



Youth work in Morocco and youth participation projects at local level



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Executive summary



Around 30 per cent of the Moroccan population is aged between 15 and 29 years of age. While this huge potential is an enormous opportunity for society, it also generates urgent challenges. Large numbers of Moroccan youngsters are illiterate; only 25 per cent of young people have

completed secondary education; over half of the youth population is not in education, employment or training; being young, better-educated, urban, and female only increases the probability of unemployment; roughly 88 per cent of the young people who do work do not have a contract. Dissatisfied young people were the main force behind the so called '20 February Movement', which later sparked the 'Moroccan Spring' of 2011. It led to important political and legislative reforms, including the drafting of a new constitution, which significantly consolidated the role of young people and the importance of active youth participation.

In April 2014, the Ministry of Youth and Sports adopted a national and integrated youth strategy, after many consultations with young people and NGOs across the country. In Morocco, the national government is mainly responsible for youth policy, although local authorities have certain powers and responsibilities for implementing policies, in particular by involving young people in local politics. With the new strategy, the government aims to increase economic opportunities for young people and the accessibility and quality of basic services and to promote active youth participation in social and civic life and in the decision-making process. Although the implementation of the new strategy is still on hold, the government's commitment and ambitions are promising.

An important part of the ambitious strategy is dedicated to improving youth work in Morocco. Governmental youth work is essentially

concentrated in five hundred youth centres across the country, which offer space and facilities for youth associations to run their activities. As directors of these youth centres, the majority of Moroccan youth workers seem to be more involved in bureaucracy than non-formal learning. Important non-governmental youth work is carried out by thousands of youth NGOs and associations working with and for young people. Although they aim high, they are handicapped by a severe lack of training, professionalism and funding.

Historically, the levels of youth participation in Morocco are low. The situation has somewhat improved in recent years, in particular in terms of political participation, encouraged by the political developments since 2011. Although young people still tend to distrust politics, there is an increased level of political participation, e.g. through local youth councils. A second important development regarding youth participation is the idea of (social) entrepreneurship as a way of finding innovative solutions to challenges in local communities: while still a relatively new phenomenon in Morocco, it is rapidly becoming more popular. Finally, capacity-building is a major force in the Moroccan youth field, mainly by national and international networking. It helps both young people and youth associations to learn and experience how to play an active role in their communities and how to involve other young people in a sustainable way.

In short, Moroccan youth work field has two faces. There are major challenges that need to be dealt with in order to facilitate a prosperous future for millions of young Moroccans. At the same time, the country is in a transitional period, in which important improvements are being made both in the quality of youth work and the levels of active youth participation in politics and society, both locally and nationally. It thus offers interesting and unique opportunities, not only for young Moroccans but also for international exchange and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Introduction

Morocco, as is the case with many other countries in North Africa and the Middle East, is going through a historical period of transition. Following the developments of the so called 'Moroccan Spring' – the Moroccans do not call it the Arab Spring, due to the large minority of Amazigh – the political, economic and social landscape in the kingdom is rapidly changing. Against this background, this document aims to present the situation of youth work and youth policy in Morocco, with a particular focus on youth participation, mainly at local level. It is part of a collection providing in-depth reflection on the issues and challenges currently facing youth work in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

This report is the product of a study visit in Morocco in September 2014, organised by SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed Resource Centre and the Italian National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme, in cooperation with the Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit (RCBS) for the EuroMed Youth Programme IV and the Moroccan Thaqafat Association.

This report will provide information about:

- the situation of young Moroccans
- youth policy in Morocco
- youth work in Morocco: its educational

and pedagogical background and its challenges

- youth participation in Morocco: its opportunities and challenges
- some examples of good practices in youth work and youth participation.

The research for this study was threefold: desk research, mainly through reports and publications from Moroccan and international organisations; visits to various youth organisations and initiatives during the study visit; and face-to-face interviews with experts on youth work, youth policy and youth participation in Morocco.

It aims to give a comprehensive overview of the situation of youth policy, youth work and youth participation in Morocco. However, it does not pretend to be exhaustive, due to the limited time and number of organisations visited and experts interviewed. We have tried to outline the general situation, the difficulties and opportunities, along with the outstanding examples of youth work and youth participation we have identified. However, it should be kept in mind that Moroccan society and the youth sector as an important part of it, is rapidly changing. This publication therefore needs to be considered as a snapshot of today's Morocco.

Volunteers from the Raheem Association (by Frouke Adema)



Making couscous with women from a local cooperative

Being young in Morocco

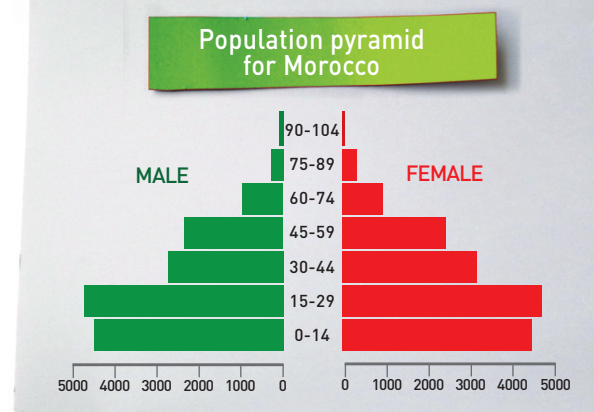
As is the case for most countries in the southern Mediterranean and Arab region, Morocco has a rather young population. Around 30 per cent of Moroccans are aged between 15 and 29 years of age, representing 9 to 10 million young people (see Table 1). Being young in Morocco is not easy to describe, due to the significant disparities between young men and young women, between urban youth and young people living in rural areas, and between lower educated and higher educated young people. Nevertheless, it can be said that the situation of Moroccan youth seems twofold: on the one hand, young people face major challenges, the most important ones being poor quality education and high rates of unemployment. When asked about their concerns for the future, over 80 per cent of young people mentioned unemployment, the increasing costs of living and reduced disposable income as their main concerns. On the other hand, Moroccan society in general, and the (formal and non-formal) youth sector in particular, has witnessed considerable developments in recent years, significantly increasing opportunities for young people. Let's look first at the situation of young people in Morocco as it stands today.

1.1 General statistics

La méthodologie de cette étude associe des Most international organisations, along with the Moroccan *Haut Commissariat au Plan* (the National Bureau of Statistics), define youth as those aged between 15 and 24 years of age. Based on this definition, young people represent almost 20 per cent of the Moroccan population. The Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports, however, defines youth as those aged between 15 and 29 years of age. Based on this definition,

young people represent 30 per cent of the Moroccan population, evenly divided between men and women. For comparative purposes: young people represent only 19 per cent of the population in the European Union (aged 15-29).

Table 1



Population pyramid Morocco by age group (source: World Bank, 2012)

Around half of the youth population lives in urban areas (55 per cent). A large majority of Moroccan youth is single (97 percent of young males; 77 percent of young females) and lives with their parents (93 per cent of young males; 69 percent of young females). In total, young people represent 44 per cent of the working age population in Morocco. Partly due to high rates of unemployment, almost 600,000 young people are directly affected by poverty. In addition, around 1.7 million young people are at risk of poverty, mostly in rural areas (75 percent).

Illiteracy is a major problem in Morocco. Although this is mostly an elderly phenomenon, literacy rates also remain quite low among the young. According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, more than 1.6 million young people are affected by illiteracy, the majority of them (70 per cent)

Students in the Amal Salé class room



living in rural areas.

Over the past three decades, fertility rates in Morocco have decreased steadily, from 4.8 per cent in 1985 to 2.4 per cent in 2007. As a result, population growth has declined, from 2.2 per cent to 1.2 per cent in the same period. In the near future, therefore, Morocco will be confronted by an important demographic transition, with a significant decrease in the proportion of the population considered to be young.

