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# Reaching Out: Navigating the Ethical, Legislative, and Physical Obstacles to Providing Assistance to Migrants in Morocco

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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# **Reaching Out: Navigating the Ethical, Legislative, and Physical Obstacles to Providing Assistance to Migrants in Morocco**

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## **Abstract**

In order to meet the needs of the rising migrant and refugee population that have made their way to Morocco, numerous associations and non-governmental organizations have filled the gaps left by incomplete legislation and state infrastructure. These organizations provide what is traditionally viewed as humanitarian aid, including emergency medical assistance and shelter, as well as long-term support and advocacy in navigating the legal, education, and healthcare systems of Morocco. My research seeks to understand the ways in which these organizations facilitate the connection between migrants and refugees and the services they themselves provide. I look at the ethical, legislative, and physical barriers Fondation Orient-Occident and Caritas Rabat face in serving the migrant and refugee communities and the ways in which they seek to overcome, or fail to overcome these barriers. I also explore the barriers migrants face in accessing the services provided by these organizations. My research consisted of a thorough review of the pertinent literature and UN reports and interview with employees at each organization.

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## **Introduction**

Morocco's geographical and historical role as a transit point between Europe and Africa makes it a hub of regular and irregular migration. Migrants making their way from sub-Saharan Africa utilize Morocco as a jumping off point on their way to Europe, but more and more find themselves staying, by choice or otherwise, in Morocco. In the last few decades, it has transformed to simultaneously occupy the role of sending, receiving, and transit country. This rapid transition has strained the resources of the Moroccan state, which had almost nothing in terms of a legislative framework specific to migration and migrants in Morocco. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have risen to fulfill the role of the state in providing certain services and protections to the migrant and refugee communities while the state plays catch-up with migration policies and protection of their rights. These organizations play a vital role in supporting the migrant communities in Morocco, but there is no larger structure in place that makes this network of organizations easily navigable. My research deals specifically with how these non-state organizations reach their target beneficiary communities and how migrants are able to seek out the services being offered by the various organizations, large and small. I focus on two organizations, Fondation Orient-Occident and Caritas Morocco. I will analyze the potential legislative, physical, and practical barriers to bridging the divide between the migrant and refugee communities and those organizations that seek to provide assistance to them. As civil society actors providing assistance to vulnerable populations, I utilize the language and discourses of humanitarian assistance to analyze the ethical challenges of their work. I highlight the ongoing academic debates surrounding the ethics and politics of humanitarian aid and humanitarian space, as well as leading theories on sub-Saharan migration and Morocco as a transit state.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brief History of Migration in Morocco

To understand the importance of Morocco as a place of migration, it is necessary to understand Morocco's history and the historical context of major shifts in migratory patterns. The colonization of Morocco and subsequent establishment of the French-Spanish protectorate in 1912 disrupted the migration patterns of the northwestern corner of Africa, previously characterized by seasonal and circular movements of people.<sup>1</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, labor shortages during the World Wars and a colonial relationship with France brought huge numbers of Moroccans to French Algeria and on to France. Independence from France in 1956 closed this path to Europe. The second half of the century was characterized by major changes to migration policies that punctuated each decade. Originally restricted from easily moving across borders by independence from France, the migration boom of 1963-1972 opened Europe once again to laborers from Morocco.<sup>2</sup> The rapid industrialization in Europe following World War II required a large unskilled workforce, which they achieved through formal agreements that allowed for the recruitment of workers from surrounding nations.<sup>3</sup> The oil crisis of 1973 once again closed European borders to labor migrants and destabilized the already precarious political situation in Morocco.<sup>4</sup> However, these restrictive policies had the unforeseen effect of discouraging the traditionally circular migration and instead encouraging the permanent settlement of migrants who had already made their way to Europe. Family reunification policies therefore became the mechanism by which Moroccans moved to and permanently settled in

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<sup>1</sup> Heine de Haas, "Morocco's Migration Experience: A Transitional Perspective," *International Migration* 45, no. 4 (October 2007): 44.

<sup>2</sup> de Haas, "Morocco's Migration Experience," 45.

<sup>3</sup> de Haas, "Morocco's Migration Experience," 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

Europe. Beyond legal pathways to joining family members or marrying citizens, irregular migration from Morocco grew in response to an economic growth in Europe and political turmoil and civil war in central Africa.<sup>5</sup> In 1991, Spain and Italy attempted to deal with the influx of migrants from Morocco and its North African neighbors by implementing visa requirements, making it much more difficult to legally migrate and opening the door to a market for counterfeit documentation.<sup>6</sup> While on the rise for the past decade, immigration into Europe has reached new heights since the ‘migrant crisis’ of 2015. The stress of huge numbers of migrants and refugees entering the European Union has brought about new policies and technologies employed to stem the flow. This makes migration into Europe a dangerous undertaking.

### **Moroccan Legislation and Migration Policy**

In response to growing migration through Morocco, the Moroccan government passed Law no. 02-03 in 2003 that criminalized irregular migration to and from Morocco, as well as those who aid irregular migrants.<sup>7</sup> For nearly a decade this remained the only legislation specific to migration and acknowledgement of the presence of foreign immigrants within Moroccan law. Without specific migration policies or the governmental institutions in place to handle the influx of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, international organizations and NGOs took on state functions. A 2007 agreement delegated the granting of asylum to the UNHCR, and they remain

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<sup>5</sup> de Haas, “Morocco’s Migration Experience,” 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>7</sup> 2013 MPC Team, “Migration Profile: Morocco,” Migration Policy Centre (June 2013): 2.



the only channel through which individuals can apply for asylum or refugee status. As of June 2016, 6,398 individuals were registered with UNHCR as refugees or asylum-seekers.<sup>8</sup>

Due to both domestic and international pressure and claims of violating the rights of migrants, the new constitution, ratified in 2011, included provisions for the “non-discrimination of foreign migrants and the protection of their rights.”<sup>9</sup> A 2013 report on Morocco by the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Their Families praised the creation of the National Human Rights Council, but called for the amendment of Law no. 02-03 and the creation of a comprehensive migration policy that aligns with the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.<sup>10</sup> This report calls specific attention to the lack of protection for irregular migrants subject to racial discrimination, physical and psychological abuse, and the lack of information disseminated to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.<sup>11</sup> By Royal Decree, the king called for the government to implement an immigration policy centered around asylum, immigration, fighting human trafficking, and migrant and refugee integration.<sup>12</sup> In 2014, the government developed SNIA, the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum.<sup>13</sup> The goal of SNIA was to produce a “policy framework which provides a comprehensive regulatory and institutional basis for ensuring

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “Universal Periodic Review: *3rd Cycle, 27th Session: Morocco*,” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report (Sept 2016): 2.

