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Morocco's Leadership: Assessing the Relationship Between the State and Non-Governmental Organizations Working on Migration Affairs

Adriana Nadyeli González Ortiz
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Morocco's Leadership: Assessing the Relationship Between the State and Non-Governmental
Organizations Working on Migration Affairs

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SIT Morocco: Migration & Transnational Identity

Spring 2020

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	5
Introduction	7
Literature Review	8
Brief History of Moroccan NGOs	
International Influence	
Moroccan State: Migration Policy	
Methodology and Ethics	14
Findings	16
The State and Moroccan NGOs	
Juridical Framework of NGOs	
The Future of the Moroccan State-NGO Relationship	
Needs of NGOs	
Discussion	25
Civil Society Evaluation	
Ambivalence	
Indifference	
Analysis	28
Conclusions	32
References	34

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Abstract

The history of Moroccan Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is almost as long as the country's history with migration. After Morocco's record as a sending country, its unique location attracted an increasing flow of migrants from the rest of Africa to transit the territory in hopes of crossing over to Europe. More recently, tighter border securitization has resulted in notable numbers of migrants permanently settling in Morocco. Significant changes in migration policy have both prompted and resulted from this progression. And simultaneously, national NGOs have strengthened their role as protagonist advocates for migrants' rights as well as foremost providers of target-diverse support mechanisms. In this study, through a historical analysis of policy, relevant literature and short interviews, I will examine the relationship between the Moroccan State and the country's civil society working on migration. By examining the evolution of the legal framework through which the Moroccan State interacts with NGOs, I intend to determine whether there is congruence between the government's approach and the achievement -or lack thereof- of NGOs' work. In addition, I will consider the influence of international pressure (i.e. the European Union) in Morocco's migration affairs. And ultimately, I seek to investigate the contextual implications of these findings in the current and future life of migrants.

Research Question: In what ways is the Moroccan State partnering with, patronizing or marginally involving the country's civil society with the responsibility of migrant-related issues, and how does this relationship look moving forward?

Introduction

Through the years, Morocco's history with migration has shifted along with its social, economic and political transformations. Long a country of emigration and transit, its latest turn has seen the country emerge as a frequent final destination for many migrants. Despite the undeniable impact of globalization and international relations that influences Morocco's strategizing in response to the increasingly relevant phenomenon of migration worldwide, it's important to recognize the country's extensive systems of response have developed internally. The Moroccan government has made noteworthy adjustments to its migration policy as the country's politics change and adapt to a growingly interconnected world. At the same time, though not always in agreement, civil society associations working on migration affairs have remarkably evolved and strengthened while navigating constantly changing challenges. Within and outside this network, various -and often contradicting- interests and political agendas that inevitably affect the mechanisms migrants encounter when entering Moroccan society. Morocco's most recent migration policy reform, the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum announced in 2013 by King Mohammed VI, repositioned the country's previous strategy into a comparatively more liberal and transnational approach. Nationwide regularization campaigns granted migrants the status that allowed them to access new forms of aid that significantly improved their living conditions. Also, the creation of public institutions such as the Ministère Délégué Chargé des Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger et des Affaires de la Migration (MDCMREAM) saw the implementation of crucial projects with direct concern of migrant-related issues. Moreover, for the benefit of civil society -whose work the State recognizes as vital in migration affairs-, a concrete legal framework was set; thus, setting up new routes of dialogue and action.

The multiplicity of public and private actors working on migration in Morocco have respectively made indisputable progress. Yet, reality shows many of the promising reforms have delivered partial results due to different obstacles in implementation. Further, policy and association tactics continue to fall short to address the wide array of migrant necessities. Unfortunately, migrants continue to suffer from basic human rights violations and other forms of despotism. Through this research, I seek to better comprehend the historical context of the current state of migrant affairs in Morocco to assess the congruence -or lack thereof- between the government's and civil society's efforts. Ultimately, a review of these interactions will hopefully display implications that better understood can help tackle long-overdue prevailing injustice.

Literature Review

For this project, though there is no universally agreed upon definition of "migrant", I will use the term as used by the UN Migration Agency's (IOM): "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is" (United Nations). Depending on the literature, the term will be used interchangeably with immigrant/immigration.

Throughout the literature and documents I reviewed for this research, I found the term for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was used interchangeably with associations and civil society, for which depending on the section of analysis on this paper, I will do the same. And more precisely, to those working in Morocco with migration affairs. Additionally, I will mention the Moroccan government sometimes as the State, referencing more specifically the work of the MDCMREAM.

