

Policy Paper

National youth policies The case of Morocco

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613174

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Executive Summary

Early drop-out from the education system is one of the major hindrances to the development of human capital in Morocco. A large proportion of young people leave the education system without any qualification. Particularly high levels of youth unemployment and precarious working conditions have contributed to youth poverty and social exclusion, inhibiting young people's autonomy and impeding their personal development and general well-being. According to SAHWA Survey data, 39% of young people aged 15 to 29 are on the labour market (40% of them are employed and 60% unemployed). 35.4% of young people without a job are also disengaged from the education system. Youth employment is characterised by a high levels of precariousness and great fragility. The family continues to play a central role and is often a substitute for public policies, notably in terms of housing (most young people still live in the family home), finding work and funding projects, etc.

In the face of such challenges, various policies have been adopted to address youth issue. The primary goal of this policy paper is therefore to present the current state of youth policies in Morocco in order to subsequently observe the way these policies can contribute to improving young people's situation by drawing lessons from their effectiveness and the challenges to be faced.

In terms of youth policies, Morocco is seeking to move on from the approaches that prevailed until now, which centred principally on the issues of graduate inclusion and formal private employment, in order to target young people as a group as well as their social conditions. If the ambition is high, the measures taken must remedy the general deficit shown in terms of education, qualification and employment

These days, young people's place in public policy, for their inclusion and social protection, ranks as a priority. The new constitution adopted in 2011 laid the foundations for the institutionalisation of the youth related issues. The new National Employment Strategy 2015-2025, the National Strategy for Vocational Training 2021 and the National Integrated Youth Policy 2015-2030 are initiatives based on a global focus that aims to grasp the set of problems young people face and understand the complexity of their contemporary reality and the issues that relate to them.

Among the targets set, greater involvement of young people in the conception of public policies is sought, along with a reduction in inequalities and the economic and social inclusion of all young people in Morocco so that they can benefit from the same opportunities.

The effectiveness of the new national strategy is dependent on the involvement of young people not only in the development of policies, but in their implementation and follow-up so that the programmes envisaged have a real impact on their conditions. It must also lead to a decentralisation of these provisions so that they are entirely appropriated by local authorities. They are able to mobilise actors, associations and enterprises at local level and translate the strategic guidelines into instruments that genuinely guide young people towards professional inclusion and the realisation of their projects.

Introduction

"Youth", as a concept, is a crucial stage of life that brings about the passage from childhood to adulthood and from school towards the world of work. Though the UN defines all those aged between 15 and 24 as young people, in Morocco the transition to adult age is not complete until the age of 29 (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2001; World Bank, 2012).

Indeed, 87.5% of those aged between 15 and 24 are unmarried, 81% live with their parents and 65% are inactive (HCP, 2012). Within "youth" as a group many diverging paths are taken but it remains a category with common problems, and for whom the situation is particularly worrying (unemployment, poverty, exclusion, vulnerability, weak participation, etc.). The jobs young people do are often precarious, poorly paid and do not benefit from social protection (HCP, 2012; SAHWA Youth Survey, 2016).

The situation of young people in Morocco is a subject with multiple problematics and overarching issues. That is why it has recently formed a public action group¹. Awareness has been growing over the past decade of the need to take young people's needs and expectations into consideration when designing public policies.

These days, young people's place in public policy, in the sense of policies envisaged for their inclusion and their social protection, ranks as a priority. The new National Employment Strategy 2015-2025, the National Strategy for Vocational Training 2021 and the National Integrated Youth Policy 2015-2030 are initiatives based on a global focus that aims to grasp the set of problems young people face and understand the complexity of their contemporary reality and the issues that relate to them.

The primary goal of this policy paper is therefore to present the current state of youth policies in Morocco in order to subsequently observe the way these policies can contribute to improving young people's situation by drawing lessons from their effectiveness and the challenges to be faced.