<sup>9</sup> Françoise De Bel-Air, “Migration Profile: Morocco,” Migration Policy Centre 05, (April 2016): 2.

<sup>10</sup> “Concluding observations on the initial report of Morocco adopted by the Committee at its nineteenth session,” Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (9–13 September 2013): 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> De Bel-Air, “Migration Profile: Morocco,” 3.

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR “Universal Periodic Review: Morocco,” 3.

successful management of asylum, legal migration and local integration.”<sup>14</sup> The newly created Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Abroad and Migration Affairs oversaw a regularization campaign for the entirety of 2014 that accepted 17,916 applications by undocumented migrants.<sup>15</sup> While unprecedented in the effort to regularize migrants, after December 31, 2014, the pathway to regularization remains difficult and convoluted.

Morocco’s approach to migration has been characterized by a lack of consistency between practice and policy. A Human Rights Watch report published in 2014 revealed that despite improvements to migration policy, no government agency provided residence permits to UNHCR-recognized refugees, without which they did not have full access to housing, healthcare, or education—rights guaranteed to them by their refugee status.<sup>16</sup> The UNHCR reports in 2016 that there remain practical barriers to refugees and regularized migrants in accessing basic services such as education and healthcare.<sup>17</sup> Despite signing on to a number of conventions protecting the rights of migrants and numerous policies promoting the integration and protection of migrants in Moroccan society, the institutional support is not in place to carry out such protections. HRW reports that NGOs assist migrants in accessing the services guaranteed to them by law, but have limited capacity.<sup>18</sup>

Regularized migrants and refugees face a number of challenges navigating the Moroccan healthcare, education, and legal systems, yet are entitled to its benefits. Irregular migrants, on the other hand, are protected under international conventions on human rights, vulnerable

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<sup>14</sup> UNHCR “Universal Periodic Review: Morocco,” 3.

<sup>15</sup> De Bel-Air, “Migration Profile: Morocco,” 3.

<sup>16</sup> “Abused and Expelled: Ill-Treatment of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco,” Human Rights Watch (2014): 50.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR “Universal Periodic Review: Morocco,” 2.

<sup>18</sup> HRW “Abused and Expelled,” 48.

populations, and migrants, yet struggle to access any basic care in Morocco. There is a network of national and international NGOs that aim to serve this population, but face challenges accessing a population whose existence in Morocco is criminalized.

### **European Migration Policy**

The European Union is a driving force in Moroccan migration policy and enforcement, particularly in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the ongoing Syrian civil war. The EU's border policies, financial incentives, and numerous partnerships with neighboring nations help to shape the Moroccan approach to migration.

Raffaella A. Del Sarto offers a critical explanatory model through which to view the actions of the European Union.<sup>19</sup> As a transnational governing body, the EU provides a medium through which member states can form and enforce legislation for the betterment and protection of their collective interests. However, Del Sarto explains the inclination to extend their sphere of influence to the periphery regions outside the defined boundaries of the European Union as the actions of a normative empire. Integration of European states into the EU hinges on the integrity of their external borders and therefore requires expanding their influence to the “buffer states.”<sup>20</sup> As a collection of states with privileged status and porous borders within the union, the security of external borders is vital to exercising control over what is, and what is not, the European Union. In pursuit of securing and promoting their own interests, the EU states seek to stabilize the periphery through policy and financial assistance. This accounts for the close relationship between EU interests and funding and Moroccan migration policies and practices.

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<sup>19</sup> Raffaella A. Del Sarto, “Normative Empire Europe: The European Union, its Borderlands, and the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 2 (March 2016): 215.

<sup>20</sup> Del Sarto, “Normative Empire Europe,” 216.

The EU response to the Arab Spring begun in December of 2010 is illustrative of the securitization of migration in Europe. In response to instability in the buffer states, the EU implemented a series of policy programs to maintain stability and the continuation of border control that would protect the integrity of the Union. The clearest example of the prioritization of stability and border security is the ‘Partnership for Democracy’ program. The EU proposed this program in order to support democratic reforms and restructure European relations with their neighbors, but participation requires that post-revolution governments must cooperate with the EU’s border agency, FRONTEX.<sup>21</sup> By utilizing their position as financier, the EU can exploit the relatively poorer border states in order to secure their interests in preventing excessive migration to Europe.

An identified weakness in EU border control, Spain has been the recipient of much pressure and funding to strengthen migration control on their borders. The Mediterranean is one of the key routes to Europe, and Spain’s extensive coastline and proximity to North Africa make it an attractive place to attempt crossing. More restrictive immigration policies serve to increase levels of illicit migration, whether by land or sea. Spain has invested in developing technologies to curb the illicit movement of migrants across the Mediterranean. For example, the Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE) detects and apprehends boats crossing to the Southern coast of Spain or the Canary Islands.<sup>22</sup> Amidst backlash from NGOs and other organizations who criticized the cost-benefit ratio of an extremely expensive system that had limited success in its first years of operation, the Spanish government claimed SIVE helped locate migrants in danger,

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<sup>21</sup> Del Sarto, “Normative Empire Europe,” 225.

<sup>22</sup> Jørgen Carling, “The Merits and Limitations of Spain's High-Tech Border Control,” *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*, June 7, 2007.

and significantly, that it was important to Spanish relations with other European countries.<sup>23</sup> As a major external border vulnerable to migrants entering by sea, Spain had the support of the EU to introduce new and costly mechanisms in an attempt to slow illicit flows.

In turn, Spain and the EU provide assistance to Morocco to implement stricter migration policies with the aim of addressing the issue at the “source.” The EU has numerous policy programs aimed at securing the periphery, with the stated aim “to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.”<sup>24</sup> Under the European Neighbor Policy, Morocco is considered a “privileged partner” in economic and political cooperation.<sup>25</sup> As such Morocco receives funding through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. In 2016, the EU allocated €165 million to Morocco, €35 million of which went to Morocco’s migration policies.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Morocco has received €5.5 million from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa.<sup>27</sup> This trust fund is aimed at “foster[ing] stability” in the surrounding regions and “address[ing] root causes of destabilisation, displacement and irregular migration.”<sup>28</sup> The EU pays the salaries of a “support unit” in Morocco made up of 13 staffers whose purpose is to coordinate EU training

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<sup>23</sup> Carling, “The Merits and Limitations of Spain's High-Tech Border Control.”

