekers are placed under UNHCR protection until a final decision is issued regarding their application.<sup>iii</sup> Those whose applications are successful are also placed under UNHCR protection, which also extends to immediate family members. Applicants are normally protected against expulsion and oppression. If an asylum seeker or refugee is arrested, it is imperative for the UNHCR to be informed as soon as possible about their identity, place of arrest, and motive, in order to be able to respond quickly. However, migrants living in the Gourougou forest, who had witnessed refugees being arrested by police, confirmed in interviews that most migrants are not allowed to telephone or use any means of communication to contact the UNHCR bureau until they are returned to their countries of origin. Only a few NGOs have tried to advocate against this situation, but it continues to persist in areas called “the hot zones,” such as Nador.

According to an activist from Guinea Bissau working as a mediator between the MS2 Association and migrants in Nador, “a black-skinned person does not have the freedom to move in the streets of the city.”<sup>iv</sup> The undocumented, refugees, and asylum seekers can be arrested by police even if they can present their asylum seeker certificate from the UNHCR bureau. This suggests that some police officers either do not know or ignore the laws related to refugees and their right to protection against expulsion.

### Policy Recommendations

To better facilitate asylum seekers' access to UNHCR services, the Moroccan government and the UNHCR, together with EU migration organizations, should seek to remove the existing obstacles. Solving these issues can certainly improve conditions for migrants, and serve as proof of efforts made by the UNHCR and the Moroccan government to legalize and protect the rights of migrants in Morocco without discrimination. The integration of refugees into Moroccan society will contribute to the economic and social development of the country, and enrich Moroccan cultural diversity. Internationally, granting more rights to asylum seekers will emphasize that Morocco respects and successfully applies the international treaties related to refugees, especially the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 New York Protocol.

### *Transportation and Accommodation of Asylum Seekers from Oujda and Nador to Rabat*

- *Creating a delegation of the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs in Oujda or Nador*

Such a delegation should be able to provide asylum seekers with all necessary services to file and process their asylum requests, thus circumventing the need to travel to Rabat.

- *Increasing cooperation with local NGOs*

Alternatively, the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs delegation could collaborate with local organizations, such as the Moroccan Organization of Human Rights (OMDH), which is already involved in helping asylum seekers get UNHCR appointments, or the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH), to allow them to provide the necessary services in Oujda and Nador.

- *Funding projects that provide financial assistance to asylum seekers travelling to Rabat*

As long as asylum applications can only be processed in Rabat, projects should be created and funded that would allow local NGOs to facilitate the access of asylum seekers to UNHCR services, by financing their travels to Rabat. These projects should be well-managed and monitored by specialists in the field.

### *Protection of Refugees in Nador City*

- *Increasing pressure on the Moroccan authorities to comply with international law*

The UNHCR and the international community should increase pressure on the Moroccan authorities to ensure that they comply with international law regarding the suppression of refugees and asylum seekers awaiting a response from the UNHCR.

- *Advocating on behalf of the rights of asylum seekers*

The Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs and NGOs working on migrants' issues should advocate more on behalf of asylum seekers' rights, such as the right to non-suppression, and the right to move freely.

- *Educating local authorities on legal procedures and the rights of asylum seekers*

In many police stations, officers are unaware of the legal procedures concerning migration and migrants' rights. The Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs and the UNHCR should organize awareness-raising days for police to clarify the new procedures for dealing with migrants. This is especially relevant in areas called "the hot zones."

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> “[Gourougou] is the closest point to the borders with Melilla [...]. The assembly camps are distributed by nationalities (Maliens, Cameroonians, Nigerians, Sierra Leonean, Guineans, Ivorians, Gambians, Senegalese ... with a low presence of women. Their destination is exclusively Melilla. [The camps] were destroyed and burned by the authorities on February 10, 2015 with the arrest and repression of almost 1,250 migrants.” Association Marocaine des Droits de l’Homme, “Rapport sur la situation des migrants subsahariens à Nador: Quand le Maroc et l’Espagne s’allient dans la répression des migrants subsahariens,” Nador, February 21, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> The project “Droits des migrants en action” was run by the Association Al Wafae pour le Développement Social de l’Oriental between 2015-2017.