Brief History of Moroccan NGOs

The Moroccan associative movement dates back to before colonization. Early tribes and communities developed association-like structures to function as intermediates between groups and the State. Additionally, societal and religious organizations supported territorial management, community work and other projects that responded to the needs of the population. Through reforms, colonialism introduced new premises for traditional Moroccan associations which would later again be modified by the constitution of 2011 (OCP Policy center, 2016). The difficulty to trace a clear history of Moroccan associations is reflective of the dynamic space in which they operate; characterized “...by its multiple actors who can compare their visions, their experiences, and their differences on multiple objects” (OCP Policy center, 2016).

➤ **Moroccan NGOs focused on Migration**

The start of the 2000s saw the creation of around 80% of existing NGOs, a notable increase from 25% in the 90s and fewer in the 70s and 80s, which reflects the growing relevance of migration issues in the country. Another change is that initially, the majority of these were led by males but female presence has augmented in later years. The objectives that motivate NGOs concerned with migration are varied; for example: the work of MLAL in Béni Mellal responds to the contextual needs of the region where there are strong tendencies among the youth to migrate, l'Association de Développement Local Méditerranéen in Tangier whose involvement in migration derives from their main concern with local development, and l'Association Sud Migrations et Développement in Laayoune, Western Sahara, that support family resistance, raise awareness of the risks of clandestine migration and propose durable alternatives. Other NGOs have found inspiration in widespread events that exposed the brutality of migratory policing. Events early as 2005, where an unconfirmed number of Sub-Saharan migrants were killed and injured by Spanish and Moroccan police when attempting to cross the Ceuta border fence, stirred the fight of new and

already existing NGOs for migrants' rights. Other NGOs emerged from the support of foreign associations such as the Spanish Asociación ProDerechos Humanos de Andalucía who supported Pateras de la vida in Northern Morocco (Khachani, 2010).

International Influence

The entrance of international donors to Morocco in the 80s marked the introduction of a new culture of broader institutional cooperation that included NGOs. The funding of projects that accompanied the launching of the Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain in 2005 by King Mohammed VI added to this. And later, the diversification of platforms and ideas brought by the Arab spring (2010s) marked another moment in which globalization impacted the work of Moroccan NGOs.

Whether through funding, training or other forms of assistance; the presence of international involvement and influence in Morocco inevitably reaches NGOs. Similar to the way the State's dynamic is questioned by the influence of international interference, the autonomy of the associative movement in Morocco is sometimes challenged. In fact, Moroccan NGOs, "have often been led by internationalized elites linked to international civil society, supported in terms of finances, capacity building, communication..." (OCP Policy center, 2016).

Moroccan State: Migration Policy

In 2003, pressured by the European Union, Morocco adopted a "national strategy to combat illegal emigration" that focused on two main pillars: the institutional, characterized by the creation of the Ministry of Interior of the 'Directorate of migration and of border surveillance' in 7 strategic regions as well as local committees for the collection of migration-related data; and the juridical,

from which the 02-03 law regarding the entrance and stay of foreigners to the Kingdom of Morocco, irregular and regular migration. The main objective of this law was to adapt to Morocco's then somehow recent transformation from just a transit to a host country. Inspired by French law, the text composing this law consisted in 8 chapters, the first being «Of the entrance and stay of foreigners to Morocco» the «Criminal provisions relating to irregular emigration and immigration» and «transitional provisions». Among other things, law 02-03 defined and regulated the conditions and procedures through which migrants could or not aspire to residency, administered the power to grant or reserve the right to host a foreigner, sanctioned the smuggling of illegal migrants. In general, the securitization implemented by this law justified its severe measures by “the threat to security or public order.” While there is mention of this in a few articles, a clear definition of ‘public order’ is absent; consequently, leaving room for unfair interpretations and abuse of power. Additionally, there is no mention of foreigners’ political, economic or social rights though these had been ratified in the ‘International Convention for the protection of all migrant workers and members of their families’ of 1993. With this, the author argues “...Morocco breaks with a tradition of hospitality which has been its own for centuries and begins privileged relations which it maintains in particular with certain African countries. It seems that Morocco is assuming the policeman role that the European Union wants it to play in the region” (Khachani, 2010).

In 2013, King Mohammed VI announced the government would develop a more comprehensive approach by implementing a *Nouvelle Politique Migratoire*. This policy promised to support all incoming migrants, refugees and asylum seekers “...by building the social capital that would allow them to secure their own progress as an integrated member of one of the many diverse communities of Morocco through having a strong participation in the development of the

prosperity of the country.” The first phase of this policy was a regularization campaign that provided temporary legal status to approximately 24,000 migrants; followed by another one that granted residence permits to another 28,400 in 2017. In 2015, as part of these reformatory policies, Morocco launched a National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum in addition to the 2003 02-03 law, with a much more human-rights oriented set of policies. In 2016, a law for the fight against human trafficking was adopted, while the two Bill drafts -one for the new law on immigration and another for asylum- remain as such. (El Ghazouani, 2019). The main vision of this national strategy is to “Ensure a better integration of immigrants and a better management of migratory flows within the framework of a coherent, global, humanist and responsible policy” (MDCMREAM, 2016). The global aspect of this policy in terms of migration governance assured an internationally accountable system that could supervise the follow-through of the strategy’s main objectives: “facilitate the integration of regular immigrants, upgrade the regulatory framework, put in place an appropriate institutional framework and manage migratory flows with respect to human rights.” Additionally, the implementation of this strategy strengthened the networks of work and information which increased the effectiveness of operations (MDCMREAM, 2018).