Youth and the law

- The legal voting age is 18, as in all EU member states.
- The legal age for marrying is 18, both for men and for women. Until the adoption of the revised family code in 2004 (*Mudawana*), the legal age for marrying for women was 15.
- The legal age of criminality is 18 years.
- Education is compulsory – and free – for children aged 6 to 14 years.
- The legal system has a specific legal code for minors, supervised by judges responsible for young people.
- Children's rights are legally protected in compliance with the international agreements Morocco has signed, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.2 Education

In 1999, the – then new – King Mohammed VI announced the ‘Decade of Education’. Its main aim was to improve the quality of public education in Morocco. The challenges for public education were daunting: wide disparities between genders and regions (urban and rural), high dropout rates, and a weak transition from education to the labour market. Moroccans had no confidence in the public education system. However, as a result of increased government efforts, the public education system has seen major improvements in the last fifteen years.

The top priority for the Moroccan government was to make public education more accessible, which led to major improvements. The national enrolment rate for primary education increased from 52 per cent to 98 per cent in just a decade. Similar improvements were made in lower secondary education (from 18 per cent to 57 per cent) and secondary education (from 6 per cent to 32 per cent). As a result, more young people between the ages of 15 to 21 have attended school (89 per cent) than their fellow citizens between the ages of 22 to 29 (74 per cent). This is true for both males and females and across rural and urban areas. Most impressive has been the improvement for rural females. Whereas only 40 per cent of rural women aged 22 to 29 have ever attended school, this proportion rises to 73 per cent of rural women between the ages of 15 to 21.

However, significant gaps remain between the genders and between rural and urban areas. For example, in lower secondary

education, the enrolment rate for boys in urban areas is 79 per cent but only 26 per cent for girls in rural areas. This gender gap still reflects social and cultural norms placing girls, particularly in rural areas, at a disadvantage.

Despite improved enrolment rates, dropout rates remain high. Only 25 per cent of Moroccan youth has completed secondary education, to *baccalauréat*, level, which is a prerequisite for those who wish to go on to university or find a job (see Table 2). In rural areas, only 14 per cent of young men and 8 per cent of young women complete secondary education. Young women in urban areas perform best in this respect: almost half of them completed secondary or higher (tertiary) education. Overall, 11 per cent of Moroccan youth has not completed any education at all. Whereas this is ‘only’ 6 per cent for young men, the proportion rises to 17 per cent for young women, and even 30 per cent for young women in rural areas.

Table 2

	Total	Male			Female		
		All	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural
No education	11%	6%	2%	10%	17%	6%	30%
Quran school and preschool	1%	2%	<1%	5%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Primary and lower secondary	56%	61%	53%	70%	51%	45%	59%
Secondary	25%	26%	36%	14%	24%	37%	8%
Higher	6%	5%	9%	2%	7%	12%	1%

Education level of Moroccans aged 15 to 24 years (source: Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2012)

Besides the accessibility of education, the quality of the teaching and learning is a major challenge in Moroccan education. Despite considerable efforts by the Moroccan government, the quality remains

low compared to international standards. Learning achievements are low, and do not correspond sufficiently to the needs of the labour market.

1.3 Employment

Until 2010, Morocco had steady economic growth: about 4 per cent per year on average. In recent years, however, growth has slowed, mainly due to the deteriorating global economy. Although unemployment in general has fallen over the last decade, from over 13 per cent in 2000 to 9 per cent in 2009, unemployment rates have not decreased at the same rate in all population segments. For example, unemployment remains high for young people. The ratio of youth unemployment compared to overall unemployment has even increased, from about 1.5 in 2001 to more than 2 in 2011.

According to the Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports, over half (51 per cent) of Moroccan youth (aged 15-29) is not in education, employment or training (‘NEETs’). For comparison purposes: in the European Union, around 15 per cent of young people fall into the category of NEETs. A large majority of the NEETs is inactive, meaning not available for work and not looking for a job, mainly because they are totally demotivated. Youth unemployment is a major problem, especially in urban areas. When calculating youth unemployment as a share of the rate of young people active on the labour market (thus leaving aside inactive young people), 31 per cent of young men and 42 per cent of young women in urban areas are unemployed. For rural areas, these rates fall to 13 per cent for young men and 20 per cent for young women.

The World Bank provides other statistics that paint a similar picture. When looking at

young Moroccans (aged 15 to 29) who are not in education, over 40 per cent of young men are unemployed or inactive and as many as almost 90 per cent of young women.

Table 3

	Total	Male	Female
Employed	36%	59%	12%
Unemployed	12%	16%	6%
Inactive – demotivated	17%	15%	19%
Inactive – other reasons	35%	10%	63%

Status of labour force participation among Moroccans aged 15 to 29 years who are not in school (source: World Bank, 2012)

Again, large majorities of them are inactive. As is the case in education, there are also significant disparities between men and women in the labour market. Whereas 10 per cent of young men not in education are inactive ‘for other reasons’, this proportion rises to 63 per cent for young women. Research done by the World Bank sheds some light on this category of ‘inactive for other reasons’: young women report many more obstacles to working than men. Over half of the young women stated as the main reason for not wanting to work that their husband and/or parents would not allow them to work (54 per cent). Over 11 per cent mentioned social norms as the main reason and another 23 per cent said they were busy at home.

Youth unemployment generally has a structural nature. According to statistics from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), about two-thirds of unemployed young people are without a job for at least one year. This rate is even higher for young women and for young people living in urban areas. The IMF describes three main reasons for the high rates of youth

unemployment: firstly, the number of jobs available to young people has decreased (by 1.2 per cent over the period 2000-2010); secondly, young people in Morocco are generally better educated than other job seekers and consequently have higher expectations, which are not, however, in line with the opportunities available in the labour market. The Moroccan economy so far has failed to create enough highly skilled work. At the same time there is an unbalanced distribution of students in different scientific fields. For example, only about 7 per cent of higher education students complete engineering programmes. This has led to an undersupply of the skills most needed by the private sector in Morocco. Thirdly, the Moroccan labour market is extremely rigid and tends to obstruct rather than facilitate the integration of newcomers into the labour market.

When we relate unemployment to education, it appears that vulnerability to unemployment increases with education.

Table 4

	Male	Female
No education	14%	19%
Primary education	17%	34%
Lower secondary education	27%	47%
Secondary education	33%	50%
Higher education	29%	25%

Unemployment rates among Moroccans aged 15 to 29 years across levels of education (source: World Bank, 2012)

It appears to be highest for both men and women with secondary education; almost a third of young men with secondary education and half of the young women with secondary education are unemployed. Those with

higher education levels are more likely to be seeking work and be counted as unemployed than those with lower education levels, among whom inactivity levels are higher.

In a nutshell, the probability of unemployment is higher for young females, young people who live in urban areas, and increases for young people with more education. Being young, better-educated, urban, and female increases the probability of unemployment – a finding that points to a number of constraints in the Moroccan labour market: initial barriers to entry, limited returns to education, lack of jobs and market relevant skills and stereotypes and restrictions based on cultural norms.

While the likelihood of a young person being unemployed appears to be higher among those with a secondary education, the bulk of unemployed youth is found to be uneducated or less educated when total numbers are examined. Less than 5 per cent of unemployed youth has tertiary or higher education, and about 16 per cent has secondary education. Almost 80 per cent of unemployed youth has less than secondary education or no education at all.