<sup>iii</sup> An appointment with the UNHCR can take six months or more.

<sup>iv</sup> An interview with Mr. Zeca Dasilva, working as a mediator between MS2 and migrants in Nador.

## Building Bridges: Moroccan Civil Society as a Mediator in EU Decision-Making on Migration

Ilham Siba

### *Summary*

Due to its geographic position, Morocco is heavily implicated in migration policies between Europe and Africa, and frequently plays the role of guardian with respect to the flow of migrants from Africa crossing the Mediterranean. Yet in many cases, human rights conditions remain problematic. To improve the situation, Moroccan civil society actors – who can act as a bridge between migrants in Morocco and European decision-makers - should be given a stronger voice and included in decision-making processes.

## Building Bridges: Moroccan Civil Society as a Mediator in EU Decision-Making on Migration

Ilham Siba

Europe maintains increasingly rigorous control of its borders, including a militarized closure of Spanish enclaves, maritime patrols, and the creation in October 2016 of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex, which employs at least 1,500 border guards and other staff to be deployed in rapid interventions.<sup>i</sup>

Because of its location, and the presence on its territory of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, Morocco has become a transit country for many migrants. Following the implementation of the country's National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum in 2013, Morocco regularized over 23,000 out of a total of 27,649<sup>ii</sup> migrants between 2014 and 2015, most of whom were trying to reach Europe. At the same time, Morocco has become a crucial partner for the European Union in managing migration flows from Africa to Europe. Consequently, Morocco has become the unwanted home for many refugees and migrants trying to make their way to Europe, especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa, who find themselves stuck at the borders near Ceuta and Melilla. An estimated 13,000 Sub-Saharan migrants were apprehended each year at Morocco's borders between 2000 and 2009.<sup>iii</sup> More recently, Sub-Saharan migrants have been joined by refugees and asylum seekers from the conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Iraq.

### Borders and Migration Flow

According to migration researcher Hein De Haas, the closure of borders and introduction of visas do not directly produce a decrease in the migration flow.<sup>iv</sup> While these policies might lessen the numbers of migrants entering the country, they encourage them to stay in the country where they presently reside. In addition, controlling borders tends to create more room for irregular migration and trafficking, which in turn puts migrants at great risk. As a result, many lose their lives in their quest to seek refuge or better living conditions; around 1,000 people lost their lives in the Mediterranean in 2017.<sup>v</sup>

Migration is beneficial for migrants in terms of improved personal and family situations, and also benefits the host country and the country of origin. Such benefits include economic growth for the host country from the contributions of both high- and low-skilled migrants; net contributions to welfare systems; an increase in trade and investment between host and origin countries; remittances; and returning migrants investing in their countries of origin.<sup>vi</sup>

But these benefits are only possible when the human rights of the migrants are protected under Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>vii</sup> and when migrants are empowered in their transit and host countries, since the exclusion of migrants creates great tension that can lead to violence, vulnerability to crime, and crime increases in the communities where migrants live.<sup>viii</sup> Consequently, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been advocating for a reform of migration laws that respects human rights and international standards.<sup>ix</sup>

### Migration and the Mobility Partnership Signed Between the EU and Morocco

The first objective of the 2013 mobility partnership signed between Morocco and the EU<sup>x</sup> was to facilitate the movement of migrants between the two continents, as well as the issuing of visas for certain groups. The second objective was to inform Moroccan citizens on legal forms of migration, and to support migrants' integration. The third objective was to combat smuggling and human trafficking. It is therefore of paramount importance to establish an asylum and protection system in Morocco.