<sup>24</sup> European Union, *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), Treaty of Maastricht*, 7 February 1992, Official Journal of the European Communities C 325/5; December 24, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> “European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations: Morocco,” European Commission, last modified December 6, 2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco_en)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “International Cooperation And Development: The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa,” European Commission, last modified December 1, 2017.

[https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/eu-emergency-trust-fund-africa\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/eu-emergency-trust-fund-africa_en)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

activities.<sup>29</sup> These funds being funneled into the periphery are evidence of the EU utilizing financial resources to implement and shape migration policies in order to strengthen their external borders against illicit migration.

The issue with this is that Morocco is as much a space of transit as it is a source country of migrants moving north. Migration from Morocco to Spain is not as easily reduced to an origin-destination dynamic. The journey of the migrant is long and fragmented, even more so with the implementation of restrictive immigration policies.<sup>30</sup> Policies that deal generally with migrants reject the complexities and unique challenges of different groups of migrants; smuggled labor migrants from Morocco, refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, and victims of human trafficking are just a few examples of people who may find themselves attempting to cross into Europe from Morocco. With a growing population of increasingly diverse origin, the question of how to deal with non-Moroccan migrants who are caught at border security is being raised. Spain and Morocco have a signed agreement to return Moroccan citizens who attempt to cross without authorization. However, migrants whose country of origin does not hold a readmission agreement with Spain are not welcome in Spain or Morocco, but are also not returned to their home country.<sup>31</sup> There is no set course of action for these migrants and they often slip through the cracks of migration enforcement. These migrants are caught in a space of exception, where both authorities reject the legality of the migrants' existence in that space, but withhold resources to make settlement or continued movement a possibility. These migrants, who lack proper documentation in Morocco as well as the funds or ability to make it on to Europe, are in a state

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<sup>29</sup> Del Sarto, "Normative Empire Europe," 220.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Collyer, "In-Between Places: Trans-Saharan Transit Migrants in Morocco and the Fragmented Journey to Europe," *Antipode* 39, no.4 (September 2007): 668.

<sup>31</sup> Jørgen Carling, "Unauthorized Migration from Africa to Spain," *International Migration* 45, no. 4 (October 2007): 7.

of forced immobility. Their time in Morocco is extended, often unwillingly, in order to find work or a source of income to continue to finance their migratory project, or to send back to their families.

### **Politics of Humanitarian Aid**

As NGOs operating in Morocco, these organizations must confront the central debates around the ethics of aid, being aware of their position within Morocco, the communities they operate in, and the international context that impacts their work. Humanitarian aid has long been a battleground in the world of development ethics. The power dynamics inherent in the giving of assistance dictated by an international player rather than the state raises the issue of the independence of the nation in which the aid is distributed and the right of other states, individuals, and international organizations to intervene, assist, or act in another territory. Discourses of imperialism and neocolonialism are intrinsic in any discussion of aid and assistance given from one or a collection of western powers—on the state, organization, or individual level—to a developing or underdeveloped nation. The act of giving aid becomes political when the context and content of the aid are examined more closely.

Mark Duffield, Joanna Macrae, and Devon Curtis argue in their piece for *Disasters*, that this relationship between humanitarian aid and politics is changing. Humanitarian aid and international development projects have long been viewed through the lens of altruism that rejects the political nature of giving aid. But in recent years, they argue, humanitarian aid has come to be an “integral part of Western governments’” political strategy in what is called ‘new

humanitarianism' that allows them to exert control in conflict areas.<sup>32</sup> Whereas there had long been the impetus to maintain a separation between 'humanitarian space' and politics, although often flawed, in the hopes of maintaining neutrality and therefore the ability to do the most good with the fewest consequences and least interference, 'new humanitarianism' embraces the possible political benefits for the giving actor. While this particular piece is limited in scope to humanitarian aid in conflict areas, 'new humanitarianism' provides a framework with which to understand the interaction between international and national NGOs, which receive funding or approval from a variety of state actors, and the people and states with whom they work. Western humanitarianism has become explicitly, rather than implicitly, political as features of a state-sponsored, or approved, network of organizations provide state services or deal with a 'political problem,' such as migration, as is the case in Morocco. With a new political importance, aid can be withheld and doled out in accordance with the political aims of the states who support it, "the provision of assistance is restricted to countries believed to be following the correct policies."<sup>33</sup> With regard to Morocco, the 'migrant issue' is being addressed at a legislative level and by humanitarian organizations aimed at migrant care and advocacy, but both groups are supported by United Nations and European Union initiatives as well as support from American donors, organizations, and individuals.

In her work "'Living Well' while 'Doing Good'? (Missing) debates on altruism and professionalism in aid work," Anne-Meike Fechter, analyzes the discourses of altruism, morality, and ethics in humanitarian work that are inherent in the phrase "living well while doing good," used to criticize those that work in the field of international aid. Her argument, while specific to

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Duffield, Joanna Macrae, and Devon Curtis, "Politics and Humanitarian Aid," *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 269.

<sup>33</sup> Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis "Politics," 272.



the role of aid workers and ‘aid receivers,’ presents some of the major discussions of development ethics that have afflicted humanitarian aid and international development. What she refers to as the ‘great aid debate’ is centered around those who make a living by working in the field of international aid, a pursuit that has long been conceptualized as a purely altruistic endeavor. This apparent contradiction, benefitting from an act of altruism, raises the debate of whether there is an incentive to perpetuate a cycle of dependence on aid in order to sustain the aid industry. Those that work in the field of aid and international development are often publicly criticized for benefitting from a “system that does not deliver for the poor.”<sup>34</sup> The central tenets of the argument that humanitarian aid perpetuates a dependency on aid or inequalities on the ground come from the division between aid givers, particularly international aid workers operating outside their country of origin, and receivers.

This division is exacerbated in the physical space of humanitarian work. The act of providing assistance, of any kind, occurs in real time and space. This ‘humanitarian space’ is defined as an “environment where humanitarians can work without hindrance and follow the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the recognized principles of neutrality and impartiality, there is an inherent political value in choosing where and how to perform humanitarian assistance. The theoretical humanitarian space devoid of political meaning is limited in practice because these spaces are often politicized or militarized by the variety of actors that must interact there, the humanitarians, state actors, aid receivers, and various other local and international community members.<sup>36</sup> Hilhorst and Jansen argue that

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<sup>34</sup> Anne-Meike Fechter, “‘Living Well’ while ‘Doing Good’? (Missing) debates on altruism and professionalism in aid work,” *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 8 (2012): 1476.