Moving forward, the State recognizes that the progress made by the *Stratégie Nationale d’Immigration d’Asile (SNIA)* can only be assured by the improvement of the evaluation mechanisms that supervise its functions. Additionally, the *Ministère Délégué Chargé des Marocains Résidant à l’Étranger et des Affaires de la Migration (MDCMREAM)* listed the following objectives in their conclusions of the 2018 Report on the *Politique Nationale d’Immigration et d’Asile* (MDCMREAM, 2018):

-”The territorialization of the SNIA....to guarantee its operationality and control its impact on the beneficiaries. Therefore, it is necessary to continue efforts to raise awareness and train local stakeholders in migration management and to promote networking and the pooling of experiences in this area.

-...emphasize the importance of producing monographs on migration in the main cities and regions hosting migrants, which could thus feed into the planification and coordination of interventions and subsequently develop areas of partnership for territorial deployment of the SNIA.

-...mobilize them [civil society] more and strengthen their capacities in project management as well as in terms of approach to local integration.

-...the integration of the migration dimension into the information systems of ministerial departments and other actors involved...” to ensure a platform of reliable data that helps measure and define appropriate measures of actions and objectives.

-...invest more in research and studies by promoting partnership with the academic world in order to adapt public policies to the Moroccan migration context.

-...efforts [of the SNIA] should be continued in terms of information, communication and setting up of orientation and referral system for migrants and refugees towards the structures concerned to consolidate their right of access to these services.”

Methodology and Ethics

❖ Research

Initially to develop a focused research question, I relied on the knowledge I gathered from the lecturers and excursions to NGOs and organizations made during the time I studied in Rabat, Morocco over the course of six weeks. To assess the relationship of the Moroccan State with NGOs, I retrieved information from a wide range of mostly qualitative sources to enrich my

findings. Many of these sources were in French, for which I had to later translate the quotes that are included in this paper. Initially, to lay the theoretical framework of my research, I examined sources that provided an overview of the general aspects crucial to understanding migration affairs in Morocco. Further, to trace the historical background of both the Moroccan government and NGOs working on migration, I made in-depth reading and analysis of various official government documents and academic literature on the topic. Additionally, I conducted two interviews (with the director of the NGO Manos Solidarias in Tetouan, and a specialist migration scholar based in Rabat) two working experts on the topic, whose perspective helped me better comprehend the context and current application of the information and data I had previously collected. To go back to address my research question, I consolidated my findings through a discussion and analysis hoping to expand my initial reasoning. And to finalize, I proceeded to draw conclusions calling on future research to broaden the relevant aspects of this topic.

Limitations

The short period of my stay in Morocco, especially due to the cancellation of the program due to the COVID-19 pandemic before the ISP period had started. I did all the planning, research and interviews carried out for this project from home which limited the reach of my investigation and my ability to conduct more interviews. Additionally, the lack of available up to date literature and official quantitative data on migrants in Morocco restricted my findings. Consequently, my research is not all-encompassing and my conclusions are partial. While attempting to understand the current situation of different groups and actors involved in migration issues in Morocco, I can't fully portray the complexity of this phenomenon. Throughout this project, I remained self-

reflective of my privilege as the conductor of this research and sought my adviser's feedback and guidance to develop my argument respectfully and appropriately.

❖ **Interviews**

For this project, I interviewed two people -both whom I had met once in visits to their workplace. With my first interviewee, Mr. Saâd Alami Merrouni, I communicated via email and conducted the interview via Skype in English. And for my second interviewee, I communicated and conducted the interview via WhatsApp messages and video call in Spanish; for which I had to later translate the quotes that are included in this paper.

When I contacted each interviewee, I explained to them the details of my interview before they agreed to participate -if so they chose to. To preface my interviews, I included a message that contained the following:

-My name and mention of my participation in the SIT Morocco: Migration and Transnational Identity.

-A request for their consent for the interview to be recorded (giving them the option to answer by audio, call or writing).

-A request for their consent to agree to the possibility of their answers - or part of them - being quoted in my final paper (making sure they knew that document would be public).

-My reassurance that I would contact them to review the parts of the interview I decided to put in my final paper before officially including them in my work.

-My reassurance that the answers that I do not use in my final work would be eliminated.

-My research question.

-An attachment with the questions I planned to ask so they knew what they were getting into before agreeing to be interviewed- if they so chose to.