When we examine the type of jobs young Moroccans do have, it turns out that almost half is employed as salaried workers in private companies. Public salaried positions are rare – only 5 per cent of employed youth has such positions – even though these positions are greatly preferred. Most young Moroccans want to be employed by the government, basically for three reasons: it can be a life-long position, it offers stability and it is expected to be less demanding. Only 13 per cent of Moroccan young people are self-employed outside the household.

There is a large informal sector in the Moroccan labour market. About 88 per cent of employed youth works without a contract.

This has consequences for both social security and health insurance; only 11 per cent of employed youth contributes to social security and only 10 per cent has health insurance. In rural areas there is very little formal sector employment for young men (6 per cent) and virtually no formal sector employment for young women.

1.4 Politics

After having been a French protectorate in the first half of the twentieth century, Morocco gained its independence in 1956. A constitutional monarchy was formed, led by the Alaouite dynasty, which claims direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed. The Moroccan king, therefore, holds the title of 'Commander of the Faithful'. Morocco was ruled by King Hassan II from 1961 to 1999. Under his reign, Morocco endured long periods of social and political unrest and harsh repression by the authorities. The period until the 1980s is known as the 'Years of Lead', especially among former opponents to the king. In the 1990s, political reforms were gradually introduced.

After the death of Hassan II in 1999, his son Mohammed VI came to the throne. Being from a younger generation and having been raised in different circumstances, he has opted for a different style of leadership to that of his father. Mohammed VI promised to eradicate poverty and corruption, to create jobs and improve Morocco's human rights record. In 2004, he created a national reconciliation commission (*Instance Equité et Réconciliation*), which investigated human rights abuses during the reign of his father. In the same year, he enacted a new family code (*Mudawana*), improving the legal status of women. As a result of these political and social reforms, Mohammed VI is a popular

monarch. Part of his popularity also comes from his image of being an 'ordinary' citizen: he regularly appears in public with his wife, princess Salma, which is something his father never did.

In 2011, the Arab world witnessed widespread upheaval and popular unrest, mass demonstrations and revolutionary movements, culminating in the end of autocratic rules in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. On 20 February 2011, thousands of people gathered in Moroccan cities such as Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier and Marrakech to demand political reforms, more jobs, and an end to widespread corruption. Given the large number of young people participating in the demonstrations, it came to be known as the '20 February Youth Movement'. The king's answer was not long coming: on 9 March 2011, he delivered a now famous speech on national television, in which he announced major political reforms: a transfer of powers from the monarch to the parliament and the judiciary, the drafting of a new constitution and early parliamentary elections. He set up a 'consultative commission' to revise the country's constitution. For the first time in Moroccan history, the consultations included civil society organisations, which submitted over two hundred memoranda.

On 1 July 2011, Moroccans voted for the new constitution in a nationwide referendum. This new constitution contained important reforms. The king has to appoint the prime minister from the party that wins the parliamentary elections. Women are guaranteed civic and social equality with men. All citizens are guaranteed freedom of thought, ideas, artistic expression and creativity and the Amazigh (Berber) language is now an official state language. However, criticising or directly opposing the king is still not allowed. In November 2011, Moroccans voted for a new parliament in early elections. For the first time, the Islamic

Justice and Development Party (*Parti de la Justice et du Développement, PJD*) won the elections. Its leader, Abdelilah Benkirane, has been Morocco's prime minister since then.

The new constitution not only offered legal reforms, it also changed political awareness in Morocco. Before 2011, Moroccans as a group didn't really care about and rarely talked about politics. The drafting of a new constitution initiated widespread debate in civil society about the political situation and about political, social and civil rights. The new constitution also created new opportunities for the youth work field: institutionalising the concept of youth participation and officially creating the so called Consultative Council for Youth and Social Work, in which representatives of the government and civil society discuss youth affairs.

Youth and the new constitution

In the 2011 constitution, two articles in particular are important for young people and the youth sector. Article 33 holds all public powers responsible for taking 'all the appropriate measures to stimulate and generalise the participation of youth in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the country'. It furthermore foresees the establishment of the Consultative Council of Youth and Social Work (*Conseil consultatif de la jeunesse et de l'action associative*). Article 170 elaborates on this Council, stating it is charged to 'formulate proposals on any subject of economic, social and cultural order [of] direct interest to young people'.

Youth policy in Morocco

In Morocco, youth is largely a national and centralised policy field. Since 2011, youth policy has undergone major developments, most recently with the adoption of the National Integrated Strategy of Youth in April 2014.

2.1 National and local responsibilities

Historically, the Moroccan kingdom is a highly centralised state and provinces and municipalities (*communes*) have only limited powers. However, in the last decade an increased share of power and responsibilities has been transferred to regional and local authorities, with the 2011 constitution stating that the 'territorial organisation of the kingdom is decentralised', based on 'advanced regionalisation'.

In the field of social and economic development, the municipal council (*conseil communal*) is empowered to define a six-year plan communal de développement (*municipal development plan*). Youth as a policy field is part of this plan. The new constitution requires youth concerns to be taken into account in the budgets and programmes of local authorities. Local councils are therefore obliged to involve young people in the decision-making process, through associations and local youth councils. However, youth policy at local level is not extensively developed in Morocco and consists mainly of actions undertaken in youth centres, along with some programmes and activities run by international organisations. In general, it is the Ministry of Youth and Sports that is responsible for developing and implementing policy relating to youth.

This includes the development of socio-educational programmes for young people and children, the promotion of regional and international cooperation in the field of youth and support for and preparation of research.

2.2 National Youth Strategy (2015-2030)

In April 2014, the national government council approved the first national youth strategy in the history of Morocco (*Stratégie Nationale Intégrée de la Jeunesse*). The process of drafting this strategy took almost five years and involved dozens of partners, in Morocco and abroad.

Following the new constitution, the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched a call for a National Dialogue for Youth in 2012. Two main topics were on the agenda: the drafting of a national youth strategy and the establishment of the Consultative Council of Youth, which was constitutionally created without defining the details. The government has actively sought the participation of young people in drafting the national youth strategy via the National Dialogue for Youth. Through national conferences, regional forums, committee workings and questionnaires, the Ministry for Youth and Sports has invited young people to give their viewpoints on the priority areas and main challenges. Around 27,000 young people were estimated to have taken part in the final event, which took place in September 2012, the ministry worked closely with civil society organisations and youth organisations, aiming to give all young people the democratic opportunity to take part in this decision-making process.

There has been fierce criticism of the

methodology and approach used in these consultations, mainly from civil society organisations and youth NGOs. Not all the important stakeholders and youth actors were consulted in the drafting of the national youth strategy. Notwithstanding the numbers presented by the Ministry for Youth and Sports, legitimate questions have been raised about the consultations' level of inclusiveness and the extent to which all young Moroccans were represented in the decision-making process.

The National Youth Strategy envisages that all young people should 'have the capacities and opportunities for a successful transition to adult life, through high quality education, access to employment, appropriate health services and the active participation in the political, social and cultural life'. Special attention is given to young people with special needs and the unemployed. The strategy aims to integrate existing programmes and strategies from different ministries and departments. To date, assessing the impact of the governmental efforts has proven to be difficult, due to a lack of coordination. With the new cross-sectoral and integrated approach, the Ministry of Youth and Sports aims to make youth a key priority in all public policies.

In the strategy, the government identifies five 'strategic axes' or key areas for the next fifteen years:

1. increase economic opportunities for young people and promote their employability
2. increase accessibility and the quality of basic services for young people and reduce geographical disparities
3. promote the active participation of young people in social and civic life and in the decision-making process
4. promote respect for human rights
5. reinforce the institutional arrangements for communication, information, evaluation and governance.

