

Millennium Development Goal 3 and Morocco: An International Development Plan

by
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A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in
partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College

Spring 2015

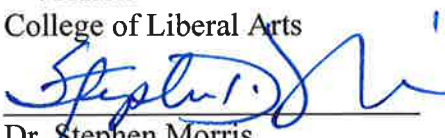
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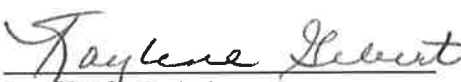
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Abstract

Based on an eight-month study abroad in Morocco, this International Development Plan heeds the recommendation of the United Nations Development Program in the Arab States to increase the number of local development plans in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3, to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women. The Development Plan begins by introducing the formulation of the MDGs and an assessment of the status of women in the Middle East North Africa region with an extended section on Morocco. Nine additional sections follow, including: background/justification, mission, goals, objectives, evaluation of impact, basic operational structure, a timeline of activities, budget, and barriers to entry. It concludes with a reflection on my time in Morocco, observations made, and the lessons learned during my stay.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, Gender Equality, Middle East and North Africa, Morocco

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Abbreviations:

MDG: Millennium Development Goal

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

ISA: International Studies Abroad

Introduction

Millennium Development Goals

In the year 2000, the world's countries, along with most of the world's leading development institutions, came together at the UN Headquarters in New York City to adopt the UN Millennium Declaration, committing themselves to a new global partnership and setting out a series of time-bound targets called the Millennium Development Goals. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include eradicating extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; providing universal primary education, reducing child mortality; improving maternal health outcomes; promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development, all by the target date of 2015.¹

Globally, there is a general consensus that women's rights and gender equality are key components of any poverty-reduction strategy, hence Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.² This inclusion within the MDG framework has been important in highlighting gender inequality and acknowledges that women's rights are central to achieving all the goals.³ It thereby creates a strategic opportunity to open dialogue among governments, donors, and civil society, especially

¹ United Nations Development Programme (2010). *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? An International Assessment*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.

² United Nations Development Programme. *Ibid.* (2010).

³ Turquet, Laura, Patrick Watt, and Tom Sharman (2009). *Hit or Miss? Women's Rights and the Millennium Development Goals*. London: Hamlyn House.

women's rights organizations. It further encourages more analysis related to the barriers women face.

However, despite this recognition, more than 900 million women live on less than one dollar a day, and the number of rural women living in absolute poverty has risen by 50% over the past 20 years, as opposed to 30% for men.⁴ In order to develop a more concrete plan of action, on June 17, 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a new report, entitled *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? An International Assessment*, which identifies eight concrete action points to accelerate and sustain development progress over the next five years. These action points are based on UNDP's experience in 50 countries and include the following 8 points.⁵

- 1. Supporting country-led development and effective governance;**
- 2. Fostering inclusive and pro-poor economic growth;**
- 3. Increasing public investments in education, health, water, sanitation and infrastructure;**
- 4. Scaling up targeted interventions, including social protection and employment programmes;**
- 5. Investing in expanded opportunities for women and girls and advancing their economic, legal and political empowerment;**
- 6. Enhancing access to energy and promoting low-carbon development;**
- 7. Accelerating domestic resource mobilization to finance the MDGs;**
- 8. Ensuring the global partnership creates an enabling environment for the MDGs,**

⁴ Sharma, Rita (2005). *Women and Development Aid*. Washington, D.C.:Foreign Policy in Focus.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Ibid.* (2010).

These action points are highly critical in achieving the MDGs in particular regions of the world where governance and development are lacking, including the Middle East and North Africa, particularly after the Arab Spring. The governments and members of society there are compelled to deal with a diverse set of challenges in order to bolster economic growth and development. Even more important is including sectors of society that have historically been excluded, like women. Action point 5 is necessary in improving the status of women across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Middle East and North Africa

The MENA region is a unique case where women already face incredible difficulties when it comes to inclusion and empowerment, and these difficulties are exacerbated by the political climate of the region. Since the Arab Spring, this region has experienced wide-spread calls for freedom and justice. Women were at the forefront of these movements as evidenced in their participation by leading protests, marches, and social media campaigns to alter the status quo.⁶ Yet, post-Arab Spring, it has become evident that women face significant challenges, especially when making attempts to achieve equal participation in the political space.