-A reminder they could at that moment -or at any time- withhold to answer any of my questions.

-A sentence expressing my willingness to answer any questions or clarify any aspects of the interview.

Findings

The State and Moroccan NGOs

The long history of Moroccan NGOs shows that despite the relevance of the consolidation of their relationship with the State, their work is not merely instrumental. However, because the State does -and increasingly- signify and important support to many NGOs, associations are often found “between the hammer and the anvil: the State as donors and the associations of a political nature constantly subject to the temptation of recovery by large associations in search of networking and instrumentalization, of increasing their negotiation capacities...” (OCP Policy center, 2016).

➤ Politics

In the political arena, associations are often perceived as an expression of ‘departure’ in which people are responsabilized for values “underestimated by the dominant political culture: participation, commitment, a concept of self-giving different from that specific to partisan activism” (OCP Policy center, 2016). Consequently, and in addition to the State’s classification of Moroccan associations within the political framework, this meant they were generally viewed by the political class as rivals. The progressive formalization of a legal framework for Moroccan NGOs redefined their role; remaining politically influential but no longer

primarily concerned with opposing the actions of political actors. And regardless, the mere formalization of Moroccan NGOs in public structure puts in question the nature of associations and whether their vision can remain independent- even when not contradictory (OCP Policy center, 2016).

➤ **Territory**

Despite the strength and solidified outreach of Moroccan NGOs all over the country, the expectations formalized by the State of Moroccan associations often exceed their capacity. The insufficiency of civil society to provide services could find reconciliation through the collaboration of the State. Through the work of NGOs, public management projects have taken notice of regional social, health, living conditions. The benefit of multifaceted and regionalized strategies is that it addresses the needs of different population groups more comprehensively (OCP Policy center, 2016).

Juridical Framework for Moroccan NGOs

In a 2010 report for the Association Marocaine d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Migrations (AMERM), author Mohamed Khachani traces the registered history of Moroccan civil associations to the early 20th century. During the French protectorate, several associations emerged motivated by Moroccans' nationalist sentiment and supported the mobilization for independence (Khachani, 2010). After independence, in 1958, Moroccan law implemented a code for associations which resulted in the creation of new associations; many focused on national development. Non-lucrative associations were -by law- allowed to function as long as they agreed with the State's rules and morals. Thus, the work of associations whose purpose was to act as political advocates was significantly limited (OCP Policy center, 2016). Regardless, and through

the challenges of political uncertainty and restricted liberties, old and new associations continued to be active in Moroccan society. During the last years of the 20th century, associations gained strength through the consolidation of partnerships and the creation of new societal structures like the Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger (Khachani, 2010). By the turn of the century, civil society was visibly a crucial actor at all levels nation-wide and <<that its activity is exercised in the field of advocacy, support for vulnerable categories or in development actions, placing Moroccan civil society at the forefront in the region (Maghreb and Arab world)>> (Ministère du Développement Social, de la Famille et de la Solidarité & FNUAP, 2006).

The laws regarding the rights of associations, last modified in 2002, outlined certain restrictions and liberties -later expanded by a law passed in 2009 that established more flexible procedures for the constitution of associations and their public freedoms. Furthermore, the so-called National Dialogue facilitated by the Ministry of government-parliament relations and civil society started in 2013 as a result of the constitutional reforms enacted in 2011. This constitution recognized the status of civil society as a full-fledged institutional actor and remarked the need for the creation of mechanisms that would facilitate the intended degree of democratization. Agreeing with the constitution's initiative to set up clearer legislative frameworks for regulation and procedures, new means of control were established for civil society (OCP Policy center, 2016). The constitution granted them the right to submit petitions, make legislative proposals, contribute to crafting policies and protected them from freezing their activities as long as the associations aligned with Moroccan law. For the first time, the State formally called on civil society to cooperatively participate in addressing issues concerning public affairs (Norman, 2014).

These and other aspects of governance related to associative administration were debated in the dialogue developed by 'la Dynamique de l'Appel de Rabat' (2012) and the aforementioned

National dialogue (2013). In regards to financial and fiscal management, both agreed there was “discrimination and lack of transparency regarding access to public funding, unjustified distinction between ordinary associations and associations declared to be of public utility, opacity of the procedures and official measures adopted concerning public funding, absence of a clear legal framework, incompatibility of the current fiscal framework, non-application of the public accounting framework proposed in 2003, non-linking of funding with clear projects, this results in a predominance of a rentier situation” (OCP Policy center, 2016).