For each key area, the strategy sets out the policy measures required. In total, 62 priority measures for the period 2015-2020 are listed, followed by a further 75 policy measures for the period up to 2030. The strategy uses a territorial approach, taking into account the large geographical disparities in the country. The implementation of these policy areas will be facilitated by an Action Plan (2015-2030), which will set out the details regarding the priority measures, the indicators for assessing results, the responsibilities involved and the financial framework. This Action Plan has not yet been drafted.

Currently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for coordinating the drafting of the strategy and the Action Plan. Once established, the Consultative Council (*Conseil Consultatif de la Jeunesse et de l'Action Associative*) will take over this responsibility. With this council, the Moroccan government aims to provide a forum for young people to participate in the economic, social and political life of the country.

The National Youth Strategy is promising, at least on paper. Only its implementation in coming years will show whether it will actually significantly improve the situation of young people. Whatever the outcome, the drafting of this strategy has its importance for youth work and youth participation in Morocco. First of all, the national government has firmly committed itself to investing in young people, in youth work and in active youth participation. This commitment is based on the recognition of the value of young people for society, and the need to invest in them. Secondly, the integrated approach aims to involve youth and the youth sector in all policy areas, not just as a single and separate policy area, which should make governmental programmes better adapted to the needs of young people. Finally, the active participation of young people in the

decision-making process and their role in the drafting of policies and programmes has been firmly recognised and established.

Youth work in Morocco

Youth work in Morocco takes place in two different formats; governmental youth work on the one hand, which is mainly about facilitating youth activities through the youth centres and non-governmental youth work on the other, which relies on an extensive network of youth NGOs, associations, and voluntary activities across the country. The methodologies and level of quality in both formats differ significantly.

3.1 Governmental youth work

The government's main instrument for implementing and supporting youth work in Morocco is the network of youth centres (*maisons des jeunes*). As the direct link between the government and the youth sector, this network of around five hundred youth centres has different aims:

- support young people's development through individual outreach and mentoring by youth workers
- support and build the capacities of registered youth associations
- stimulate social inclusion and participation by involving local young people from different social and cultural backgrounds in its activities.

The youth centres' main function is to support and facilitate programmes and activities run by local youth NGOs and associations, mainly in the fields of sports, theatre, music and

games. Youth centres do not implement programmes themselves, apart from some large-scale programmes that are initiated by the Ministry for Youth and Sports. In general, youth centres offer local NGOs the infrastructure and facilities to run their own activities for a fee. NGOs need to be officially registered to make use of the services provided by the youth centre.

There are a few reasons to explain why these youth centres do not function very well. First of all, the accessibility of the youth centres is quite limited, given that there are only five hundred in all the country to meet the needs of between nine to ten million young people. In addition, youth centres are unevenly distributed across the country; in general urban areas are better covered, while some rural areas seem totally neglected. There are wide disparities even between urban areas: the city of El Khemisset (population of 110,000) has sixteen youth centres, whereas the city of Tangier (population of 700,000) only has three. According to a survey conducted by the World Bank, while 70 per cent of young people were aware of the existence of youth centres, 40 per cent stated there were none in their area. The number of newly built youth centres is far from sufficient, mainly because since the late 1980s responsibility for building new centres has been given to local governments. Given their dire financial situation, new youth centres are not a priority. Secondly, many centres suffer from a lack of funding. The Ministry of Youth and Sports provides each centre with an annual operating budget of 3,000 dirham (less than 300 euro). In most cases, this budget is supplemented by contributions from local NGOs, but their total budget remains small. Thirdly, most of the youth centres are poorly equipped and housed in buildings with inadequate construction standards, especially in rural areas. They are understaffed and lack material resources

such as equipment, meeting rooms and sports fields. According to research from the Mohammed V University in Rabat, only 20 per cent of youth centres have a sports field and only 40 per cent have a theatre or exhibition space.

The national government has acknowledged the deficits in the network of youth centres. In the National Youth Strategy, the Ministry for Youth and Sports stressed the investment needed to improve the network of youth centres. According to the Ministry, 60 per cent of the youth centres have been improved in recent years, and the remainder will be revamped in the next three years. The main needs identified by the Ministry are: proximity and accessibility for young people, the competences of youth workers, the financial resources and equipment and the communication and information campaigns aimed at informing young people about the programmes and activities available in the centres.

In addition to facilitating the youth centre network, the national government also runs large national programmes targeting young people. One of the most important is '*Vacances pour tous*' (*Holidays for all*). In this programme, the Ministry for Youth and Sports offers educational and leisure activities for children and young people across the country, mainly during the summer holidays. The Ministry aims to give young people the opportunity to participate in educational and cultural activities, participate in community life, and to get to know other young people and other parts of Morocco. Although the Ministry is upbeat about the number of young people involved in these summer camps, there has been negative feedback about the programmes and activities on offer in the summer camps. They have been criticised for lacking a pedagogical vision and well-developed (non-formal) learning methodologies.

3.2 Non-governmental youth work

In general, civil society in Morocco is very well developed and is known to be one of the most diverse and vibrant civil societies in the region. Estimations vary between 30,000, 70,000 and even 100,000 registered associations in Morocco. Freedom of association has been a constitutional right in Morocco since 1962. In contrast with most of the other countries in the region, Morocco has formally guaranteed freedom of association without any constitutional restriction since 1996 and is also one of the few countries that have formally adopted the principle of declaration in their legislation with regard to associations, only requiring NGOs to inform the authorities of their creation to be considered as legally registered. Since the late 1980s, when the former king loosened his firm grip on politics and society, the Moroccan NGO sector has experienced a considerable boom.

Since the succession of King Mohammed VI, many new associations and NGOs have been created and associative life has benefited from a series of legal and political changes in recent years. However, the dynamism of the civil society is also linked to the distrust of the political world. Already during the reign of the former king, Moroccans did not trust politics and, even worse, feared getting involved in political life. Parents forbade their children from getting involved in any way, for example by actively participating in (the youth wings of) political parties, fearing they would 'disappear'. Social work and the activities of NGOs was considered to be safe, so many Moroccans turned towards NGOs and associations as a way of being active in their communities. The 'Moroccan Spring' and the 20 February Movement have given a significant boost to the active role of youth in the civil society. Many new protest groups and organisations have emerged. This has

created a 'dynamism in Morocco's public sphere that did not previously exist'.

Non-governmental youth work plays a major role in the Moroccan youth field. There are thousands of youth NGOs and NGOs working for young people in Morocco. A 2007 survey listed more than 5,000 youth associations. Other studies cite numbers of over 8,000. Whatever the definitive number, NGOs play an essential role in youth work, bridging the gap between public and private spheres and taking responsibility for activities the government is unwilling to or incapable of assuming. However, huge disparities continue to exist between youth associations and NGOs. Most of them are small-scale, local and working in a specific community. Some of the NGOs have national programmes and work with networks of local and regional organisations. The field of action differs from one NGO to the next, ranging from sports, cultural activities, and capacity-building of young people to political awareness, language classes, entrepreneurship and voluntary services. Some NGOs work with all types of young people while others focus on specific groups, e.g. young people with disabilities, young women or young unemployed. Many youth NGOs are coordinated by young people themselves, whereas others organise activities and programmes for young people. Finally, the vast majority of NGOs in the field of youth rely on a vast network of unpaid volunteers to function.

Some NGOs and associations have a specific status, known officially as being of public utility (*statut d'utilité publique*). This status implies a formal recognition by the state that the organisation is of public utility. Associations granted this status enjoy tax benefits and other financial advantages. They can receive donations and legacies and they can make a public appeal for donations once a year. In some cases, associations play the role of delegates from public services.