Another important factor to women's empowerment is economic inclusion. There is widespread youth unemployment throughout the region in addition to a low level of women's participation in the labor market. The percentage of Arab women's labor force

⁶ Bachelet, Michelle (2012). *Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and Worldwide*. Washington, D.C.: Women's Foreign Policy Group.

participation is the lowest in the world.⁷ As a percentage, Arab women make up a mere 26 percent of the labor force, compared to a 52 percent global rate.⁸ “The highest levels of native female labor force participation in MENA countries are found in Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, and Yemen, where women constitute more than 30 percent of the labor force.”⁹ Still, these rates fall below those found outside the region. Women in the MENA region work primarily in the public sector, mainly in the fields of education and health.¹⁰ Furthermore, “the female unemployment rate is much higher and the unemployment gender gap much wider in MENA than in other regions.” The unemployment rate in the MENA region is 17 percent versus a worldwide average of 10 percent.¹¹ There are many contributing factors to these statistics. Female unemployment is high and economic activity is much lower than its potential due to a particular set of social, cultural, and legal barriers.¹²

Since there is a general scarcity in jobs throughout the region, many are under the impression that employing women will subsequently reduce the job availability for men, who are culturally expected to be the primary source of income for families.¹³ This is a common misconception and women’s employment can significantly improve household

⁷ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. (2009). *The Status and Progress of Women in the Middle East and North Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

⁸ Bachelet, Michelle. *Ibid.* (2012).

⁹ Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh and Valentine M. Moghadam (2003). *Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.

¹⁰ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

income, sometimes by as much as 25 percent.¹⁴ As a result, many families could be lifted from poverty. Discrimination is compounded by the fact that employers openly prefer male job seekers.¹⁵ In Syria and Jordan, 15 and 33 percent, respectively, identified gender, and more specifically a preference for men, as the most important factor in hiring consideration for a professional position.¹⁶

The interaction between the region's economic structure and its conservative culture, in which traditional gender roles are strongly enforced, certainly plays a role in women's employment.¹⁷ Men in the MENA region are more likely to have direct access to wage employment and control over wealth, while women are largely economically dependent upon male family members. Women's employment options have been limited to a small number of socially acceptable occupations and professions. Gender discrimination in the MENA region is sometimes institutionalized in law, via family laws or civil codes. Before seeking employment, requesting a loan, starting a business, or traveling, women must obtain permission from a male relative.¹⁸ Other laws in the region dictate the work hours for women, maternity leave, childcare provisions, and access to transportation result in higher costs

¹⁴ World Bank, *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere* (2004).

¹⁵ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

¹⁶ International Labor Organization (2006). *Global Employment Trends for Youth*.

¹⁷ Valentine M. Moghadam (1998). *Women, Work, and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

¹⁸ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

for employers who hire women.¹⁹ One way to combat this trend is to encourage female entrepreneurship.

“Women account for only 13 percent of firm owners in MENA, compared to 20 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean and East Asia and Pacific, and 24 percent in Europe and Central Asia.”²⁰ Yet, in MENA, in terms of size, sector, productivity, and job creation, women-owned firms are essentially similar to male-owned firms. Women-owned enterprises are more likely than male-owned firms in MENA to hire women.²¹ This creates an environment conducive to women’s entrepreneurship which can be a win-win situation.

The area of education is seeing some improvement in MENA, but there is still work to be done. The importance of education has been emphasized by a numerous international conventions. The 4th annual World Conference on Women acknowledged that women’s literacy is paramount in empowering women’s active participation in decision-making and in enhancing families’ well-being.²² Education certainly has a role to play in establishing sustainable economic growth and constructing democratic societies.

¹⁹ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

²⁰ World Bank (2007). *The Environment for Women’s Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Region*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

²¹ World Bank. *Ibid.* (2007).

²² Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh and Valentine M. Moghadam. *Ibid.* (2003).

There are vast differences in access to education among women from different socioeconomic groups; female-headed households are particularly vulnerable.²³

Great inequalities are also present between urban and rural women. “For example in 2006, only 14 percent of female youth in rural areas were literate compared to 48 percent in urban areas. Furthermore, only 48 percent of rural girls compared to 67 percent of urban girls are enrolled in primary education.”²⁴

There is a shortage of female teachers, especially in rural areas, which has been shown to adversely affect girls’ school attendance. “In Yemen, for example, there are 52 female teachers to every 100 male teachers in urban areas versus only 8.6 female teachers to every 100 male teachers in rural areas.”²⁵ Additionally, there are wide disparities in the number of female teachers across the MENA region.