As part of the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum (2013), the Moroccan government set up 81 actions defined within 11 programs; some dedicated to the support of NGOs. For example, as listed: in Education and culture, and health to define “...a frame of reference for a more effective intervention of NGOs and associations in the field of education/health of immigrants”; in social and humanitarian assistance, to “implement with associations and NGOs of specific assistance programs for immigrants and refugees (in particular victims of ill-treatment or trafficking in human beings)”; in flow management and fight against human trafficking, to “conduct the exceptional operation of regularization; in regulatory and conventional framework, to do an “Dahir amendment on the right of association”; and in governance and communication, to establish a program “of support for the development of associations representing immigrants” and “of training and capacity building for associations working in the field of immigration” and for the “Development and implementation of an information and awareness plan on immigration issues for immigrants, the general public, administrations, civil society, the media and international partners” (MDCMREAM, 2016).

In a report published by the MDCMREAM during the Annual Forum of Immigration in 2016, they quantified the results of the financed projects 2013-2015 to associations dedicated to

the assistance of immigrants. For this time, they reported the financing of 130 projects with a total of 48000 beneficiaries in the intervention areas of social, culture and education, and economic integration; this, with a budget of 31.5M MAD (MDCMREAM, 2016). Two years later, another report informed that the *Ministre Délégué auprès du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération Internationale, Chargé des Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger et des Affaires de la Migration* had supported “...more than 100 projects led by associations working in the field of immigration and asylum” in the period 2017-2018 (MDCMREAM, 2018).

Through the years, and importantly in the last decade, Moroccan civil society has affirmed and strengthened their role in the country. They have attained certain maturity that allows them to act with autonomy in different areas of intervention; not limited to advocacy, social service delivery, community development, etc. The coordination of joined efforts has increased within and in between regions which in turn, has consolidated the work of each association (Khachani, 2010). Apart from the sizable outreach allowed by the plurality of objectives and actions through which NGOs operate, this characteristic shows an increase of their participative ability with other agents (i.e. the State, migrants, staff) that in sequence, create mechanisms of accountability and co-responsibility. And generally, the networks NGOs have secured through their partnership with other local and international associations, and the State, allows them to participate in impactful discussions about migration affairs (OCP Policy center, 2016). Similarly, the consolidation of informal networks among associations -though already beneficial- would accomplish the goal of “have a single, strong interlocutor capable of influencing public decisions and enjoying a greater autonomy from both donors and public institutions” (Khachani, 2010).

The Future of the Moroccan State-NGO Relationship

Today, the Moroccan State recognizes the vitality of NGOs to tackle the challenges of migration as a transit and host country. The programs and services that the State provides for migrants are complemented by the work of NGOs; for example, through the development of more projects and by encouraging the population's participation. In fact, "Their knowledge of the reality on the ground and their proximity to migrants makes it easier for them to identify their specific needs. Their ability to develop synergies with public and private actors, local communities and universities makes their intervention and contribution even more efficient" The State's recognition of NGOs experiences undeniably shows in the reformation of Moroccan migration law in the last decade that relied on permanent consultation between them and the (i.e. through conventions, debates, etc.). Through this dialogue, the State has recognized that only by reinforcing the regional links of civil society, can they take full advantage of the policies planned to respond to the various needs of migrant populations (MDCMREAM, 2016).

Moving forward, during an Annual Forum of Immigration, the Ministry in charge of Migration Affairs suggested the following vision for the consolidation of the State's partnership with civil society (MDCMREAM, 2016):

- "Strengthening the capacities of the associative fabric on technical and organizational levels in order to be well equipped to identify projects that meet the expectations and specificities of migrants and better support them in their integration into Moroccan society.

- The evaluation of projects carried out by associations and their impact on the target population with a view to correcting any dysfunctions and capitalizing on good practices."

➤ **Sub-Saharan NGOs and the State**

The Council of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco reported they represented around 15 associations by 2016, almost three years after their creation. During the Annual Forum of

Immigration, Constantin Ibanda, the institution presented the following recommendations for the State to strengthen the capacity of institutions assisting the representation and integration of migrant communities (MDCMREAM, 2016):

- ”A files review of 8% of the 2014 exceptional regularization;
- Subsidies at headquarters and office equipment to migrant associations (especially those of the platform);
- Reduce criteria for calls for projects for the training of migrants in large-scale;
- Complete the training of consultants to leaders of associations and migrant communities of the platform;
- The start of the regularization process for unaccompanied minors, trafficked women, migrants with chronic illnesses;
- The economic integration of migrants benefiting from certain vocational training;
- Financing and supporting migrants with projects;
- Schooling of migrant children in public schools;
- Taking charge of healthcare for migrants in vulnerable situations;
- The relaxation of the granting of birth certificate extracts in certain administrative courts;
- The applicability of legal texts in force and under construction on the respect and protection of the rights of migrants and members of their families for their better integration into Moroccan society.
- The ratification of certain international human rights conventions, such as the international convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, which nevertheless still suffers from non-application in its effectiveness.”