Consequently, not all youth NGOs and associations aspire to be officially recognised as being of public utility, fearing indirect interference by the government in their activities.

Youth NGOs and associations in Morocco face many challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of training, both for volunteers working in associations and for (paid or unpaid) staff members supporting the volunteers. Many of the volunteers are not trained to do the work they actually do in their associations, e.g. working with young people with special needs, and most staff members are not trained to supervise volunteers, which eventually often has a negative effect on the quality of their youth work. A second challenge, linked to the lack of training, is the lack of professionalism within youth associations and NGOs. There is a severe need of knowledge and expertise on how to run a NGO and on how to operate more professionally, including aspects such as how to promote programmes, schedule activities, coordinate volunteers, give a follow-up to the activities and disseminate the results of programmes. Thirdly, there is a lack of funding. Although the governmental support to NGOs has increased in recent years – partly through the National Human Development Initiative, launched in 2005 by King Mohammed VI to improve the living conditions of citizens – there are still many organisations that receive no funding whatsoever to run their activities.

International programmes and foundations offer valuable opportunities to NGOs in the Moroccan youth sector, by providing grants, young volunteers or training opportunities. However, there is still a need for a structural and Moroccan-based strategy to improve non-governmental youth work and build the capacities of youth NGOs, in particular for the longer term.

Mohammed V Foundation

An important national, though non-governmental, funding opportunity for NGOs is the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity. This foundation was established personally by King Mohammed VI, who still acts as its president. Guided by its motto 'Ready to help those in need', the Mohammed V Foundation aims to fight poverty and social marginalisation. Its activities include support for social work centres for youth and for women, the development of literacy and education programmes and humanitarian support for victims of natural disasters. The Foundation itself receives its financial resources from structural (national and international) donors, and through the annual National Campaign for Solidarity. Moroccans are invited to contribute financially to the solidarity work pursued by the Mohammed V Foundation as part of this fundraising campaign. Due to the king's popularity, an impressive amount of money is collected every year.

3.3 Youth work and non-formal learning

The quality of youth work in Morocco, both governmental and non-governmental, is in general quite poor, notwithstanding some very good practices across the country. The main reason for this low level of quality is education. The formal education needed to become a (governmental) youth worker is provided by the *Institut Royal de Formation des Cadres (IRFC)*. This institute has Bachelor degrees in *Education de jeunes enfants* and *Animation Socioculturelle*. Graduates from the IRFC are trained to work as directors of local youth centres, as official representatives of the government. This 'youth worker' does not run activities directly with young people, but instead manages facilities and helps local associations to do their youth work. A

4.1 Background

governmental youth worker, therefore, is a highly bureaucratic position. In some youth centres, there is also a strict hierarchy, with some directors considering the youth centre as their personal property.

Most youth workers in Morocco, both government educated and non-government educated, lack the knowledge and competences to promote non-formal learning and youth work as a learning experience for young people. These competences hardly figure in the formal education curriculum. Most voluntary youth workers and youth leaders have not had the opportunity to be well trained in the concept of non-formal learning, which is a relatively new phenomenon in Morocco. Some youth workers have been able to benefit mainly from European programmes, and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to work on non-formal learning in their associations. However, to raise the quality of youth work in Morocco, more investment in the country itself is needed.

Youth participation in Morocco

Youth participation in the social, civic and political life in Morocco has been historically quite poor, although the situation has improved somewhat in recent years. This chapter describes some important trends in stimulating youth participation: the improved political participation of youth, e.g. through local youth councils; youth participation through entrepreneurship; and more and better youth participation through capacity-building of both young people and youth associations.

According to a World Bank survey, about 90 per cent of young Moroccans' leisure time is spent on so called 'unstructured activities': with family and friends, listening to radio or music, and watching television. Volunteer activities are virtually non-existent, and young people spend very little time in clubs, associations and civic organisations. Only around 10 to 15 per cent of Moroccan youth is estimated to be involved in, or a member of, a youth association or NGO.

There are a few explanations for this low level of youth participation. Firstly, there is no official recognition of these types of activity in Morocco. Young people do not receive a certificate or any other kind of award for being active in a civic or political association. Since finding a job is one of the major struggles for young Moroccans, receiving some kind of formal recognition for volunteering would make it much more attractive. At the same time, there can often be a gap between expectations and reality. Young people look to civic associations to provide job training or intermediation services for the labour market, although many associations or NGOs do not deliver these services. Finally, there is often a lack of awareness among young people of the existence of organisations offering such activities. The accessibility to information is an important challenge, in particular for disadvantaged young people and in rural areas.

Until the beginning of the 21st century, youth participation in Morocco was very limited. Most of the existing youth NGOs and associations were created in the last ten years. A few developments have contributed to this increase in youth participation. One was the World Youth Congress, which was organised in 2003 in the city of Casablanca. This international gathering of over 800 young activists from more than 120 countries gave an important impetus to youth work and

youth participation in Morocco, by introducing young people to many (international) youth NGOs. It spurred the creation of a large number of (local) youth organisations, managed by young people themselves, especially around 2005 and 2006.

The process of drafting the new national youth strategy, started in 2009, also stimulated youth participation, at least in political life and the decision-making processes. Many regional and national forums and conferences were organised, in which thousands of young people took the opportunity to have their voices heard by politicians and decision-makers.

Finally, the 20 February Movement, which was the driving force behind the 'Moroccan Spring' of 2011, greatly stimulated the active participation of young people. Mainly a youth movement, it provided an important boost to youth activism. Moreover, it encouraged the many newly created youth NGOs to work together and to create networks of organisations promoting active youth participation. It also resulted in more networking with international youth NGOs. The new constitution, adopted in 2011, gave solid legal support for more and better youth participation and institutionalised the concept of youth participation, not only at national but also at local level.

Although youth participation has become increasingly important in the Moroccan field of youth, major challenges remain. First of all, the capacities of young people themselves need to be further improved, to be able to take initiatives and play an active role in their own community. There are no real and efficient programmes in Morocco that prepare young people to participate in decision-making and to publicly debate issues relevant to their lives. Secondly, local governments, political parties, and civil society in general need to better facilitate the

active participation of young people and truly recognise its importance. Finally, legislative articles and national and local policies, e.g. the constitution, the election code, and the code for political parties, need to be adapted to the principles of youth participation and be implemented to have a concrete impact on the active participation of young people. There is a lack of specific legislation guaranteeing active youth participation in local and national public policies and decision-making.

4.2 Political youth participation

One major development in stimulating youth participation in political life has been the introduction of **local youth councils**. An important force in this development is the Mediterranean Forum for Youth (*Forum Méditerranéen de la jeunesse et de l'enfance, FOMEJE*), a national youth organisation that helps young people enhance their social, civic, entrepreneurial and political skills. An important part of its work is dedicated to empowering young people at local level and to giving them a forum for voicing their concerns. Inspired by international experiences, FOMEJE has created a local youth council in the northern city of Assilah, in partnership with the local government.



Two girls in Assilah

Through its support of local youth councils, FOMEJE aims to prepare a new generation of politicians and decision-makers and to develop an inclusive local youth policy. Up to now, there has been no clear legal or political framework for local youth councils. The 2009 Communal Charter provides an area for dialogue between youth and the local government, through the creation of ad hoc committees in which young people can participate. The national youth strategy calls upon local governments to develop and support local, communal and provincial youth councils. It underlines the importance of involving young people in every aspect of local policies, through local youth councils and youth organisations. However, these provisions do not clearly specify the mechanisms for dialogue and participation, leaving them to the authority of the local government. A new law is currently being drafted to offer a framework for local youth councils.

