

Not enough aid and very slow progress



According to official follow-up reports on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Morocco has made progress towards several of the goals and is on the way to achieving others. However, this conclusion is based on a purely quantitative focus and does not reflect the real human development situation in the country. There are problems in the implementation of the scant official development assistance (ODA) that Morocco receives. In education, these impede any concerted efforts by the Government and civil society organizations to eliminate illiteracy and provide universal access.

Espace Associatif
Said Thel

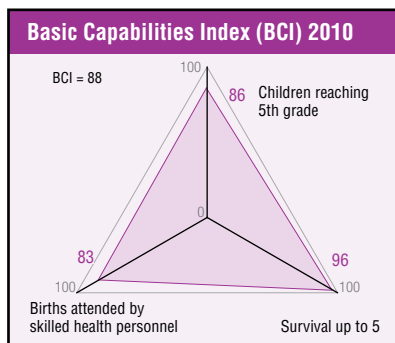
Various development plans have been abandoned and the public administration does not act in accordance with the Government's policy commitments, but the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are still the main frame of reference for civil society organizations and the country's people – who are demanding better performance and more progress. One aspect of the Millennium Declaration is that it includes a follow-up mechanism to monitor policy implementation. This involves periodic reports from governments, which are drawn up with the help of the UN, about progress towards the MDGs. In Morocco, the reports from the High Commissioner for the Plan insist on a quantitative approach that usually results in the same old clichés, such as “We have reached some Goals and we are well on the way to attaining the others.”

Development assistance: a small share of the budget

The 2009 country report on progress towards the MDGs emphasizes that Morocco, which endorsed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, participated in the second follow-up survey in 2008 that was carried out under the aegis of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) working group on aid effectiveness and, more specifically, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

This study shows that the official development assistance (ODA) that Morocco receives – a total of USD 2.3 billion in 2007 – amounts to only 12.6% of the country's budget (some USD 18 billion).¹ The World Bank is presented as the country's main financial partner with 18.8% of total ODA (USD 426 million). Next are the European Union with 13.6% (USD 308 million) and then the European Investment Bank with 9.7% (USD 221 million). The UN contributes only 1% of total ODA (USD 22.5 million) and the US provides 0.9% (USD 20 million).²

Civil society organizations have stressed how small the share of ODA is in financing development in Morocco, and point out that ultimately it is the State



and the people themselves who have to carry the biggest part of this financial burden.

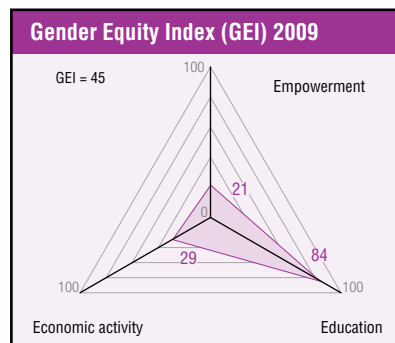
World Bank “assistance”

There is no explanation as to why the World Bank figures so prominently among the organizations providing assistance for development in Morocco. This is a bank, after all, and most of the funds it provides are loans rather than grants so they have to be repaid with interest. In addition, part of the meagre grants from this institution, and from many other international financial institutions, go to finance technical studies to prepare for the allocation of loans for development.

Some projects of a social nature that have World Bank support are:

- improving basic training for adults, Alpha Morocco (USD 4.1 million);
- supporting the reorganization of basic education (USD 80 million);
- improving the quality of the education system (USD 130.3 million);
- reforming teaching in higher education (USD 76 million); and
- the National Initiative for Human Development Support Project (INDH). This loan is aimed at reducing poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion and strengthening institutional capacity (USD 100 million).³

There has also been yet another in an apparently endless series of initiatives to reform the country's education system: the Urgency Plan (PU), which is



budgeted at USD 5.3 billion. The persistent inability to tackle the far-reaching problems in this area casts serious doubt on the effectiveness of the World Bank and discredits its constant propaganda about good governance in development projects. Many civil society organizations have criticized the distribution of large amounts of resources for projects whose ultimate quality is in doubt and for which future generations of Moroccans will have to pay.

Questioning where ODA is spent

In 2007 the US signed a compact with Morocco in the framework of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) for USD 697.5 million, which was the largest amount that the MCC had committed up to that point.⁴ These funds were intended to raise productivity and improve employment opportunities in sectors with the best potential, and thereby to generate an annual GDP increase to the tune of USD 118 million. According to the General Director of the MCC, John J. Danilovich, this would directly benefit 600,000 Moroccan families.⁵

More than two years after this initiative went into operation, Salua Karkri Belkeziz, a Deputy (member of parliament) from the Socialist Union of Popular Forces⁶ claimed that only USD 50 million had so far been received. The rate at which these projects developed would therefore be far slower than the objectives that had been set. Deputies have

1 High Commissioner for the Plan, *National MDG Report*, Morocco, 2009.

2 *Ibid.*

3 World Bank Rabat Office, *Nawafid Maghreb*, no. 6, December 2007.

4 The contribution from the US Government to this program is estimated at around USD 250 million.

5 *Maghreb Arabe Presse*, Press Conference in Washington on 15 September 2007.