Needs of NGOs

For the Annual Forum of Immigration, the National Council of Human Rights (Morocco) remarked the indispensability of civil society for the success of migration policy. She highlighted the crucial role of NGOs as credible interlocutors supporting the State's effort to integrate migrants and develop strategies of intervention. Aside from these accomplishments, she presented the following prevailing challenges faced by NGOs (MDCMREAM, 2016):

➤ Structural

- "The lack of legal recognition of these associations has been a major obstacle to obtaining funds to ensure their functioning.

- The majority of associations use the meeting rooms of other associations and remain dependent on the availability of the latter.

- "...questions of operating costs of the association and professional human resources because they work mainly on the volunteer work of its members."

➤ Capacity Building

Training relative to:

- "the administrative and legal management of an association, project management (project set-up, request for funds, monitoring and evaluation of a project);

- the accounting and financial management of an association

- Capacity building in information technology.

- Interview and data collection technique;

- Report development and writing technique;

- Advocacy/alliance building techniques;

-Monitoring of public policies, consultation/dialogue with public authorities and other actors;

-International rights and agreements;

-Exchanges on the experiences of civil society actors from other countries who have worked on integration issues (the expertise of Moroccan associations or groups of Moroccans who have played a significant role in the integration of migrants in Europe over time)”

Discussion

Civil Society Evaluation

In a report titled “Morocco: Negotiating change with the Makhzen” published in 2008 by the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior on freedom of association, they remarked two approaches in which civil society works with the State in Morocco. One is when advocates believe “closeness to the regime necessarily entails being absorbed by it, thus turning former dissidents into lazy, regime-faithful followers that back away from making real criticisms” (Kausch, 2008). While others consider cooperation with the regime as essential to attain dialogue on reform. Some are relatively confrontational while others opt for a more partnership-based approach; the authors argue a combination of both is most efficient. They argue, both “approaches are more efficient when seen as complementary forces: one applies the necessary pressure, the other talks to the government” (Jacobs, 2012).

➤ Challenges

From an endogenous perspective, civil society faces challenges deriving from restricted freedom of expression, institutional limitations (i.e. lack of independence in judicial system and little to none financial support), lack of recognition, distance from migrant communities (i.e. due to language barriers), state skepticism that prevents change, and systematic obstacles and

opposition (i.e. migrants not having due process if detained). From an exogenous perspective, the European Union's attempt to «externalize the migration problem» results in major pressure for Moroccan migration affairs. The capital channeled in the form of aid to strengthen border security inevitably ends up paralleling the harshness of migration policy that civil society works hard to reform. On the other hand, the EU funds several initiatives to protect vulnerable migrant groups but this is often overshadowed by politics of securitization.

Altogether, the impact of international intervention pressure and internal issues counteract the progress of positive reform; thus, slowing down the battle for migrants' rights. Civil society is relatively successful in challenging the power hegemony that perpetuates unfavorable conditions for migrants in Morocco. However, the difficulty of implementing beneficial political reform and ameliorating the negative discourse surrounding migrant issues, bridging the gap between legal theoretical framework and practice, increasing focused strategies for migrants' rights advocacy, enforcing the availability and transparency of information, and promoting productive dialogue, remains. (Jacobs, 2012)

Ambivalence

Scholar Kelsy P. Norman uses the term ambivalence as a term to describe the strategically chosen “engagement policy of Morocco in the 1990s and 2000s. Like many countries in the MENA region, Morocco lacked formal, comprehensive legislation governing migrants and refugees on its territory, relying instead on outdated, piecemeal laws. Moroccan authorities would sometimes carry out police raids and even deportations at the request of European states, but, in general, the Moroccan government turned a blind eye to the presence of foreigners” (Norman, 2016). The important shift of migration policy announced by King Mohammed VI in 2013 caused surprise

among civil society and political activists. Despite the long history of civil society's strong presence and mobilization, this author argues the main motivation of this reform might have rather emanated from international shaming. Another factor to explain Morocco's reform comes from its desire to play a leading role in Africa's economic and geopolitical affairs. Various levels of differential treatment towards migrants of various nationalities is perhaps another pointer of this, more specifically as the State arguably attempts to regain control of the Western Saharan region. Delays on policy reforms, on top of mobility partnerships with the EU makes the Moroccan's government commitment to its liberal reforms questionable.