1. The situation of young people

1.1. Education and training

The issues of compulsory schooling, the generalisation of education and the fight against illiteracy, in particular among those under 20, constantly figure among the main priorities of successive reforms and various plans for economic and social development. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure the generalisation of quality schooling for all. However, significant deficiencies are still evident:

a) Compulsory education:

- Early drop-out from the education system is one of the major hindrances to the development of human capital in Morocco. A large proportion of young people leave the education system without any qualification
- School dropouts hampers the generalisation of compulsory education. Of pupils enrolled in the first year of public primary education, only 35% manage to complete this cycle without repeating, 18% finish high school, 6% reach the end of upper secondary school and pass and only 3% receive the baccalaureate.
- According to the results of the SAHWA Youth Survey, among those who had left school, 26% of young people said it was due to their inability to overcome the difficulties of learning, 11% the need to work and help their family (of whom 3/4 were boys) and 10% to prepare for marriage (of whom 90% were girls). 43% did not foresee returning to school even if the opportunity was offered to them.

b) Illiteracy and Non-formal education

- Only 6% of the dropouts and out-of-school benefitted from the school of second chance in 2013, of whom 1.9% rejoined formal education.
- The level of illiteracy is relatively lower among 15–24-year-olds. The national level fell from 29% to 11% between 2004 and 2014 thanks, notably, to the progress achieved and the efforts made on the generalisation of schooling during that decade.

c) Private education

- Private education in Morocco seems to be a response to steadily growing demand and major concerns among families about school failure and access to quality education (the proportion of private schooling has reached 11.3 in 2013 with a

growth rate of 9.5% per year) . This significant growth of the private sector can be called into question with regard to public education, as well as the impact in terms of equal opportunities and the right to quality education for all.

- The results of the SAHWA Youth Survey show that the chances of inclusion are higher for young people who have studied in the private sector. The level of professional integration is 37% for young people who studied exclusively in the public sector. It is around 52% for those who studied at least partly in the private sector and 62% for those educated entirely in the private sector.

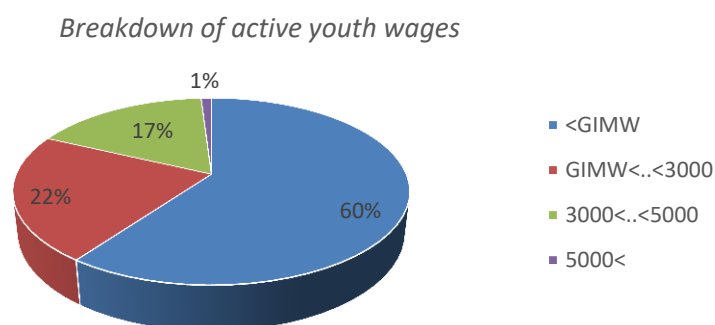
1.2. Employment

According to SAHWA Survey data, 39% of young people aged 15 to 29 are on the labour market (40% of them are employed and 60% unemployed).

Young people's employment is characterised by great precariousness and serious fragility. According to the results of the SAHWA Youth Survey:

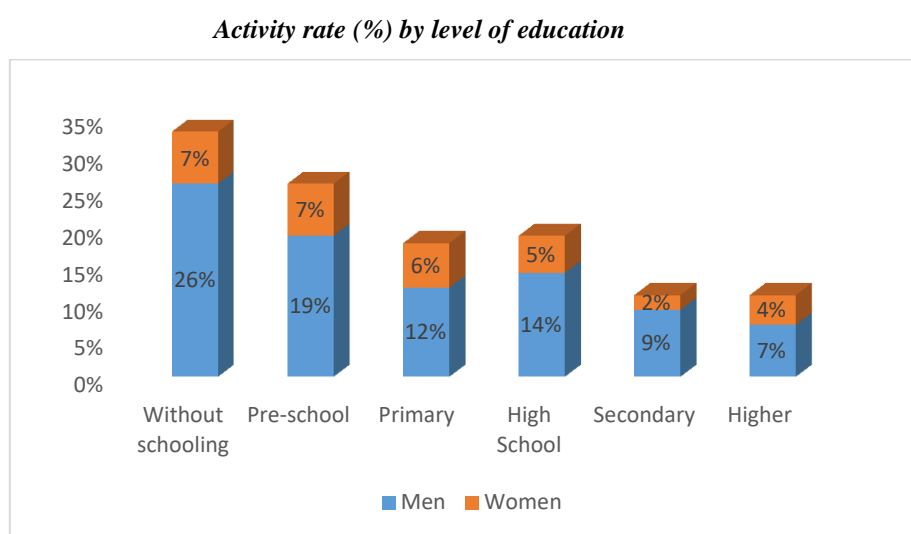
- 73.3% of active 15–29-year-olds are not registered to any system of medical coverage and work without a contract.
- Only 21% of active young people are permanent employees, 33% are self-employed and 27.6% are temporary staff. 80% of those working work without contracts or with a fixed-term contract.
- More than half of the young men work in commerce, other market services and administration and non-market services, principally in the urban environment.