“Women account for 72 percent of teachers in Lebanon versus only 20 percent in Djibouti.”²⁶ This is one of the primary reasons for girls’ low school enrollment rate in rural areas. Overcoming these challenges can lead to more prosperous societies across the MENA region.

There are many widely recognized benefits to increasing female education. “According to the United Nations Population Fund, countries that have made social investments in health, family planning, and education have slower population growth

²³ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

²⁴ World Bank Middle East and North Africa Social and Economic Development Group. *Ibid.* (2009).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and faster economic growth than countries that have not made such investments.”²⁷ Population growth and infant mortality tend to fall with increased education and family health improves. An increase in girls’ secondary education is associated with an increase in work force participation, which in turn contributes to household and national income. “A study of 19 developing countries, including Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, concluded that a country's long-term economic growth increases by 3.7 percent for every year the adult population's average level of schooling rises.”²⁸ Increased education for women also has implications for future generations. The daughters of educated mothers are more likely to attend school. Furthermore, educated women are better informed actors within their societies.²⁹

Morocco

Typically, Morocco is hailed as a model for progressive thought within the Middle East and North Africa region. Women have made important strides forward under the policies of King Mohammed VI. Under the King’s guidance, Morocco has undergone significant reform that helps increase women’s access to decision-making positions. Early in his reign, the king appointed women to several high posts traditionally reserved for men. He appointed the first woman in Moroccan history as a royal counselor as well

²⁷ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2002). *State of World Population 2002: People, Poverty, and Possibilities*. New York, NY: UNFPA.

²⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics. (2002). *Financing Education: Investments and Returns, Analysis of the World Education Indicators*.

²⁹ Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh and Valentine M. Moghadam. *Ibid.* (2003).

as a woman to sit on the Higher Council of Oulemas, the official council of religious scholars. In anticipation of the September 2002 national elections, Parliament approved a statute, proposed by the king, reserving 30 parliamentary seats (roughly 10 percent of Parliament) for women.³⁰ The number of women ministers has increased from four in 1993 to seven in 2007 and an additional five in 2009, totaling 15 % of the entire government. Women are also present in the diplomatic sphere, where there are currently 10 ambassadors of His Majesty the King. In parliament, their share increased from 0.7 % to 10.5% between 1997 and 2007.³¹ Even more controversial, in many ways, is Morocco's recent initiative to license 50 women, trained in religious sciences, as religious preachers.

Another great achievement for women was the revision of the Moudawana, or Family Code, despite considerable opposition from religious conservatives. The revised code raised the minimum age of marriage from 15 to 18, gave women equal custody rights, allowed polygamy only with the consent of the first wife, and made it more difficult for a husband to divorce his wife unilaterally.³² Additionally, Morocco has set ambitious goals for increased access to education and economic participation for women and girls as key strategies for the country's economic development. Morocco's changes to the status of women are unique in the Arab world, for both their substance as well as the way they have been enacted.

³⁰ Alterman, Jon B, and Haim Malka (2006). *Arab Reform and Foreign Aid: Lessons from Morocco*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

³¹ United Nations Development Programme in the Arab States (2013). *Morocco National Development Goals Report*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.

³² Alterman, Jon B, and Haim Malka. *Ibid.* (2006).

However underneath all of the positive reform, on paper, lies a rather dim reality for Moroccan women, and critics express concern that the government has not implemented or institutionalized the reforms in an effective manner. Regarding the Moudawana, training judges in the details of the new code has been slow, especially in more traditional and conservative rural areas. Some critics speculate that there was intentional failure, by the government, to provide adequate infrastructure to implement the new laws, thereby allowing the king to be seen as a reformer without him having to spend the domestic capital to do so.³³ High levels of illiteracy among Moroccan women—an estimated 42 percent in urban areas and 82 percent in rural ones—suggest that informing women of their new rights would be an arduous process even if the proper infrastructure were in place.³⁴