<sup>35</sup> Dorothea Hilhorst and Bram J. Jansen, “Humanitarian Space as Arena: A Perspective on the Everyday Politics of Aid,” *Development and Change* 41, no. 6 (2010): 1117.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1118.

humanitarian space is a socially negotiated arena that involves the local and international power structures and that how recipients of aid and humanitarian agents define each other is a result of that political power struggle.<sup>37</sup> NGOs can become politicized by the governments of the states they operate in as well as those who fund or support their operations.<sup>38</sup> This tension between the mission of the NGO and the political and physical realities of the spaces they operate in must be confronted and continually reexamined in order to continue to function in the most ethical manner. While seemingly tangential to my research on the accessibility of resources to migrant communities, the perpetuation of a financial and physical divide between aid givers and aid receivers is a key component to the ethics of humanitarian assistance and can contribute to the ability of these NGOs to operate successfully and effectively in the communities they are providing services to. Organizations are tasked with not only providing aid in the mechanism that they see as most effective and efficient, but also with navigating the possible implications that their presence and work may have.

### **Organizations: Orient-Occident and Caritas**

Fondation Orient-Occident was founded in 1994 as a nonprofit organization with the original mission of helping disadvantaged Moroccan youth by providing socio-educational and professional trainings.<sup>39</sup> With the influx of migrants and refugees, the organization expanded its mission to include non-Moroccans. Since then, it has grown its services to the migrant and refugee communities, providing psychological care, language and technology classes, childcare

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<sup>37</sup> Hilhorst and Jansen, "Humanitarian Space as Arena," 1120.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1129.

<sup>39</sup> "Who We Are," Fondation Orient-Occident, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://www.orient-occident.org/who-we-are/>

and kindergarten classes for young kids, and assistance navigating the Moroccan healthcare, education, and legal systems. As well as providing necessary services for the survival of migrants and refugees in Morocco, the Fondation emphasizes cultural expression and exchange. The organization hosts a variety of cultural events for the community, has a space to perform theater, dance, and music, supports a radio station, and hosts a workshop for women to make and sell the clothing of their home countries.

Caritas Rabat is a branch of Caritas Internationalis, the humanitarian arm of the Catholic Church. Caritas Internationalis describes itself as a “confederation of over 160 members” of Catholic charities operating at “the grassroots.” It operates with the overarching mission to serve the “world’s poor, vulnerable, dispossessed, and marginalized,”<sup>40</sup> and to “respond to emergencies, promote development and advocate for a fair and just world.”<sup>41</sup> In Morocco, there are two branches of Caritas, one in Rabat and the other in Tangier. Established, respectively, in 1947 and 1953, the two organizations were united in 1956 when Morocco gained independence and was recognized as a member of Caritas Internationalis in 1957.<sup>42</sup> In the 1990s, in response to the growing sub-Saharan migrant population in Morocco, the organization refocused their work to promote the protection and rights of migrants by “regularizing access to common law services” or “facilitating integration.”<sup>43</sup> In Rabat, Caritas operates CAM, Le Centre d'Accueil des Migrants, in 2003, a reception center that provides access to emergency healthcare as well as facilitates the connection to a network of organizations and government programs focused on all

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<sup>40</sup> “Our Mission,” Caritas Internationalis, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.caritas.org/who-we-are/mission/>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “Caritas Moroc,” Caritas Internationalis, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/middle-east-and-north-africa/morocco/>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

aspects of migrant care and protection.<sup>44</sup> The reception center acts as something of an initial point of contact for migrants arriving in Rabat. The Caritas staff perform an initial assessment, and can assist migrants within the center in their legal, healthcare, women and children's, education, and language training departments. Any services that a beneficiary is seeking that Caritas does not provide directly will be met by connecting the beneficiary with the appropriate organization or association within their network.

## **METHODOLOGY**

I began my research with an exploration of academic literature on the topics of migration policies in Morocco, sub-Saharan migration through Morocco, the role of NGOs, and the politics of humanitarian aid. In order to narrow the scope of my paper, I decided to focus on two organizations with different structures but similar aims in providing a variety of services to migrants in Morocco. I chose Fondation Orient-Occident because of my previous experience there, as the subject of fieldwork earlier in the semester and as a site visit with the program. There was a familiarity with the organization and its aims that I felt would serve me later in being able to compare its operations to other organizations. Orient-Occident is also a remarkable organization in the variety of services it offers to migrants, from psychological services to hosting events aimed at fostering an appreciation of different cultures. In addition, Orient-Occident is an organization that has achieved international acclaim for its model of serving the migrant and refugee communities, but was founded in Morocco and therefore may be able to

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<sup>44</sup> Mathieu André, "Asylum and Migration in the Maghreb- Fact Sheet: Morocco," Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (December 2012): 46.

provide a different perspective than the common narrative of international aid organizations co-opting the humanitarian space within a state.

I chose Caritas while researching migrant aid in Morocco because its services were mentioned by several authors as a key element in the network of support migrants have in Morocco. Caritas in Morocco also operates as a branch of the larger international organization Caritas Internationalis, presenting a different structure and therefore different possible motivations, alliances, or restrictions in the pursuit of providing assistance to a vulnerable population in Morocco. Caritas is the humanitarian arm of the Catholic Church, providing yet another point of comparison with other unaffiliated organizations operating in a Muslim country. I was curious about the possible challenges a Catholic organization may face in accessing certain populations in Morocco and whether their religious affiliation affected its standing or relationship with the state or other NGOs and associations.

I originally sought to interview employees of the two NGOs I chose to focus on and migrants who partake in their services in order to compare how each group views the accessibility of the other. I reached out to numerous employees of the organizations and possible gatekeepers to the migrant community, but was unable to secure interviews. I knew that reaching migrants, especially irregular migrants, would be incredibly difficult and ethically challenging, but I was surprised, perhaps due to my naivety, to encounter obstacle after obstacle in reaching possible interviewees. Despite the challenges of reaching migrants directly, it only served to further my research on the issue of accessibility and the methods of making contact with vulnerable populations.

On the NGO side, I conducted interviews with the director of Caritas Rabat and with an employee of Fondation Orient-Occident. I also had a casual conversation with an employee at

the Caritas reception center in Rabat. Both the employee at Fondation Orient-Occident and the employee at the Caritas reception center have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy and ensure their responses will not negatively affect their employment. As a public figure and the highest-ranking employee at Caritas Rabat, the director gave consent for his identity to be disclosed. Without any personal contacts at Caritas, I relied solely on information that was publicly available on the internet. In making contact with Orient-Occident I was able to utilize the connections made through the SIT staff. The possible theoretical and practical implications of my ability to make contact with these organizations will be discussed later in the analysis section of this paper.