In terms of pay, 82% of active young people earn salaries of under 3000 Dh, while 93% of young women earn less than that. The analysis by gender reveals pay inequalities to the detriment of women.



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey, 2016².

The analysis of the means of acquiring a job shows that 63% of employed young people used personal and family relations to secure their job, with the exception of those with a higher level of education (50% have used regular channels such as job boards). When it comes to entrepreneurship, 61% of young entrepreneurs are financially supported by their parents. Lack of information (44%) and commercialisation (30%) are the major constraints on the development of entrepreneurship. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the mechanisms of intermediation for professional integration and state's aid for the creation of enterprises.



Source: SAHWA Youth Survey, 2016.

The level of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Morocco is 35.4%, which is higher for girls (44%) than boys (27%).

2. Youth policies

In terms of youth policies, Morocco is seeking to move on from the approaches that prevailed until now, which centred principally on the issues of graduate inclusion and formal private employment, in order to target young people as a group as well as their social conditions. If the ambition is high, the measures taken in this time must remedy the general deficiencies shown in terms of education, qualification and employment.

2.1. Presentation and analysis of national youth policies and strategies

The need for a suitable policy dedicated to young people was expressed in Morocco in the 1990s through the setting up of the National Council for Youth and the Future, whose main mission is essentially to inform public decisions on the situation of young people.

Several reforms have been made since then, mainly in order to remedy the problematic of youth unemployment and favour their social inclusion. Mechanisms centred above all on the issue of employment and the professional integration of young people. The findings are unanimous (Rapport du Conseil Economique et Social, 2011): despite the efforts deployed, the instruments have only reached a very limited number of unemployed young people and the results remain dwarfed by the extent of youth unemployment.

The new constitution adopted in 2011 laid the foundations for the institutionalisation of the issue of young people and underlined the need to “make general the participation of youth in the social, economic, cultural and political development of the country; to help young people establish themselves in [an] active and associative life and to give assistance to them in the difficulty of scholarly, social or professional adaptation; to facilitate the access of the young to culture, to science, to technology, to art, to sports and to leisure, all in creation of propitious conditions for the full deployment of their creative and innovative potential in all these domains.”

The government declaration in 2012 showed a manifest interest in young people. It underlined the need for a transversal strategy that is sufficiently coordinated between the different sectors of government acting directly or indirectly in the field of youth. Among the recommendations made by this declaration a significant place is given to the economic inclusion of young people, facilitating access to local services, setting up youth councils as well as the participation of young people in political and community life.

a) The new National Employment Strategy 2015–2025

Since the 1990s, the employability of young people has begun to be considered a real problem. Certain measures have been conceived and implemented to facilitate young people's integration into the labour market.

Active employment programmes have been implemented by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. They come in two types:

- Improvement of young people's employability through access to their first professional experience (the “*contrat insertion* ”entry into the workforce contract) and skills training. These are the Idmaj programme (entry into the workforce contract, professional integration contract and exemptions to companies from paying employers' social security contributions if they hire graduates as trainees) and the Taehil programme (qualified skills retraining, training under contract and the support instrument for emerging sectors).
- The promotion of self-employment: Moukawalati Programme.