Local youth councils aim to be the bridge between young people and local politics. This is not an easy role and puts pressure on both the relationship with the municipality and on the active involvement of the young people. In practice, these challenges have given rise to different models for local youth councils. Some have taken a bottom-up approach to creating a youth council, based on the needs of young people in the community and on their own initiatives. In most instances, however, the creation of youth councils has taken a more top-down approach, mainly because of the constitutional and legislative reforms in Morocco in recent years. The new constitution holds all public powers responsible for stimulating the participation of young people in social, economic, cultural and political life (article 33). In addition, all local authorities are obliged to draft a six-year plan (*plan communal de développement*), for which consultation with everyone living in the *commune*, including young people, is needed.

Different models also exist in terms of the organisation of the youth council. Board members for some councils are directly elected by the young people from the commune, while for others they are appointed by the local authorities. For a youth council to function properly, a certain budget is needed to implement its activities. In most cases, this budget comes from the local authorities, raising the question of the level of independence of the youth council. The question of political will within the local government also has to be considered: is there sufficient support and trust to create a youth council without trying to take control?

On the other hand, youth councils have to deal with the important challenge of representing all the young people in their community, including those with disadvantages. Some youth councils have decided to only accept young people with a certain level of education on their boards. While there might be legitimate reasons for such a decision, it is also important to include disadvantaged young people among their members and volunteers. This is a major challenge, since young Moroccans continue to have little trust in the political system. Through their local meetings and consultations, youth councils must therefore strive to include as many as possible of young people's needs and wishes, along with the needs and priorities of the youth associations and NGOs in the community.

Local youth councils in Assilah and Tetouan

The local youth council in the northern city of Assilah (population 30,000) is the outcome of a partnership between the communal council of Assilah and the Mediterranean Forum for Youth (FOMEJE). Using the slogan 'Developing my city is my own responsibility', the youth council aims

to give all young people in Assilah the opportunity to participate in the management of local affairs. "It is a tool for young people to taste and to test politics", says Taoufik Louzari, member of the Assilah communal council. "We want to make them a bit more comfortable with politics and with the idea of being a political activist."

The youth council's board members are directly elected by the youth population of Assilah. Candidates need to have completed at least the first year of higher or vocational education, and must be a member of a youth association. Around 300 young people voted for their representatives in the youth council in a public election held in a youth centre. The council is guided by a supervisory committee, consisting of representatives of the communal council and FOMEJE, as well as representatives from the Assilah population. The youth council is involved in various activities. Together with the communal council, they campaigned for a bus connection to the city of Tangier, where the closest university is based. And they started the campaign 'One hour for my city', in which they promoted and encouraged voluntary initiatives by (young) citizens for the development of the city.

In spring 2014, the 'collective council of youth' was created in the city of Tetouan (population 320,000), on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea. As in Assilah, the board members were directly elected by the young people. In keeping with its determination to be an inclusive youth council,

one of the council members is assigned to be the representative of young people with special needs. The youth council in Tetouan is very closely connected to the communal council; it was initiated by the commune, is facilitated by the commune and receives financial support from the commune. This might raise the question of independence, but according to the youth council members, they are completely free to develop their activities and programmes as they wish.

Recently, the youth councils in Assilah and Tetouan joined forces to develop the first regional youth council in Morocco. Its aim is to motivate and encourage other municipalities in the region to set up local youth councils themselves.



The Raissouni Palace in Assilah

Parallel youth government

Benefiting from the impetus given to youth participation by the new constitution, the Moroccan Youth Forum (*Forum des Jeunes Marocains*) in 2012 established the "parallel youth government": a national shadow government in which every constitutional minister has his young "shadow"/counterpart. With this youth government, the Moroccan Youth Forum wanted to consolidate the voice of young people in national politics and at the

same time act as an instrument for training the 'politicians of tomorrow'. The members of the youth government, mainly youth leaders and students, evaluated public policies developed by the national government and prepared reports together with other young people on issues on the political agenda. The youth government, now in its second term, has been a success, says Adib Lrhoul, who acted as the youth minister for foreign affairs in the first government: "We know that the ministers in the official government talked about the youth government in their meetings."

4.3 Participation through social entrepreneurship

The level of participation of young people in **political parties** in Morocco is even weaker than youth participation in general. It is estimated that less than one per cent of Moroccan youth is involved in a political youth organisation. There are many reasons for this. Historically, political activism could be dangerous and could lead to harassment and persecution by the authorities, in particular during the reign of King Hassan II. Parents did not encourage their children to be active in political organisations or activities. In addition, there is a lack of education concerning political participation and democratic citizenship and a pervasive distrust, especially among young people, of the political system and of politicians, as a result of the corruption and lack of internal democracy in political parties. Finally, young people in Morocco spend much of their time and energy looking for a job, making active participation in political youth organisations a low priority for them.

In 2006, the Moroccan government established the National Institute for Youth and Democracy (*Institut National de la Jeunesse et la Démocratie*). This institute aims to encourage young people to engage in political action. It organises training sessions, symposia and conferences to introduce young people to the mechanisms of politics. Political youth organisations can now receive a direct grant from the government through this institute, whereas before funding could only come through the political party with which it was affiliated. This direct funding opportunity gives political youth organisations a more independent status, even if its ties to the political party remains strong: in some cases, for example, the leader of the political youth organisation is elected by the board of the political party.

While Morocco has a healthy tradition of social economy, in which cooperation and solidarity play important roles, the concept of social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon. Despite the low levels of awareness about the opportunities for social enterprises, social entrepreneurship is seen as an important developing trend in Morocco, creating new ways of fostering youth participation and positive change. This is not only about creating profit-making enterprises with social purposes. It focuses on creating an entrepreneurial mindset and on stimulating (young) people to find innovative solutions to the issues they are confronted by their daily lives. It is perceived as a sustainable way to stimulate meaningful participation of young people in their own communities.

Although still in the early stages of developing activities and the infrastructure needed, many new initiatives have been taken to stimulate social entrepreneurship, such as the Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (MCISE). In general, social awareness of the concept is quite low, which is also true of the youth sector. Formal youth work still relies on models and methodologies from the 1980s and 1990s, and has so far been unable to integrate social entrepreneurship as a means of promoting active youth participation. In the informal youth sector, on the other hand, the concept of social entrepreneurship is driven by a small circle of mainly higher educated youth leaders, who learned it from their international experiences. The social enterprises that have been set up work on a variety of projects, with the most important supporting marginalised communities, women, providing education and training for young people and helping people to find jobs.

Given its very recent introduction in Morocco, the development of social entrepreneurship – as a mindset and as an instrument for participation – faces many challenges. Some

of them are operational, such as the lack of appropriate technical support (e.g. training in project management), of platforms for sharing best practices and ideas, and of structural funding. There is also the legal framework, which is not always supportive of small-scale social enterprises. The biggest challenge, however, is probably cultural. In Moroccan society, an entrepreneurial mindset is hard to find. The idea of taking personal responsibility for challenges in one's life, and

taking initiatives to tackle those challenges, is not the norm in Moroccan society, which tends to functions in a 'passive consumption mode'. This partly has to do with the education system, which does not support entrepreneurial behaviour or ideas in any way. There is also a language barrier: the concept of social entrepreneurship does not have an equivalent in Arabic, which equates the concept with 'alien' and 'not of our own'.

Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship

The Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (MCISE) is a small NGO based in Rabat with one clear mission: to find entrepreneurial and innovative solutions to every social challenge in Morocco. To achieve this ambition, MCISE aims to bring an entrepreneurial mindset and approach to young people, by educating young people in entrepreneurship, raising awareness of the opportunities it generates, building the

capacities of small youth NGOs, doing research, and offering a space for young people with ideas. Their activities are not limited to the youth sector, since they believe all social challenges are interlinked, as explained by cofounder and chief visionary officer Adnane Addioui. "You cannot fix education without fixing transport. You cannot fix health if you don't fix security. Everything is interconnected." In its activities, MCISE trains local NGOs to run the projects themselves, making the impact more sustainable. "In the end, it's all about responsibility", says Adnane. "If you are responsible for yourself, you are responsible enough to participate in the community, in whatever way you choose."

Social enterprise working on female participation

In 2008, the Moroccan artist Asmaa Benechir founded "Au Grain de Sésame", an art gallery, literary café and space for art workshops in the old town (medina) of Rabat. Her mission is to empower disadvantaged women from the medina in order to improve their lives, mainly through art design and creation. In workshops, Asmaa teaches women how to recycle everyday objects using natural materials. Most of the women are illiterate, and work under hard conditions with poor salaries. "Working on art is a therapy for them", says Asmaa. "Besides teaching them how to make art, I give them advice. I tell them they have to make a choice; if they want to have a better life, it's up to them." Au Grain de Sésame is a social enterprise:

the sale of the products made by the women in the workshops and by other artists funds its activities that focus on the capacity building of vulnerable



The art gallery of Au Grain de Sésame

women. There is a need for this type of activity, says Asmaa. "The situation of women is very bad in Morocco. On paper, women have rights, but many don't know what they are and don't know how to benefit from them in reality." The implementation of women's rights is a major challenge in Morocco. In 2004, the Moroccan government adopted a revised version of the Mudawana (Family Code), improving the legal status of women. According to the reformed family code, women cannot be married against their will, the minimum age for women to be married is 18, and the right to divorce belongs to both men and women. However, the new legal provisions have not been implemented in all the regions yet, due to cultural reasons, corruption, and the high levels of illiteracy, preventing women from claiming their rights.

4.4 Building young people's capacities

To foster genuine youth participation, the capacities of young people themselves need to be further improved, to enable them to take initiatives and to play an active role in their own community. As mentioned earlier, Morocco lacks programmes to prepare young people for active youth participation, although many initiatives have been taken recently to develop young people's capacities to become change-makers in their society.

In the last five to ten years, the Moroccan youth sector has witnessed many initiatives in which youth associations and NGOs grouped together to jointly build their capacities and prepare younger generations to play an active role in Moroccan society, politics and labour market. One of these NGOs is the Association Jeunes pour Jeunes (Youth for Youth), which was created in 2005 and which is run by young people. Its main mission is to support young people to ensure their full social, civic and

political integration. The NGO mainly works on two levels: raising awareness among young people of their rights and encouraging them to make use of those rights; and supporting young people in the decision-making process. On the national level, they have organised large-scale projects involving dozens of local youth NGOs. Some of their projects involve training courses for local NGOs in advocacy, communication and awareness-raising. They stimulate more and better cooperation between decision-makers, media and youth organisations. They also work with international organisations, such as EU programmes, the World Bank, Oxfam International and the Canadian International Development Agency.

In recent years, the Mediterranean Forum for Youth (Forum Méditerranéen de la jeunesse et de l'enfance, FOMEJE) has played an important role in national and international youth activities in Morocco. This NGO is run by young people and acts as a hub for young leaders, who are committed to and creative initiators of change in their own society. Their activities include capacity building for young people and youth organisations, research on youth issues, international youth exchange projects, cultural activities, and fostering youth participation in politics and decision-making. FOMEJE further developed the concept of local youth councils, and is currently involved in the work of the local youth council in Assilah. It also works on a volunteering programme, aiming to stimulate the involvement of young people in society.

The Moroccan Network of Youth and Dialogue (Réseau Marocain de Jeunesse et de Concertation, REMAJEC) was established in 2011 by 64 youth associations and 46 youth councils across the country. It was the result of a French-Moroccan governmental partnership aiming to build the capacities of youth NGOs through training courses, youth exchanges and seminars. After the

partnership came to an end, the Moroccan NGOs involved continued the project and created their own network. Its main mission is to encourage young people to become civil society activists. Young people and youth NGOs are trained in political and social rights, social work and the management of

associations. By establishing youth councils in all the regions of the country, REMAJEC aims to represent all the young people in Morocco. On a national level, the network advocates for a stronger role for young people in politics and policy-making, based on consultations in the different regions.

Amal Salé Association

The "Amal Salé Association" is an example of a small community-based youth initiative that developed into a permanent and large-scale NGO in the field of youth. In 2002, seven young Moroccans from a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the city of Salé were faced with major



Students in the Amal Salé class room (by Frouke Adema)

challenges in their neighbourhood – poverty, lack of good education, few opportunities for young people. "So we decided to do something new", says Youssef Cheffoui, founder and president of the Amal Salé Association. They started with small-scale social work, such as sports activities, music, theatre and cleaning the streets. In just a decade, the "Amal Salé Association" has developed into a social and educational centre for underprivileged young people from the neighbourhood. By offering classes in hotel management, secretarial work, accounting and languages, they give young people who left school early or who did not take the language classes they need to find a job with 'a second chance'. The "Amal Salé Association" works with the Mohammed V Foundation, which donated the building and equipment. In 2014, Amal Salé was granted the status of public utility, giving them access to more governmental funding and tax relief.

Working with (young) people with disabilities

The situation for (young) people with disabilities is very difficult in Morocco. Although it has improved in recent years, young people with disabilities still face major difficulties in, for example, accessing education and the labour market. Young people with disabilities are virtually excluded from many governmental programmes and activities for young people, such as the summer camps. Since 1992, the Meknès-based Raheem Association supports people with disabilities and advocates for better opportunities for them. The situation (at least on paper) has improved in recent years. In the first draft of the 2011 constitution, there was not a single article referring to people with disabilities. Dozens of NGOs supporting people



Study visit participants and volunteers from the Raheem Association

with disabilities joined forces to defend their interests. Their efforts produced results: the new constitution states that all public powers must implement policies designed specifically for people with special needs, including people with physical and mental disabilities (article 34). However, the implementation of this article has been weak, and young people with disabilities still in general have far fewer opportunities than their peers. The Raheem Association, which is run by people with disabilities themselves, focuses on both the organisation of activities for people with disabilities and on advocacy. Youth is their main priority. They strive to be part of the solution in their country. "There is a desire and determination to make a change. We want to be part of that change. We don't want change being made for us", said one of the board members. Besides this specific organisation, there are different youth-led organisations that aim to integrate all young people in their activities, including young people with disabilities. One example is the youth association 'Fifaw', which is also based in Meknes. This cultural organisation 'for young people and by young people' organises many activities where young people get to know each other and promote their cultural and artistic work. "People with disabilities are human beings, as we all are", says Maroua Merzouqui, volunteer in Fifaw. "So for us, it's normal they just join our activities."

Although most of the youth NGOs rely on a large number of young volunteers, **volunteering** is not a well-developed concept in Morocco. There is no legislation granting specific rights or obligations to volunteers, there is no policy regarding volunteers, and the formal recognition of voluntary service is virtually non-existent. Currently, various associations and NGOs are working on the development and promotion of voluntary

service for young people, as a way of actively participating in the community. Developments include drafting a strategy to exchange volunteers at national level, creating a national agency for volunteerism, and to draft a national law organising voluntary service in Morocco.

In recent years, the Moroccan youth sector has benefited considerably from

international programmes for youth, in particular the Euro-Med Youth Programme and the Erasmus+ Programme (former Youth in Action Programme). Young people, youth leaders and youth workers have participated in youth exchanges, voluntary services, training courses and seminars. They have gained knowledge and experience in active youth participation, youth work methodologies and non-formal learning, thanks to international partnerships and intercultural learning.