Due to the positive correlation between poverty and illiteracy, literacy programs must be strategically included with development initiatives in impoverished areas so that the beneficiaries, particularly women and girls, can gain access to education. However, the implementation of such literacy and education programs has been inconsistent, largely due to the pervasiveness of women's illiteracy. The challenge is further intensified by the convolution of potential solutions proposed by the government, international aid donors, educators, civil society groups, and Moroccan women.³⁵

One of the biggest obstacles to women's upward mobility is their primary responsibility for caretaking in the home even as more and more women are joining the

³³ Alterman, Jon B, and Haim Malka. *Ibid.* (2006).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Edwards, Christie. (2011). *Morocco's Future Depends on Women*. Washington, D.C.: Vital Voices Global Partnership.

informal and formal work force. The burden of caregiving largely prevents women from pursuing educational opportunities or participating fully in the public economic sphere. Morocco is making great efforts to make primary education for children widespread, but sometimes parents do not value the need of an education for girls because of the idea that girls' futures will only consists of marriage and child rearing.³⁶ Many girls do not enroll in school, or they have a tendency to drop out. One of the reasons for this, in addition to the prevailing social attitude, is Morocco's high child labor rate. Tens of thousands of girls under the age of fifteen are working in the textile industry, as child domestics, or in traditional arts and crafts.³⁷ "The dramatic dropout rate of girls at the secondary school level -- at 50% in urban areas and 89% in rural areas -- is a direct contributing factor to adult female illiteracy."³⁸

Additionally, the country still struggles with high levels of gender-based violence. It is reported that up to 60% of women in Morocco have experienced some form of violence and 25% have suffered from sexual violence in their lifetime.³⁹ To combat this violence, a Joint Programme was established to reduce gender-based violence among Moroccan women and girls. The main strategy was to address the linkages between poverty and their subsequent vulnerability. The implementation involved applying gender-sensitive policies in the six administrative regions of Morocco through: "the establishment of multi-sectorial referral systems for women and girl victims of violence;

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ UNICEF. (2013). *Country Info: Morocco*. New York, NY: UNICEF.

³⁸ Edwards, Christie. *Ibid.* (2011).

³⁹ MDG Achievement Fund. (2012). *Morocco: Programme for the fight against gender-based violence through the empowerment of women and girls in Morocco*. New York, NY: Millennium Development Goal International Fund.

the creation of multifunctional spaces for empowering women and girls; and awareness raising and educations to promote a culture of equality.⁴⁰

Undoubtedly, Morocco faces a complex set of challenges as it works to improve low literacy rates among women and improve socioeconomic participation, broadly. Women face practical and societal challenges when trying to access the education programs. It is also the case that, in Morocco, “the introduction of programs in cultural terms that are acceptable to the local community is necessary for building credibility with communities [which are] often wary of change.”⁴¹ To achieve its goals related to literacy and training, the government must coordinate with international donors and actively engage civil society. Civil society groups attempt to play the intermediary role to accomplish what the government cannot.

Background/Justification

Civil society and NGOs are the main avenue for political expression, and numerous organizations have sprung up throughout the country, representing a wide range of interests including women’s issues, Amazigh (Berber) cultural rights, and overall human rights. These organizations are fundamental in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and greater parity between men and women in Morocco. For Morocco to effectively reach the MDGs related to women and girls empowerment, a holistic strategy must be put in place. This strategy must take into account the challenges

⁴⁰ MDG Achievement Fund. *Ibid.* (2012).

⁴¹ Edwards, Christie. *Ibid.* (2011).

and expectations of all stakeholders including women and girls, civil groups, the government, and international donors.

It is absolutely essential for women's voices to be represented in the dialogue concerning their rights so that they may express their needs and concerns. This way NGOs, the government, and donors can devise effective strategies for social and economic reform that can be enacted to promote education and economic empowerment for women in Morocco. The needs of local communities must be included in this countrywide discussion as well. Adequate research must be conducted "by talking to and working with local groups and organizations, which will encourage local buy-in."⁴²

Over the past 8 months, in Meknes, Morocco, I have been working at Association Al Amal, which translates to the Association of Hope in Arabic. It is a women's rights organization that helps women of all economic levels to complete their education. Many of the educational courses teach artisan skills including embroidery, calligraphy, cooking, and hair dressing. Such classes are aimed at increasing employment opportunities and/or assisting the women in starting their own businesses. Language courses in Modern Standard Arabic, French, and English are also taught. The organization also provides counseling services and computer services as needed.