The author concludes Morocco's reform attempted to simultaneously co-opt domestic critics, garnering support of African nations and satisfying EU demands. (Norman, 2016)

Indifference

Through the transition that has transformed Morocco from a transit to a host country, the government's engagement with migrants and refugees has progressively been described as liberal in its policy. Alternatively, scholar Kelsey P. Norman has criticized the authorities through the concept of 'indifference', which "refers to indirect action on the part of the host state, whereby a state defers to international organizations and civil society actors to provide basic services to migrants and refugees" (Norman, 2018). Through an evaluation of the implementation of the migration policies of 2013, she concludes that "while thousands of migrants were regularized in 2014, they were given access to short-term permits and still faced de facto barriers to accessing the labor market, forcing most individuals to participate in the informal economy. Thus, Morocco's strategy is indifferent in terms of policy outcomes" (Norman, 2018). Additionally, she observes that while it is difficult to pinpoint where the failure of these promising reforms lies, the distinction

is crucial to resolve the need to align the agenda of associations and governmental institutions working to assist migrants with most urgent issues in the field.

Analysis

Considering the long history of the Moroccan associative movement, it is no surprise remaining NGOs have and continue to overcome the particular challenges that threaten their operation. Migration focused NGOs benefit from a strong background of knowledge and linkages that allows them to prevail and provide networks of resilience to vulnerable populations. Their historical evolution is proof of their adaptability. For example, with the diversification of demographics conforming migrant flows into Morocco, civil society progressed to expand its assistance to services such as: basic healthcare, vocational training, informal education for children and adults, and community fostering. Structurally, the politicization of Moroccan associations that followed the increase in brutality and deportations consequent of the toughening of borders in the start of the 21st century, shows their ability to assess and address the nationwide atmosphere relevant to their work. Even further, though it is difficult to measure the extent to which international pressure -through aid and ideology- sways the direction of Moroccan migration policy, it is clear that civil society is aware of their influence. The cooperation of the Moroccan State with international powers is paralleled in the partnerships of Moroccan NGOs with international associations. And while one must not ignore the leverage held by international actors in the web of Moroccan migration affairs, totally retrieving either the Moroccan State's or NGOs' agency from the matter would be a mistake.

To the State's decision, it is important to keep in mind that besides the strong position of the European Union, Moroccan internal pressure can't be disregarded. In fact, King Mohammed IV's decision to implement the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum in 2013 derived

directly from his evaluation of a report issued by the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) on the situation of migrants in Morocco. On top of being a national institution, the CNDH is independent from the State, for which many of its representatives are NGO representatives and political activists. In this sense, as expressed by scholar Mr. Saâd Alami Merrouni -and aside from the irrefutable influence of the visible work of associations- it is possible to argue that “there was also some kind of pressure from national NGOs on the government to revisit the whole policy on migration and to make it more humanitarian, and to protect migrants’ basic human rights” (Alami Merrouni, 2020).

The work of Moroccan NGOs specialized on migration is definitely tied to the State’s disposition; however, they are also able to operate independently and reciprocate in also informing the actions taken by the government. More recently, within the programs adopted as part of the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum, the Moroccan government set up specific strategies through which it intended to support the work of NGOs. Reports published by the MDCMREAM in 2016 and 2018 show the successful financing of over a total of 200 with thousands of migrant beneficiaries (MDCMREAM, 2016, 2018). Such accomplishments evidence the forward movement of the Moroccan government and civil society in favor of migrants.

On the other hand, as observed by scholar Dr. ET-Tibari Bouasla, “Mainstream civil society activism is channeled through associations coming to the help of poor and marginalized groups but also advocating human rights, gender equity and social justice. This is challenging for the state as its move towards democracy is slow, therefore its financial support to NGOs is mainly allocated to those associations in line with government vision and programs.” (Tibari Bouasla, 2020) The support from the Moroccan government to NGOs manifests clearly in the expansion of their outreach, diversification of consulting platforms and sorted financing. Nonetheless, is

unwilling to provide assistance -and sometimes obstaculizes- actions that fail to align with other concerns it commits to. To exemplify this situation, I will analyze the following narrative from my interview with Mr. Mohmaed Benyakoub, the Director of Manos Solidarias, a social development association based in Tetouan active since 2010. When I asked about the work of his association, he told me (Benyakoub, 2020):

“The majority of immigrants lived in the forest...near the northern frontier bordered by a tall (approx. 3m) fence covered with blades. When they [immigrants] go up there, they cut their hands; it’s a catastrophe. In 2015, we did our first humanitarian medical campaign near the forest...the doctors made a report they had made 152 medical consultations...2 months later we did a second campaign...We weren’t prepared for so many people but by the end, we managed to help more than 400 people...Since 2017, they [the government] prohibited us from going down to the forest...they said it is a military zone... Since then, immigrants have come to the association.”

I followed up with questions about Manos Solidarias’ relationship with the Moroccan State, international entities and the Moroccan population, to which he responded (Benyakoub, 2020):

“We work with projects financed by the Moroccan Ministry of Migration. We’ve done 6 projects with them...Since 2018, the Ministry stopped, there was no more financing. However, we have a partnership with a Moroccan association in Spain. Through this international cooperation they send us projects. Like now, we have a project of humanitarian aid from Spain....