Despite the ambition of these programmes, the situation of young people in employment has not improved. Indeed, these programmes have had no impact on certain groups of young people who are hit hard by unemployment, in particular, young dropouts falling out of the education system without the prospect of a “second chance” in the non-formal education system or in apprenticeships, young graduates from small or medium-sized towns that lack a local economic fabric, the long-term unemployed and young people with specific needs. The quality of the jobs created is one of the weaknesses attributed to these programmes. The Idmaj programme’s entry to the workforce contracts do not envisage social security coverage for the beneficiaries, which makes the measure unattractive.

The young people benefitting from the Moukawalati Programme lack managerial culture, do not benefit from an assistant and post-start up monitoring and have difficulties accessing funding.

Another programme, the Moubadara (Initiative), sets out to encourage the hiring of graduate jobseekers or those with integration difficulties within the framework of neighbourhood associations and social and educational services via lump-sum grants. The Taetir (Mentoring) programme intends to improve the employability of long-term unemployed graduates by awarding monthly grants for up to a year.

A new strategic vision of employment 2015-2025 has been prepared by the Ministry of Employment and approved by the government. It seeks, principally, to aid the social inclusion of women and young people’s professional integration through the creation of lasting jobs that

must be supported by improvement in the productivity and the unit cost of the work. It is structured around four strategic axes:

- Guiding the macro-economic and territorial policies towards the creation of new job opportunities (*38,000 jobs per unit of GDP*, which is 200,000 jobs on average annually);
- Bringing value to human capital via stronger training, improved levels of qualification and reform of the social protection systems;
- Strengthening the active employment programmes;
- Improving the governance and functioning of the labour market.

The implementation of the content of this strategy depends on the mobilisation and engagement of all actors (public institutions, social partners and private sector actors), not just the ministry in charge of employment in Morocco.

A draft law is also in preparation to modify and supplement the law on the incentives for companies that organise internships for the holders of certain qualifications for the purpose of facilitating their transition between training and professional integration.

b) The National Integrated Youth Policy 2015-2030

The National Integrated Youth Policy 2015-2030 was developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in partnership with the General Directorate of Local Communities, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund, and with the technical assistance of the World Bank and the support of the Marseille Centre for Mediterranean Integration. The starting point of this strategy is that the activities carried out by the various sectors for young people have been, on the whole, inefficient and that a transversal, cross-sectoral youth policy that responds to all the challenges young people face is needed.

Though it has been conceived and developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, it is not a sectoral strategy but one that is integrated and coordinated and involves the whole range of government sectors with the aim of ensuring convergence in the actions dedicated to young people in all domains (education, employment, housing, health, culture, etc.).

Contrary to the policies and devices that have prevailed thus far and beyond the question of graduate youth employment, the strategy this time places the accent on the economic and social inclusion of all young people and particularly of disadvantaged youth groups.

Among the targets set, greater involvement of young people in the conception of public policies is sought, along with a reduction in inequalities so that all the young people in

Morocco can benefit from the same opportunities in terms of quality education, access to dignified employment, suitable health services, and active participation in political, social and cultural life and respect for human right.

To achieve this, the national strategy is supported by the implementation of an institutional, political and legislative framework as well as a series of instruments involving various sectors and ministries.

An action plan was produced to accompany the implementation of the National Integrated Youth Policy 2015-2030. It is closer to a true operationalisation of the strategy as it includes a set of priority measures likely to help achieve the targets set, an implementation strategy, monitoring and evaluation indicators, financing arrangements and coordination mechanisms.

2.2. International youth cooperation programmes

Several international cooperation programmes have been put in place on these issues, particularly in the fields of education, professional training and the employability of young people. Some are listed below.