Much of my primary research consists of an analysis of my own experience and challenges in accessing both NGOs and their various services. In an effort to quantitatively measure the accessibility to NGO resources, I walked from the Takaddoum neighborhood, one of two neighborhoods known for being a base for the sub-Saharan migrant community in Rabat, to Fondation Orient-Occident and to the Caritas Le Centre d'Accueil des Migrants (CAM), in order to understand the physical distance many migrants would have to travel to partake in the services of the organizations. I chose my starting point as the intersection of Avenue Al Haouz and Avenue Mohammed VI because it was an easily identifiable location at the edge of the Takaddoum neighborhood. If I had more time or were to complete this exercise again, I would have liked to repeat it multiple times from different residential areas of Takaddoum and Youssoufia in order to create a more accurate picture of the situation many migrants find themselves in. I chose to walk given the common situation that a newly arrived migrant will have limited resources to spend on travel costs and walking ensures that they will pay nothing more than the time it takes to walk there. Other possible methods of travel include public

transportation, the bus or tram, or taxi, either grand or petit. Both public transportation and taxis present potential for instances of discrimination, either personal harm or an unwelcome run-in with the authorities for those that lack documentation.<sup>45</sup> I will use this quantitative data in conjunction with my qualitative research and literature review to analyze the challenges and obstacles migrants may face in reaching these organizations, and by extension the services they require to maintain a life in Morocco.

## **ANALYSIS**

Migrants and refugees face particular challenges in Morocco due to a lack of comprehensive legislative infrastructure that specifically addresses migrants and migration policy. The local, national, and international organizations that pursue the humanitarian goal of providing some of these services or easing an unanticipated stay within Morocco are restricted by their ability to access those populations. These restrictions can be ethical, legislative, and physical. Lacking a comprehensive structure under which to provide set services to migrant and refugee populations, organizations fulfill certain needs as they see fit, within their mission and abilities, leaving some gaps and areas of overlap across organizations.

My interviews shed light on some of the central issues of access between the organization and vulnerable populations, some reflected in the literature I read and some not, raising new concerns that I had not previously encountered. I used my research and the literature to hypothesize about the barriers migrants face in reaching the organizations, but without access to migrants to interview myself, this area of my research is lacking.

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<sup>45</sup> HRW “Abused and Expelled,” 50.

## **Ethical Challenges**

As the literature has made clear, the field of humanitarian aid is fraught with ethical and political concerns, making it a difficult task to minimize the consequences or political implications of a humanitarian organization's actions. The intertwining of the state and NGOs who perform state functions or work with marginalized populations has more tightly bound politics to humanitarian aid. In Morocco, these organizations are subject to the regulations and motivations of the Moroccan government, as well as foreign states and international organizations, like the EU and UN, with whom they partner. European economic aid and EU funding to Morocco is "conditioned on Morocco's ability to effectively control migration."<sup>46</sup> As organizations supported by the Moroccan government—Orient-Occident is recognized as an organization of public utility and Caritas has interacted with the state on many migrant policy committees and campaigns—both have to balance the possible motivations of the state with their own mission.<sup>47</sup> Despite being a Moroccan organization, Fondation Orient-Occident also partners with international bodies like the UN and international organizations based in the West. Caritas, despite a level of autonomy within Morocco, is still an international organization based out of Rome that receives funding from a variety of sources, public and private, mainly from other Church-affiliated groups in the West. Navigating these, sometimes conflicting, perceptions of the migrant 'issue' and solutions has the potential to compromise the ethics of the organization. The monetary support from Western organizations and states has the potential to cast an imperialistic tone on the work that is being done with migrant communities, especially if the aid is being given with the explicit aim of reducing migration to Europe or solving the migrant 'issue,' as in

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<sup>46</sup> De Bel-Air, "Migration Profile: Morocco," 2.

<sup>47</sup> "Who We Are," Fondation Orient-Occident, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://www.orient-occident.org/who-we-are/>



the case with the EU. It raises the question of how much autonomy a non-governmental organization truly has when it requires the acceptance and financial support of a variety of governing bodies, from the national to international level.

mismatch between international pressures, funding and needs/wants of the migrants themselves

The ethical challenges of having humanitarianism in Morocco funded by Western powers also contribute to a divergence between what types of programs are funded and what the needs and desires of the migrant populations are. The European Union provides funding for Moroccan migration policies and practices that emphasize integration or voluntary return to their country of origin. Hannes Stegemann referred to this as a “European fiction,” the idea that if they send money to Morocco it will solve their European migration ‘problem.’<sup>48</sup> In reality, most migrants who find themselves in Morocco view their situation as temporary. There are a number of reasons—shame, family pressure, personal ambition—that keep individuals from giving up on the migration project to Europe. For those migrants who view their time in Morocco as merely temporary, they are not necessarily seeking regularization through the legal system, but more material support.

Both Caritas and Orient-Occident provide services dedicated to integration into Moroccan society, including Arabic and French language classes, employment workshops, and assistance navigating the health, education, and legal systems. However, Stegemann makes the claim that realistically the Moroccan state and society will not integrate everyone, and only a small number of migrants are seeking to integrate.<sup>49</sup> This casts some doubt on the ethicality and motivations behind the resources that are dedicated to facilitating voluntary return through the

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<sup>48</sup> Hannes Stegemann (Director of Caritas Rabat), interviewed by Margaret Jackman, Rabat, Morocco, April 13, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

IOM, who will finance the journey back.<sup>50</sup> It raises the question of whether these organizations can be considered ethical if the motivation behind the assistance they offer to migrants, including voluntary return and integration services, comes from the European incentive to lessen migration to their shores. On a practical level, it diverts funds and resources from the services migrants are most likely to seek out, like healthcare and shelter. This disparity between resources provided and those needed serves as yet another barrier between the organizations and the migrant community. Both organizations combat some of the ethical concerns of Western or governmental pressure to emphasize certain pathways to migrants by allowing the individual migrants to choose what assistance or services they partake in themselves. In both interviews with employees at each organization, they emphasized the autonomy of the migrants. The process with a potential beneficiary begins the same way at both organizations, with an initial appointment that allows the organization to assess the situation of the individual and provide information about their services. From there, the individual has the ability to choose what services they need. At Caritas, this means that no irregular migrant is forced to attempt to gain documentation, but may freely take part in the other services they offer.<sup>51</sup>

In Morocco, the status of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees as vulnerable populations is magnified by a deeply rooted racism that subjects black Moroccans and sub-Saharan Africans to greater scrutiny and discrimination. Beyond the challenges of surviving in an unfamiliar society with different language, customs, and religion, these migrants must also face possible violence and discrimination at the hands of other Moroccans or the state itself. Like many marginalized groups, there are certain spaces where this danger is heightened. Choosing where, how and who

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<sup>50</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

to disperse aid and assistance, while making themselves accessible to migrants in an environment where they feel safe is vital to operating in an ethical and effective manner. The aid givers themselves are an important part of tackling this ethical issue.