Thaqafat Association

Thaqafat ('cultures') Association" is a Moroccan NGO established in 2002, aiming to promote Moroccan culture and to bring it into contact with other cultures in the world. To achieve its objectives, Thaqafat runs and participates in various international programmes. It is involved in the exchange of volunteers through programmes such as the United Nations Volunteers programme and the European Voluntary Service (EVS). In addition, Thaqafat offers high school programmes, in which high school students from abroad "get a taste and flavour of Moroccan culture and Moroccan people", as Fairouz el Hamdaoui, coordinator of Thaqafat, describes its main purpose. For the Moroccan youngsters involved, these programmes offer the opportunity to meet their peers from other countries. Thaqafat also sends young Moroccans to various international training courses, as part of the framework of European and Euro-Mediterranean programmes.

5. Conclusion

“We didn’t have a revolution. We’re experiencing an evolution.”
(Fairouz el Hamdaoui, coordinator Thaqafat Association)

Due to its history, geography and specific mix of cultures, Morocco has always developed differently from neighbouring countries in the Arab region. When thousands of Moroccans, many of them young people, gathered in demonstrations on 20 February 2011, they opened a new chapter in the political and social history of their country, for which the first sentences may already have been written a decade earlier. The anger, frustration and demand for reforms were rooted in a lack of opportunities, especially for the 9 to 10 million young Moroccans. As they know the quality of education and youth work is low, the transition to the labour market is hard and the opportunities to have their say are limited. They are demanding change. The mass demonstrations did not lead to a revolution but rather initiated an evolution. The drafting of a new constitution sparked a public debate about politics, civil rights and the role of young people. The creation of a large number of new youth associations has



increased the opportunities for young people to have their say, be heard and develop skills and competences. The adoption of a national strategy for youth has institutionalised the importance of active youth participation and stimulated the establishment of local youth councils.

The Moroccan youth field is an important, interesting and inspiring partner in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Although many Moroccans acknowledge that change and development need to come from within, the exchange of expertise with international partners is very useful for the further development of the youth field in Morocco. It is important for young Moroccans to benefit from such international exchanges and become change-makers in their own communities. In this way, they themselves could become a new source of inspiration to all the other young people in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Programme of study visit

Day 1

The group of European participants gathered at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in the Moroccan capital of Rabat. After a formal welcome by Ministry officials, the group listened to various presentations about the political situation in Morocco, the process of drafting a new constitution and the National Youth Strategy. The second part of the day was dedicated to the civil society in Morocco, with presentations of many youth NGOs, associations and political youth organisations.

Day 2

Morning of the second day in the old town (Medina) of Rabat. "Au Grain de Sésame" is an art gallery, literary café and space for art workshops run by Asmaa Benechir. After this visit, the group crossed the river to Rabat's twin city Salé, where it was



The art gallery of Au Grain de Sésame

welcomed by the Amal Salé ("Hope for Salé") Association. The participants had an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Moroccan youth with a large number of young people attending classes at Amal Salé. They had a wonderful lunch together, after which the group left for their next visit in the city of Meknès. In the imperial city, participants visited the Raheem Association that works with (young) people with disabilities.

Day 3

The study visit continued with a visit to the city of Assilah in the north of Morocco and on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Close to Assilah, participants were welcomed by several women from a rural cooperative, where they cook and sell traditional couscous. Some participants were able to prepare some couscous themselves, guided by the local women. The group enjoyed a lovely homemade lunch and after buying some local couscous, the bus continued to the city of Assilah. The participants were introduced to local youth participation in the region through presentations of the youth councils of Assilah and Tétouan and the local municipality of Assilah.

Day 4

On the last day, the group travelled back to Rabat. They were welcomed by the "Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship" (MCISE). Inspired by the discussions on social entrepreneurship and its opportunities for young people, the participants began preparing the final NGO fair. In an interactive way, all the participants presented the NGOs and organisations they work for, alongside half a dozen Moroccan NGOs. New ideas and opportunities for EuroMediterranean cooperation were discussed during a convivial farewell dinner in the wonderful building of the "Thaqafat Association".

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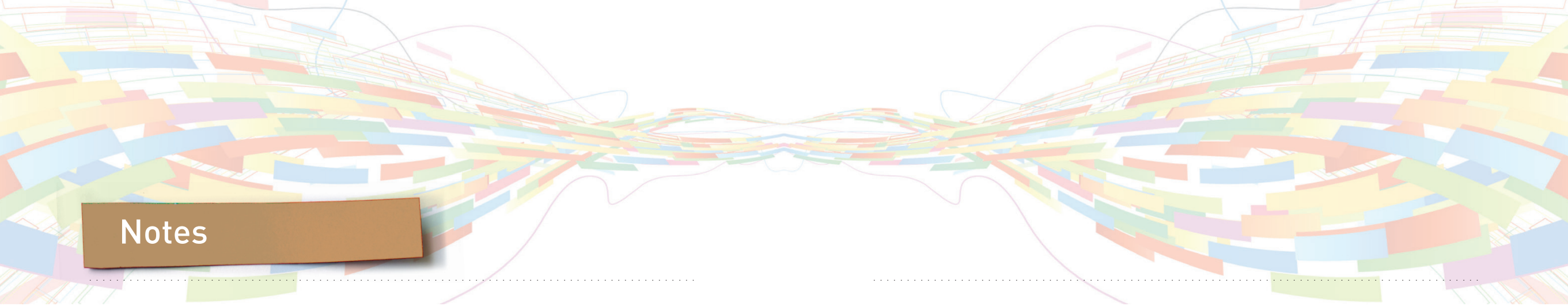
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Notes

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Moroccan tea

Youth work in Morocco and youth participation projects at local level



This publication has been edited and financed by the Regional capacity building support unit (RCBS) for Euromed Youth Programme IV dealing with the countries participating in the ENPI South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia).

The overall objective of RCBS is to support the Euro Mediterranean youth units (EMYUs) in their efforts to ensure an efficient implementation of the Euromed Youth programme and an optimum achievement of results:

- guidance and training activities for EMYUs and project leaders and organisations,
- coordination and synergies between actors and stakeholders (youth in action programme, Euromed platform, etc.),
- visibility and communication.

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Youth work in Morocco and youth participation projects at local level

Youth work is changing and opening new interesting perspectives for the future. The field of youth work within Meda countries is living strong changes and the role of young people is more and more relevant in the society.

It is the fifth issue of a collection in several languages called «Youth Work in...» composed of publications dedicated to youth work in the European Neighbourhood South countries.

This collection aims to support the cooperation within EuroMed area providing a depth reflection about the nowadays issues and challenges in youth work in the Euro Mediterranean context.

Youth work in Morocco and youth participation projects at local level is the result of a study visit, organized with the coordination of RCBS (Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit for the EuroMed Youth Programme IV) held in Morocco from the 15th to the 20th September 2014 that gave the chance to contribute, during five days, to the overall reflection about youth work in Morocco with a specific focus on field projects and to provide some new keys for reading the ongoing situation about youth. The specific aim of this study is to supply some new keys for reading the ongoing situation of youth work in Morocco, the challenges, strategies and good practices of youth work facing the complex situation in the country.

This publication provides:

- an overview about Youth Work in Morocco;
- an educational and pedagogical background of youth work in Morocco;
- the statistics situation about youth in Morocco and the youth participation projects at local level;
- some challenges of youth workers for developing projects facing of youth participation projects at local level;
- some examples of youth projects and best practises.

Download it for free at: www.euromedyouth.net and <http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/>



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