6 The Socialist Union of Popular Forces is a political party that has been represented in the Government of Morocco since 1998.

also questioned the selection, organization and land distribution criteria employed in key projects.

During discussions about the structure of ODA expenditure distribution, civil society organizations have also pointed out several key issues to bear in mind when considering the aid policies:⁷

- What should be the level of ODA?
- What should be its priorities?
- Which procedures should be put in place for its implementation?
- What should be done to make the aid process more participative while ensuring better governance?

Lack of coordination

ODA in Morocco is not coordinated or harmonized. There are numerous agencies, foundations and other structures for social development with similar mandates (including the Ministry of Social Development, the Social Development Agency, the Agencies for Northern, Southern and Eastern Development and the Rural Development Agency). Moreover, international cooperation programs and projects very often overlap. All of this rebounds to the detriment of the effective implementation of aid for development in general. In response to this situation the idea emerged to set up a “thematic group to harmonize fund providers,” which is an aid coordination group with a dozen members.

The main objectives of this control structure are to propose paths and avenues to improve aid; to publish a good practices guide for the technical and financial partners that operate in Morocco; and to make concrete proposals to the Government to optimize aid coordination mechanisms. However, the place and the role of the Moroccan counterpart in all this are not clear: it seems not to figure in the structure when one would suppose it should be directing the thematic group.

At the same time, the Ministry of Economics and Finance, in association with UNDP and with financial

support from France and Spain, has since 2008 been drawing up a Map of Development Projects through a system of geographical information. This is intended to provide “a database to ensure the integrated management of information about development [and] enable the group of members to access in the middle term complete, reliable data about interventions implemented as part of public aid for development and of structural development projects in Morocco, thus enhancing the visibility of the aid the country receives.”⁸ The project is defined as a tool for communication, for publishing information, for teamwork and for coordination.

The impact on education

The education sector is notorious for taking a large part of the budget and it is also the sector that benefits most from international cooperation and ODA.⁹ But while the quantitative results seem to be on course and acceptable, they are seriously deficient from the quality point of view. International studies about the evaluation of knowledge acquired at school make it clear that the performance of Moroccan children in sciences, mathematics and reading is dismal.¹⁰

For example, the average score in mathematics of 4th year primary school pupils in Morocco was 347, which is far below the international average of 495. Some 61% of schoolchildren cannot meet the minimum mathematics requirements laid down by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In sciences the average score of Moroccan pupils was 304, which is also very low compared to the international average of 489. Some 66% of schoolchildren do not meet the basic requirements for sciences set by the TIMSS.

The Government has shown evident concern about the critical situation in education, which it has given high priority on its agenda. As mentioned above, the Urgency Plan has a large budget allocation. Some positive effects have included the construction or renovation of many schools, under the

INDH, and the participation of civil society organizations in the management of pre-school education in remote parts of the country. In addition, information and communications technologies (ICTs) are being progressively introduced into education practices. Even at the level of non-formal education it is noteworthy that ICT departments and literacy programs are in operation.

However, the reform introduced through the national education and training plan failed and there continue to be a number of weaknesses in this area. In terms of the PU, the French language (which not everyone in the country speaks) is frequently used in technical documents on PU projects and the projects are often prone to improvisation. There is also a lack of rationalization in the management of human resources, and many places have no teachers. This means that the possibility of schooling in remote parts of the country is limited. In spite of the many literacy programs, illiteracy is still widespread in Morocco compared to other countries at a similar level of development and there is a lack of suitable premises for literacy courses. There are many economic hindrances and also socio-cultural resistance to training for adults, and the content of literacy programs is not adapted to the specific needs of the different regions.

Conclusion

The MDGs in Morocco are mainly used as a slogan when the time comes periodically to draw up and issue international reports. Apart from that, nobody talks about them, neither the public authorities nor most civil society organizations. In any event, civil society organizations have very little power to act directly and intervene in the fund provision process. In spite of the fact that international aid is so scarce, however, it still provides a kind of vigilance mechanism that pushes the public authorities to exercise control and respond to demands, which is essential to the main principle of the Paris Declaration—nationally owned development. ■

7 Among participants in the discussions were civil society organizations (AMSED, OMDH, AMDH, UAF, CARREFOUR, FLDDF, Transparency, UMT) and college professors: Moussaoui Mohamed, Nadia Cebti, Maati Mounjib, Mustpha Bouhadou, Fatima Chahid, Meriem Benkhrouya, Aziz Chaker, Abdellah Saaf, Saad Belghazi, Fillali Meknassi Saad, Khadija Ghamiri, Aicha Dariti, Youssef Chiheb, Najja Zirari, Samira El Ghazi, Fatma Outaleb, Aziz Chaker, Ahmed Bencheich.

8 High Commissioner for the Plan, *op. cit.*

9 See above for examples with the figures of loans from the World Bank to finance education reforms that range from literacy classes to higher education.

10 TIMSS and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) International Study Center. See: <timss.bc.edu>.