As an international organization, I hypothesized that Caritas would have the most trouble overcoming this issue, both practically and ethically, of having a European, or otherwise Western, staff. Practically it may discourage migrants from seeking their assistance or present a number of language and cultural barriers that make care difficult. Ethically, having a Western organization determining what care and resources available to sub-Saharan migrants and refugees invites a necessary critique of the ideals of imperialism or neocolonialism that may be present. However, at Caritas Rabat about half of their staff are European or American expats while the other half is made up of Moroccan or sub-Saharan staff. One way of overcoming these practical and ethical concerns is the use of mediators at Caritas. Sub-Saharan migrants, many of whom utilized the resources at Caritas and then became involved more closely with Caritas' activities, receive training and act as a bridge between the migrant community and the organization itself.<sup>52</sup> As sub-Saharan migrants themselves, they can more easily move through the migrant communities and have a better understanding of the internal politics and dynamics of these complex networks of migrants and refugees who find themselves together in cities across Morocco.

### **Legal Barriers**

While the Moroccan state leaves much to be desired in terms of an accessible pathway to legal status, the organizations that have taken on the role of providing legal counsel and

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<sup>52</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

assistance in navigating the Moroccan state have to toe the difficult line of legality in their own work. These organizations face a ‘gray zone’ of legality in which there still exists legislation that criminalizes irregular migration, yet the reality of the growth of the migrant population in Morocco has prompted government supported or approved services whose primary focus is on this ‘irregular’ population. When this issue was brought up with Hannes Stegemann, the director of Caritas Rabat, he explained that the ability to operate and interact with the irregular migrant population with minimal government interference was due to the state being “happy that someone was dealing with their problem.”<sup>53</sup> Because the state itself is lacking in the complete infrastructure to handle the influx of migrants, NGOs have the freedom to access those populations that would otherwise be under the jurisdiction of the state. For Caritas, this unofficial level of approval and willingness to work with the organization from the state is important because they draw no distinction between regular and irregular migrants and those seeking asylum or refugee status.<sup>54</sup> Serving any individual regardless of documentation lowers one possible barrier to reaching migrant and refugee populations and reflects the altruistic principles declared in their mission and the principles of humanitarianism, but make them susceptible to claims against the legality of their actions within a national and international context. For example, in order to provide the necessary medical care to their beneficiaries, Caritas works through a network of hospitals, pharmacies, and doctors that they have personal relationships with, who they know are willing to accept irregular migrants as patients, because under the

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<sup>53</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> “Caritas Moroc,” Caritas Internationalis, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/middle-east-and-north-africa/morocco/>

Moroccan healthcare system, care can only be provided to Moroccan citizens or those with regularized or refugee status.<sup>55</sup>

Fondation Orient-Occident's mechanism of outreach, largely through referral from the UNHCR resolves the issue of legal barriers by limiting their target beneficiaries to those who possess documentation.<sup>56</sup> During my interview with an employee there, I asked what the protocol would be if irregular migrants arrived seeking assistance. I was told they would be directed to UNHCR to apply for asylum or refugee status.

### **Outreach Activities**

When asked specifically about outreach and how each organization makes contact with their target beneficiaries, the approaches described in their answers were radically different, but relied on similar assumptions about the interconnectedness of the migrant communities, often based around country of origin. This is supported by the literature. Despite the fragmented nature of the journey from country of origin to destination, technologies allow for greater communication and connection between migrants.<sup>57</sup> In order to make the journey physically and financially viable, migrants maintain contact with families they left behind and those they are hoping to join at their destination. Although many migrants make the journey alone, the social networks created along the route are vital to continuing the project and pave the way for migrants coming later. These social connections are often made spontaneously, based on nationality or geographic proximity, and provide key information to continue the journey, like accessing services and resources along

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<sup>55</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Karima (Employee at Fondation Orient-Occident) interviewed by Margaret Jackman, Rabat, Morocco, April 11, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Collyer, "In-Between Places," 673.

the way that may be provided by these NGOs.<sup>58</sup> At Fondation Orient-Occident, their beneficiaries find them through referral from UNHCR. This limits their pool to documented refugees and asylum-seekers and limits the need for direct knowledge of the organization by the social networks in place in migrant communities.

In my interview with the director of Caritas, I was surprised to hear that they relied almost completely on word-of-mouth and the referral of migrants by numerous other organizations. There were two conflicting themes on outreach throughout the course of our interview. On one hand, their inability to provide for every migrant or refugee in need kept them from reaching out to those communities but rather provide for those that found them on their own. By limiting their beneficiaries to those who knew about Caritas and their services, they could provide more care to fewer people. Based on the large numbers of potential beneficiaries who came seeking assistance, it is obvious that Caritas is well-known within migrant communities. On my visit to CAM, there were about 10 people waiting in the reception room and on the steps outside, and the director of the center expressed her inability to answer my questions because there was so much work to be done. When asked how these migrants knew about the organization and reception center, Stegemann replied that many migrants come with the knowledge of the name or places to seek assistance before they leave their country of origin or pick up the information on their journey.<sup>59</sup> Stegemann instead emphasized that they try to appear less “attractive” rather than more, in order to limit those that they would inevitably have to turn away or keep waiting.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, he discussed the role of mediators, who—due to their ability to move more freely within migrant communities and spaces—would make the initial contact with migrants and either

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 686.

<sup>59</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

invite them to the reception center or accompany them on their first visit in order to receive care they desperately needed.<sup>61</sup> Though these cases were less common than migrants arriving at CAM of their own accord, it reveals that there is more to the outreach strategy of Caritas. These mediators provide a mechanism of outreach to the most vulnerable groups, women, children, or the seriously ill, who are less likely to be able to come to the center on their own.

### **Physical Obstacles**

Barriers that prevent migrants from accessing resources in Morocco come from a variety of different sources. Migrant policy, or lack of policy, create bureaucratic hurdles that complicate the process of gaining documentation and therefore severely limit the protections and rights to live and work freely. Fondation Orient-Occident only accepts documented migrants and refugees, presenting a huge legal barrier to the irregular migrants who could benefit from their services. Those seeking assistance at Caritas do not face this same legal barrier, but must be wary of the possibility of being apprehended by authorities if they do not seek legal assistance.