The association is located in a neighborhood called Bassatine, a suburb of Meknes City. Currently, the association serves about 60 women on a weekly basis, and there are two women who are largely responsible for daily operations within the association. The majority of the women live within walking distance of Bassatine; increased access is an

⁴² Edwards, Christie. (2011). *Morocco's Future Depends on Women*. Washington, D.C.: Vital Voices Global Partnership.

important issue that needs to be addressed to improve the reach of Association Al-Amal within the Meknes region.

The class schedule is organized to coincide with the typical Moroccan daily schedule, which includes a break in the middle of the day for lunch as a family meal. Thus, classes run from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and resume again at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. English classes are held Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, as well as Thursday mornings. French classes take place on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Daily Embroidery classes are taught every afternoon in addition to daily Ceramics classes. Cooking classes are held on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Private tutoring sessions can be scheduled for any available morning time slot.

As an intern, my primary responsibilities have been to organize logistics, prepare lesson plans, and teach English to the women. I also assist in fundraising, marketing, maintaining social media platforms, and website development. The website is where the women sell their hand-made products. Since starting, I have been able to observe where improvements can be made to better align with the goals of the Millennium Development Plan and lead to better outcomes for the women. It is the goal of the forthcoming Development Plan to outline a process by which to streamline the organization's efforts and incorporate it into the larger country-wide initiative taking place.

Mission Plan

Since Association Al-Amal is an existing organization, much of the difficult groundwork has already been done, but now the focus should be to expand the impact

and reach of the organization. It is the aim of this international development plan to establish concrete ways to broaden the scope of Association Al-Amal by building on its current framework. The goal is to have Association Al-Amal be the voice of women in the Meknes region and to set an example for other associations, throughout the Maghreb, in terms of operations, logistics, and programming.

The vision for Association Al Amal, and organizations like it throughout Morocco, is to see a country where every woman is educated, economically stable, and lives free to participate fully in the social and political sectors of society. As an organization, Al-Amal seeks to serve the women of Meknes, facilitate in-country networking that enables information sharing, enhance education, and increases awareness of issues related to women's empowerment. Association Al-Amal is working to be a part of a greater voice to achieve gender equity, locally and internationally.

Key community partners support Association Al-Amal. International Studies Abroad (ISA) is a local partner that provides a steady stream of volunteers/interns and English teachers. Four times each year, once in the Spring and Fall semesters and twice in the Summer, ISA receives a group of students from the United States who are participating in a study-abroad program. These students have the option to engage in what is called e-lap, or service learning. One of the options is to volunteer at Association Al-Amal. This particular option is attractive for students interested in public policy, human rights, and education.

Association Al-Amal is also connected to the work of Amnesty International through the director's participation in educational panels and international conferences.

By strengthening and maintaining these ties, Association Al-Amal hopes to continue its work on behalf of women and girls. Beyond these existing partnerships, there remains the goal of forging new partnerships, especially local and international donors. By securing these donors, the association will have access to greater funds and a more steady cash flow. Currently, the income of the association stems from the sale of handmade goods. But beyond the fiscal component, is the opportunity to draw more attention to the cause and increase international support of local initiatives in Meknes, Morocco.

To accomplish this, the current operational structure must be re-evaluated and re-constructed in ways that better serve the needs of the current women as well as promote the inclusion of more women, namely women from the surrounding rural areas. Those women stand to benefit the most from the educational and vocational training offered by the association. So often monetary contribution is provided in direct correlation to measurable outcomes. Thus, every effort should be made to document what takes place and the tangible impact the services have in the lives of everyday women, as such documentaton is currently not being recorded. Proper documentation will pinpoint where gains have been achieved and also where changes or adjustments need to be made.

Goals

The goals section outlines the overarching aims of the association and serves as a guiding principle for long-term achievements.