It was already emphasised that the National Integrated Youth Policy was developed in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund, as well as with the technical assistance of the World Bank and the support of the Marseille Centre for Mediterranean Integration.

a) ALEF Project of USAID

ALEF³ is an educational development project in Morocco funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of organisations including AED. It aims to increase the employability of young Moroccans by improving the quality and relevance of primary and secondary education and professional training.

b) Youth in Action: United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) – UNICEF

A project that aims to develop autonomy and strengthen the participation of young people in the country's development processes. The main partners in this project are young people, the structures and spaces in which they live, peer educators (school establishments, health clubs, youth centres, young women's centres, youth health centres, etc.), the parliament of children (ONDE), the young Scouts, the young active members of associations, etc.

c) Project for the promotion of young agriculture entrepreneurs - African Development Bank (AFDB)

In a general manner, this project is a support technique that aims towards inclusive development and the promotion of local agriculture services for greater productivity in the agriculture sector and the inclusion of young people playing leading roles in the local development dynamic.

This programme has several specific objectives: i) to fight unemployment among young graduates and promote job opportunities; ii) to develop 160 viable micro-enterprises through training, integration and technical advice of young “agripreneurs” capable of contributing to improving productivity in the agricultural sector.

d) Including the Most Vulnerable Youth in Economic Development - Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

This project aims to increase the employability of the most vulnerable young Moroccan men and women by providing training and support to help them integrate into the labour market.

Conclusion and recommendations

Awareness of the youth problematic is shown by a series of intervention measures that is nevertheless operated to the detriment of the coherence of the policies put in place in this domain. Over the past decade, the situation of young people in Morocco has been recognised as a priority challenge that demands decisive, appropriate policy responses.

It is clear that the higher levels of youth unemployment and precarious working conditions have contributed to youth poverty and social exclusion, inhibiting young people’s autonomy and impeding their personal development and general well-being. The situation is even more concerning when it comes to young people without qualifications because of the difficulties encountered not only in the phase of transition towards adult age, but because it has repercussions on their whole life. The ever-growing proportion of young people who are not in school, employment or training requires often very expensive measures to be taken. But this is largely offset by the positive effects in the long term on the whole of society in terms of employment, social cohesion and security, among other benefits.

The social and educational support measures for disadvantaged young people that encourage education should be strengthened. The efforts to prevent the risk of dropout taken as part of the non-formal education programme and second-chance schools must be consolidated for the purposes of better contributing to achieving the generalisation of compulsory education and improving the level of young people's qualification.

Learning in all its forms must be accessible to all. In terms of lifelong training, it is essential to develop educational pathways (basic, general and professional training) and bridges in order to guarantee that all the forms of acquiring knowledge and expertise are recognised.

The strategies that are currently planned do not include aid measures that favour the independence of young people and their autonomy. The role of the family remains predominant and it often substitutes that of public policies in terms of accommodation (most young people still live in the family home), job seeking, project funding and so on. Countries that favour autonomy and training for all manage to significantly reduce the poverty of young people and facilitate their access to work (e.g. Finland).

Employment policies for young people must be supported by mechanisms of social protection specifically aimed at them. The improvement of the integration of young people must be conceived as a collective responsibility that requires the involvement of all actors (public powers, social partners and youth organisations). Indeed, youth organisations must always be considered partners in the implementation of the policies that relate to them. Young people must not only participate in the development of policies, they must also be constantly involved in their implementation and their follow-up so that these projects have a real impact on their conditions.

The effectiveness of the new national strategy must also lead to a decentralisation of these provisions so that they are entirely appropriated by local authorities. They are able to mobilise actors, associations and enterprises at local level and translate the strategic guidelines into genuine instruments for guiding young people towards professional integration and the realisation of their projects.

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End Notes

1. Based on the assumption that this fraction of the population has particular "problems" because of its age and that this requires the elaboration of specific responses.
2. GIMW is guaranteed interprofessional minimum wage: Monthly is of the order of 211 euros.
3. In reference to the first letter of the Arabic alphabet



Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract



This project has received funding from the European Union's
Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological
development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613174.

The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axis around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.