Migrants suffer from many things. Mainly, lack of food, housing...basic things. The problem is that they can't find a job to afford these things. Morocco is not a rich country, it has difficulties. Youngsters can't find jobs. And how can employers give migrants jobs and leave their compatriots? This makes things hard for immigrants so they want to go to Europe. The situation here is difficult so civil society tries to help them. We can't afford many things because we don't have the money. You can only do so much with little money. So we help with what we can. What I always say is, we try to improve at least a little the existence of immigrants; this is what we try to do."

The start of Mr. Benyakoub's narrative illustrates the clear rigidification of border control that spiked the number of migrants necessitating aid to survive and endure the dangerous conditions of border crossing. Mr. Benyakoub credits the financing received from the Moroccan Ministry of migration to support Manos Solidarias' projects but remarks the hindering of their medical campaigns in the forest, which had proven to be of increasing demand. The fact that Manos Soldarias has been able to maintain medical assistance for migrants undeterred by the State's intervention demonstrates the strength of their commitment. Beyond the possibilities or limitations enabled from variable financing, Moroccan NGOs are also seriously affected by the State's favoring or counteracting of their work. Ultimately, though -as Manos Solidarias- NGOs are able to subsist through their own means and the support of partnerships (sometimes internationally, as it is in this case), what the government imposes is irremediably restrictive.

Conversely, the final section of Mr. Benyakoub's answer displays a much broader issue. Without disregarding the aforementioned problematic, my interviewee's narrative shows he is also

aware of the challenges faced by Moroccan society in terms of economic stability that unavoidably deter any progress on migrant affairs.

As do most -if not all governments- the Moroccan State holds responsibility to manifold actors. In the case of Morocco, as described by Kelsey P. Norman, “While the state is conducting ongoing consultations with migrant community organizations regarding the implementation of a forthcoming national integration plan, the state simultaneously faces pushback from European, particularly Spanish, countries that are committed to preventing irregular migration across EU borders” (Norman, 2016). Thereby, any evaluation on the relationship between the Moroccan State and NGOs must consider the contextual implications of both parties being somehow influenced by factors other than just each other. What’s more, one must account for the power differentials embedded in this dynamic that give way to disparate relations.

Conclusions

Morocco’s front to deal with migrant affairs has come a long way since the beginning of its development. An important set of mechanisms are set in place to assist migrant communities in different areas and increasingly consolidated partnerships have broadened the means by which parties are held accountable. Despite the headway, the government’s regime -sometimes mirrored by the work of NGOs- rests majorly attached to historically unfavorable structures that perpetuate injustice. Regardless, it is worth noting that the widened network NGOs has conspicuously managed to work through the obstacles to provide unprecedented support for the most vulnerable of migrant populations. And in turn, through the permanent platforms of dialogue installed by the Moroccan government, the knowledge and experience accumulated by NGOs has powered distinguishable advancement. At the same time, it’s important to recognize the diversification of civil society operations “with its sociocultural and political ramifications that testify to the birth of

the civic spirit and consciousness bringing about solidarity, justice and equality for all citizens.” (Tibari Bouasla, 2020)

Moving forward, besides the challenges deriving from the necessity to bridge the gap between the issues regionally tackled by NGOs and the State’s deliberate strategizing, another pressing matter is considering “...how can we position migrant civil society in Morocco and how can we interpret migrants’ activism within Moroccan civil society; and in civil society as a whole.” (Alami Merrouni, 2020). The assessment of migrant needs must account for their’ self-representation and agency through their participation with formal and informal networks. Ultimately, only by encouraging and seriously considering the reception and reaction of migrant communities to migration policy and assistance, will it be possible to develop truly comprehensive strategies. For this, further and updated research and data collection is crucial.

In an increasingly intertwined, the responsibility to ensure the rights of all humans, especially those in vulnerable situations, must be regarded by everyone involved. Morocco’s migration policy is arguably moving towards the right direction but requires even more pronounced change to accelerate its accomplishments. The truth is, as expressed by the director of Manos Solidarias, “We need help from the whole world...I believe that instead of spending so much money on the border, that money should be taken to finance projects -like vocational training centers- in the places where they [migrants] come from.... I think in this way they would stay, they come because -what else can they do? They look of a better life” (Benyakoub, 2020). All migrants are entitled not only to expect but to demand dignified treatment. Moreover, it is essential to reevaluate the role of the Moroccan government and civil society to generate more effective means of operation. It is vital to plan migration policy based on objectives that seek to empower the efforts of actors in charge of enforcing it. The phenomenon of migration, not only in Morocco but

worldwide, is multifaceted and complex for which similarly intricate problem-solving is required. Challenging the present and upcoming evolution of structures tied to migration affairs must be prioritized if an honest commitment to equality and justice is to be honored. Migrants' have the right to search for a better life and each through their means and responsibilities, a duty to help them find it.

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