Even though Morocco has implemented its National Strategy of Immigration and Asylum, and signed the Mobility Partnership, human rights concerns remain, as Morocco still criminalizes any attempt to leave the country illegally. It also imposes prison sentences and fines for illegal migrant workers in its territory under Law 02.03.<sup>xi</sup> Many migrants and refugees, including minors, pregnant women, and new mothers, are denied their human rights when caught at the borders, and risk illegal deportation.

### Cooperation between Moroccan Civil Society and European Decision-Makers

CSOs in Morocco want to make their concerns heard and gain more influence on decision-making processes at national and EU levels. Cooperation between civil society and the governments is crucial in the creation of human rights-based laws. As European migration policies also concern non-EU states and citizens, it is essential to consult beyond civil society actors in the EU, in order to reach as many migrants as possible.

Associations in Morocco do exist that play an active role in migration issues, and many of them focus on migrants' human rights. These civil society actors want to have their concerns heard by both Moroccan and European decision-makers, with some of them explicitly expressing this interest in a position paper.<sup>xii</sup> If Europe wants to further support a human rights-based migration policy in Morocco, it should establish direct communication channels with Moroccan civil society, and not deal exclusively with the government.

In addition to the dangers and possible death faced when attempting to cross the border, migrants and refugees spend months stuck in the forests

near the borders in very poor, inhuman conditions.<sup>xiii</sup> Through advocacy work aimed at Morocco and the EU, civil society plays a major role in promoting awareness of human rights conditions and respect for the rights of migrants and refugees. These awareness-raising activities mostly take place through art and culture, with the use of various tools such as theatre, movie screenings, storytelling, music, and experience sharing. These tools are also used to address the fact that a large part of Moroccan society still refuses the presence of migrants in the country, which sometimes results in violence.<sup>xiv</sup> CSO activities have aimed at reaching and engaging more people through cultural events, such as the Festival migrant'scène Rabat, Africano Mohammedia, and Festival Rabat Africa. In addition, CSOs actively support the integration of migrants in universities, the job market, housing, and child education. Civil society has also initiated mobilization campaigns, such as the #Free\_mandika campaign in support of a pregnant Congolese woman, who was held at the airport and threatened with deportation under Law 02.03.

Moroccan civil society has already demonstrated its ability to contribute to domestic decision-making. Prior to the launch of the National Strategy of Immigration and Asylum, CSOs were consulted on the elaboration of its human rights aspects. They have also contributed to the adjustment and evaluation of public policies and laws related to human rights, migration, and asylum through the implementation of a National Commission for Follow-up and Appeal. This Commission is tasked with following up the regularization campaign during the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum campaign in 2013, and the regular evaluation of its progress.<sup>xv</sup>

Many of the changes in migration policy are the fruits of the hard work by a very active and mobilized civil society, as mentioned in the report of the National Council of Human Rights (CNDH).<sup>xvi</sup> Civil society plays the role of a social mediator between migrants and Moroccan citizens, and helps improve the country's lawmaking to respond to the needs of its people. Whether in the transit countries such as Morocco, or in destination countries, civil society is very keen to play a role, if it is officially and adequately included in decision-making processes. CSOs should be given weight and credit for their work.

## Recommendations

- *Greater inclusion of Moroccan civil society in the decision-making process*

Moroccan CSOs should be invited and consulted by European decision-makers when deciding on policies which concern migrants travelling to Europe via Morocco. This will allow Moroccan CSOs to play an active role as mediators, and to voice the concerns of migrants.

- *Allocation of a specific share of development aid to smaller NGOs in Morocco*

A large share of development aid from the European Union, and Germany in particular (via the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), goes to large governmental institutions.<sup>xvii</sup> A share should be specified for small Moroccan NGOs to help them cooperate with citizens and migrants in order to mediate and move closer to both parties. This will enable them to better inform, cooperate with governments in policy-making, and create a bridge between governments and migrants.

- *Revision of the mobility partnership signed between Morocco and the EU*

The partnership should be reviewed and based on a human rights approach instead of border security-based laws. The inclusion of Moroccan civil society actors, especially those who work on human rights, should be guaranteed.

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## Notes

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