- To empower the women and girls of Meknes, Morocco, and the surrounding areas to uplift their own living standards, raise healthy families, and participate positively in community building.
- To create a large base of advocacy for women's rights in Morocco.
- To quantify the efforts and successes of Association Al-Amal in Meknes, Morocco.
- To increase literacy among women in Meknes, Morocco, and the surrounding areas.
- To widen the artisanal skill-set of local women in Meknes, Morocco, and the surrounding areas.
- To function as a support system for women who may be the victims of abuse, and to provide legal services for women when necessary.
- To participate in a coalition/network of women's organizations and community-based organizations within Morocco to share knowledge, best practices, and resources related to the empowerment of women.
- To educate rural communities surrounding Meknes City (Hamria) on the rights of women, the value of female education, and women's economic empowerment.
- To include men in the efforts to improve the status of women.
- To establish partnerships with educational institutions/centers in Meknes to gain access to libraries, textbooks, workbooks, and additional educational materials.

Objectives

The objectives of the international development plan consist of discrete and measurable points to achieve by the conclusion of the project. They are related to three main areas: organization management, community relations, and education. These were developed based on a number of shortcomings such as lack of documentation, inconsistency of curriculum, as well as a need to increase participation from all areas of Meknes.

Organization Management

- Add the positions of Community Recruiter, Financial Officer, and Digital Specialist to increase organization productivity.
- Equip and manage the staff appropriately, enabling them to educate and properly serve the women of Association Al-Amal.
- Create and maintain a balanced budget, ideally with an annual surplus to create a savings account and further promote sustainability of the organization.
- Create a membership roster/database to track attendance, participation, and access impact.
- Diversify platform for selling hand-made products. Consider online platforms like etsy, The Little Market, etc.
- Design a user-friendly website and update regularly, at least monthly.

Community Relations

- Increase membership of women who regularly attend afternoon workshops and classes by 25% within one year, and another 20% the following year.
- Create a larger community presence in the Meknes City (Hamria).

- Extend services to surrounding rural areas of Meknes. Participate in rural visits every three months.
- Organize city-wide celebration for International Women's Day.
- Gather testimonies of women who have been impacted by Association Al-Amal.
- Gain at least two community donors.
- Participate in SIAM International Agricultural Forum, annually each April.

Education

- Devise a set curriculum for all levels of English, French, and Arabic classes.
- Purchase workbooks and textbooks for language classes.
- Organize cultural exchanges with female American students in coordination with ISA.
- Formalize cooking class schedule during the weekends.

Evaluation of Impact

The impact of these changes will be evaluated in very concrete ways. But first, a data collection system must be implemented. For example, it is necessary to establish a roster to record how many women attend each class, workshop, and event. By collecting this data, the association will be able to gauge which programs are most effective. For language classes, especially, it would be helpful to conduct pre and post tests, to see whether or not there is any sort of improvement in language acquisition. This could also give the women incentive to retain what they learn and serve as a source of motivation

for them as well. Aggregating this data in an excel worksheet is well within the scope of the organization. Essentially this will enable the association to put numbers to the initiatives they carry out.

The website will also be another means to evaluate the progress of the association. Web traffic can be monitored on a monthly basis. The number of purchases made via the website would also be an important metric to get an idea of how many products are being sold, and which ones are of interest to the general public. Additionally, the digital specialist can conduct meetings with the rest of the team to analyze the web metrics, including number of hits, media tracking, twitter following, and Facebook data.

Compiling these metrics in an annual report would be a tangible product not only for the association to gauge its progress year after year, but could serve as a recruitment tool for potential partners. It will work as an evaluation tool for the previous year's goals. The annual report would also serve as a means to inform partners of the happenings within Association Al-Amal. It would clearly outline each of the programs, the targets, and the effectiveness. Essentially, it would function as both an internal means of accountability and a source of information for those outside of the organization.

To highlight the personal aspect of the organization, individual testimonies can be gathered from women who have participated in any of the services offered by the association. This is a simple way to gather information in an anecdotal format. Organization-wide surveys could also be conducted in order to have a wide range of feedback on the offerings and could highlight any areas of possible improvement.

Each of these will serve as a safeguard against stagnation within the organization. By constantly evaluating the progress, in relation to the mission of the organization, the necessary adjustments can be made to better serve the women of Meknes and better align with international goals for the advancement of women's rights and inclusion. As new frontiers develop, the association can incorporate those into the framework of the organization if it is deemed beneficial, for example expansion, into the political sphere, inclusion in government initiatives, or coalition building, etc.

Basic Operational Structure

Currently, Association Al-Amal's operational structure consists of the Executive Director, Associate Director, a lawyer, a French language teacher and volunteers/interns. I propose adding the positions of community liaison, financial officer, and digital specialist to improve the day-to-day operations of the association.