Physical barriers between the migrant communities and the organizations attempting to fulfill the need for basic care limit their ability to act effectively. In order to understand some of the physical obstacles to accessing services at each organization, I undertook the task of reaching each organization from the migrant neighborhood of Takaddoum to each organization, Orient-Occident's Rabat location and the Caritas reception center. I began this task by using only information available publicly to find out about the organization and then to find its physical location.

My initial instinct to find these two organizations was to look them up on the web. Both

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<sup>61</sup> Stegemann, interview April 13, 2018

organizations had well-developed and well-maintained websites, possibly due to the fact that they are large organizations, Caritas Morocco being a chapter of a large international NGO and Orient-Occident expanding to Italy from their beginnings in Morocco. Orient-Occident had a very helpful website that detailed their history and projects. Orient-Occident gives a street address for their center in Rabat and maps each location across Morocco. The Caritas website gave a brief overview and history of the organizations centered in Rabat and Tangier, but the addresses provided were only those of the respective dioceses of each region. Each center also had an email address and Facebook page listed, but there was almost no information available on Facebook. I was given the address of the Caritas main office in Rabat after making initial contact through the email address provided on the website. Located in the Hassan neighborhood of Rabat, it was not a far walk from the medina where I lived and was directly along the tram line, making it easily accessible for me, but farther from the migrant neighborhoods of Youssoufia and Takaddoum. While unable to locate the exact address on Google Maps, I made my way down the avenue it was on, hoping there would be an identifying marker visible from the street. Fearing that I had walked too far, I stopped in front of a *hanoot* with my fellow researcher and briefly discussed asking for directions. When I turned to ask the owner of the *hanoot* if he could help, before I even opened my mouth to ask the question he immediately pointed across the intersection and said “porte verte.” He clearly knew exactly what we were looking for, perhaps overhearing us say “Caritas,” but most significantly, he could tell us exactly where to find the office, illustrating that they are known in the immediate neighborhood. However, the Caritas main office is rarely visited by the migrants themselves, rather it contains the offices of the higher administrators and meeting spaces for Caritas staff. While this was helpful in making contact with the director, who I eventually was able to interview, as a migrant coming to this



location, one would only be redirected to the reception center.

The Caritas reception center had been mentioned multiple times in research or literature put out by other organizations, often UNHCR, but there was no trace of a location or address on the Caritas website. It was referenced as vital to migrant assistance, but extremely difficult to track down. In an interview with the director of Caritas Rabat, he only said that it was near Takaddoum, nothing more. Armed with only the neighborhood it was supposedly in, my fellow researcher and I took a blue taxi to what appeared to be the main avenue through the neighborhood, Avenue Al Haouz. From there we walked along in the direction we thought it might be and planned to ask for directions. The first person we stopped to ask if they knew of Caritas was a Moroccan taxi driver, in his 40s or 50s. We asked in French, as that was the easiest way we could translate the question, but he responded in French that he did not know what or where Caritas was. The next person we stopped was a younger sub-Saharan man, in his 20s or 30s, who spoke fluent French and knew immediately what we were asking about. He walked us part way down the avenue and then pointed us in the right direction. As we walked I noticed a lot more sub-Saharan young people hanging around on the sidewalks and sitting on a low wall along a soccer field. As we tried to follow the directions given to us in a stream of French, we stopped to ask another person for clarification. A sub-Saharan woman was setting up a table with products to sell on a side street and was able to point us in the right direction as soon as we said Caritas. We wound our way off the main road and into a residential area, away from the bustling souk that we happened across. Another 5 minutes of walking along a residential street with no apparent signs of a migrant reception center, we asked another older Moroccan man. He pointed us in the right direction, and after apparently missing the street that we were meant to turn on, he retrieved us and again pointed us down the correct road, which looked no different from the first.

He pointed down the street and said in French, the second black car. Unsure of how those were helpful directions, we searched each gate we passed for signs that would identify Caritas and the services it provides. The second black car on the street that we passed was parked in front of a nondescript gate, much like the others we had passed thus far. However, hanging on the gate were 3 or 4 pieces of paper identifying it as Caritas, listing the hours of operation, and the “admission procedure for newcomers.” This last flier gave the priority listing, first were “health emergencies, women and children,” then individuals registered on the newcomer list—which I gathered was a list that was dropped at 8am, an hour before the doors opened, and individuals signed up in order of arrival—and finally as many “other newcomers” as they could fit in appointments for. The entire process of finding the center took 18:45.16 from the intersection of Avenue Al Haouz and Avenue Mohammed VI. We stood outside the gate for a few minutes, debating on whether to go inside to try to make contact with an administrator with the hope of setting up another time to talk. Eventually, we followed another woman through the door after she knocked and it was opened by a guard on the other side. There were about 15 sub-Saharan migrants inside, waiting on the steps and in a little waiting room off to one side. The man sitting behind the reception desk asked if we spoke English, and pointed us towards another man who clearly worked there and was able to speak to us in English and asked what we needed. While unable to take time to interview the director of the center due to the number of people who were waiting to be helped, this experience shed light on what some of the major obstacles to finding assistance may be as a migrant in Morocco.

As an American student with no connection or contact with the sub-Saharan migrant community, it was extremely challenging to locate this reception center, what is supposedly an integral part of the network that serves the migrant population and orients them to the necessary

services in Rabat. There was no official site or literature by Caritas readily available on the services they provide there or its location, but it is clearly well-known enough to be mentioned in other publications. I found out about the center through both individual researchers and other aid organizations such as UNHCR and IOM that identify Caritas as a key element of the migrant support network, but only after undertaking the task of researching it myself. I made contact with the organization through the email address listed on their main website, but the address given was only that of the Diocese of Rabat. Only after getting a response to set up an appointment via phone was I able to get the street address of their main office in Rabat. Even during the interview, information about the location of the reception center was limited to the neighborhood it was in. We were told that migrants knew about it so they did not have to advertise it or perform outreach in the community. The lack of public identification on the building itself is also a way of ensuring as much privacy and safety for those seeking their services as possible, as many, if not most, are undocumented. The director's explicit confession of not conducting outreach in order to not appear "too attractive" points to the larger concern of not having enough resources to combat the multitude of issues that migrants face during their stay in Morocco. The fact that employees at the center spoke multiple languages, beyond just French and Arabic, and those working the reception area were both sub-Saharan men, reveals how Caritas attempts to overcome the practical barrier of language and make their services more accessible to sub-Saharan migrants.

Locating the center on our own was difficult and we relied solely on the directions of people we found on the street. Three of the five people we approached knew Caritas and were able to point us in the right direction. The divide between those who knew of it and those who did not was stark. Those who recognized the name were immediately willing to give directions

that would lead us to the almost completely unmarked gate, those who did not seem to not recognize the name at all. This reveals how well word-of-mouth works in reaching certain communities—such as the migrant community where social networks connect many new arrivals with those individuals who either have more knowledge or have been in Morocco for longer—but not in other populations, like the average Moroccan citizen. My research supported the claims within the literature of highly connected and complex migrant communities that disperse information and facilitate access to important resources.

In comparison, the time it took me to reach Fondation Orient-Occident from the same intersection, Avenue Al Haouz and Avenue Mohammed VI, was 1:12:29.25. It was 6.8 kilometers to the gate of the Fondation. I was able to walk relatively quickly, but it still took me over an hour to walk from the edge of the Takaddoum neighborhood to the foundation. If a potential beneficiary of the organization who lived in Takaddoum or the neighboring Youssoufia walked at the same speed as me, it would be a minimum of two hours and nearly 30 minutes of travel time there and back. This presents a number of challenges for migrants who find themselves in Rabat and seeking the services of Orient-Occident.

Given the pressing need for most migrants to continue to find sources of income while in Morocco, which often comes in the form of hourly wages in the informal economy, either to fund their continued migration, send home to their families, or maintain their life in Morocco, this amount of time cuts into their ability to make money. Very few migrants would choose to spend the money to take a taxi or bus to an organization when they have more pressing needs, like buying food or medicine for themselves or family members. The opportunity cost of going to the organization would include both the money they would need to spend to get there by public or private transportation, as well as the money they could have made had they sought

employment during that time.

Physical ability to complete this relatively long trip to the organization presents another barrier to access. Providing emergency healthcare to migrants as well as facilitating the entrance into the Moroccan healthcare system are important services of many key migrant-focused NGOs, including Orient-Occident. Beyond being a recognized human right, the fragmented journey many migrants face is both emotionally and physically taxing and often requires access to healthcare facilities. Walking those nearly seven kilometers is difficult for someone in perfect health, but for those whose journey thus far have been physically damaging, that walk is even more difficult.

As a white, American, young woman walking by myself, I at no point feared for my safety, but was harassed on the street in a variety of ways, from cars honking at me to men yelling or speaking to me on the sidewalk. The possible harassment sub-Saharan migrants, in particular, face on the street is of a much different variety. Despite being a multicultural society, racism, particularly against black sub-Saharan Africans, is still a major issue. Victims of violence and discrimination at the hands of private citizens, irregular migrants also have to be fearful of run-ins with the authorities. The long distance between their communities and the Fondation increases the possibility of these dangers.

## **Conclusion**

Although my research does not result in a conclusive list of the challenges and solutions of serving the migrant community in Morocco, I have found that some of the obstacles to accessing necessary resources provided by NGOs are exacerbated by the ethical concerns of working with

vulnerable populations, complicated legislative policies that are not consistently enforced, and physical barriers.

The work of Orient-Occident and Caritas is subject to examination through the lens of development ethics and the possible neocolonial and imperialistic implications of humanitarian aid being provided and distributed by organizations reliant on the funds and support of the Moroccan state and international—largely Western—bodies and organizations. The ethicality of humanitarianism is complicated by how these organizations interact with and serve the vulnerable populations of migrants and refugees. Employing mediators and ensuring the autonomy of individual beneficiaries are important aspects of navigating these ethical questions. It is nearly impossible to make claims as to which organization operates ‘more ethically,’ but it is interesting to note important differences between them. Caritas does not distinguish between migrants and refugees with or without documentation. However, this presents a larger range of need and therefore requires more services to be provided directly or facilitated access to. It also presents the ethical and legal complications of assisting irregular migrants who then may be put in greater danger or risk to themselves because of the way the organization operates, where it is located, et cetera. Because their potential beneficiaries are so numerous, but their resources are limited, the actions of the organization may unknowingly contribute to, or disrupt, established power dynamics within the migrant communities. Fondation Orient-Occident is limited to those with documentation, which may present the ethical issue of turning away those in need, but also allows a depth of support that other organizations may not be able to provide and circumvents the ethical concerns about the legality of their assistance.

In agreement with much of the literature, I have found that there is a gap between policy and practice that keeps migrants from being able to utilize the services guaranteed to them by law.

While these NGOs, and the network of organizations they are a part of, help to fill the gaps left by legislation and state practices, without any overarching structure to organize or facilitate the necessary communications between the state, NGOs, and local associations it is incredibly difficult to navigate the various services being offered. Access to these organizations is hindered due to the lack of a singular source of information or authority on all aspects of migrant and refugee assistance in Morocco. Rather, the relationships and partnerships between various organizations lay a dense and complicated web of resources, often unclear to those on the outside. Once the initial contact is made, these networks become clearer and resources more accessible, but the challenge for migrants is making that first contact. The literature on the importance of social networks of migrants in transit was supported in my research. Caritas especially, relies heavily on word-of-mouth and the interconnectedness of the migrant communities in order to reach their target beneficiaries. On the side of the NGO, the disparity between their limited resources and the number of people that are seeking assistance allows for a lack of targeted outreach. My primary research is lacking the migrant perspective, but going forward, their voices are an important addition to the discussion of access, both its problems and possible solutions.

Physical barriers to the organizations serve to exacerbate the challenges of accessing assistance. In my research, the biggest factors that played into physical access were the distance of the organization from well-known migrant communities and the lack of information publicly available as to its specific location. Fondation Orient-Occident was the greatest distance from the migrant neighborhoods of Takaddoum and Youssoufia, but the address was easily available in their publications and online. Caritas' migrant reception center was significantly closer to the migrant communities, but there was no mention of its specific location. This difference may be

attributed to the fact that Caritas serves irregular migrants in addition to those who possess documentation, while Orient-Occident does not. In order to protect the privacy and safety of their beneficiaries, Caritas does not publicly disclose their location, but relies on the social networks of migrant communities to spread awareness for their services. Both organizations rely on word-of-mouth within migrant and refugee communities, but Caritas specifically employs mediators to facilitate the connection between vulnerable migrants and the resources of the reception center.

Vital work is being done by both these organizations to assist the migrant and refugee populations in Morocco, but in order to continue in the most ethical and effective manner, it is extremely important to continue to examine where they succeed and where they can improve. Assistance such as this cannot be given in a top-down fashion, as aid is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. It requires the recognition of the autonomy and humanity of the people they are seeking to serve, a willingness to adapt to their needs and circumstances, and an awareness of the position of they themselves hold in migrant communities, in Morocco, and in the world.



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