- Executive Director: She facilitates partnerships with existing and new organizations and is the point of contact for such organizations. She is also the official representative of the organization at formal conferences and outside events.
- Associate Director: She oversees the facilities and coordinates with volunteers, interns, and teachers. She is also the lead artisan instructor.
- Community Liaison: Person from Meknes who is familiar with the community, and who works to increase participation and awareness of organization services and events.

- **Lawyer:** Counsels women on legal matters related to the family and their rights in cases of abuse or ill-treatment. This is a friend of the association and comes on a need-be basis.
- **Financial Officer:** Responsible for overseeing the organization's financial statements, funding, grant writing, and securing donors.
- **Digital Specialist:** Responsible for developing the website, managing updates, and maintaining social media presence.
- **French Teacher:** Responsible for teaching Beginning and Intermediate Level French classes. This is a volunteer position.
- **Volunteers/Interns:** Responsible for teaching Beginning English classes, assisting with administrative tasks, and aiding other team members as needed.

Timeline of Activities

1-2 months: Advertise job listings for the positions of community liaison and digital specialist, conduct interviews, and hire employees, or determine if someone is available for either position on a volunteer basis. Educate employees on mission and outline job responsibilities within larger organization framework. Purchase any additional materials for classes i.e. textbooks, notebooks, markers, etc.

2-4 months: Establish weekly schedule of events to include language classes, vocational training, workshops, and community outreach days. Advertise updates schedule.

Implement attendance system and data collection. Brainstorm most effective ways to reach rural communities and make initial contact with a particular rural enclave.

4-6 months: Hold first intercultural exchange with American students. Aggressively promote the organization inside *Hamria* by using promotional materials, like flyers, placed in local cafes and clothing stores. Organize first trip to rural areas, gauge needs and interests of women there.

6-8 months: Evaluate enthusiasm for programs up until this point, identify any weaknesses or improvements to be made. Hold mid-year check-in on the sale of hand-made items, via traditional methods. Begin to research on-line options to increase the volume of sold items. Conduct mid-term exams in language classes to determine level of progress.

8-10 months: Implement a strategy to integrate web based sales into the organization; this should be the main focus during this period. Discuss potential production schedules with women in order to meet new demand.

10-12 months: Compile information for first annual report. Finalize design and graphics for report. Prepare products for annual SIAM International Agricultural Forum. Organize a celebration for International Women's Day. Possibilities include displays of products created by association women, panels of local women/experts on women's issues in

Morocco, and conclude the day with Moroccan tea and pastries. Conduct surveys with women who regularly visit the association, attend programming, and utilize organization resources. Gather employee feedback on daily operations.

13-18 months: Evaluate first year of development plan implementation based on quantitative objectives and survey feedback. Release first annual report. Use report to aggressively begin pursuing national and international donors. Develop talking points that will allow the association to approach and create partnerships with local businesses to make material donations or monetary contributions.

18-24 months: Continue revamped programming and quantitative data gathering. Research potential grants as a source of funding. Look for national or international speaking opportunities to promote Association Al-Amal. Begin working with local government authorities to advance women-friendly policies.

3+ years: Within 5 years Association Al-Amal should have a reputation in the area as an NGO that is capable of effecting actual change within the lives of women and children. This reputation should be based on quality work, regular evaluation, and constant improvement.

Estimated Budget

Office maintenance	Cost per month (MAD)	Quantity	Months	Annual Cost
Rent	2,000	-	12	24,000
Utilities (Electricity, Water)	350	-	12	4,200
Internet Access	200	-	12	2,400
			Sub-total (MAD)	30,600
Salaries	Salary per month (MAD)	Quantity	Months	Annual Cost
Executive Director	2,000	1	12	24,000
Associate Director	1,500	1	12	18,000
Community Liaison	1,000	1	12	12,000
Digital Specialist	1,000	1	12	12,000
Financial Officer	1,000	1	12	12,000
			Sub-total (MAD)	78,000
Equipment	Cost per unit (MAD)	Quantity	Months	Annual Cost
Computers	3,000	2	-	*6,000
Sewing Machines	1,400	1	-	*1,400
Office Supplies	500	-	6	*3,000
			Sub-total (MAD)	*10,400
			Annual Total (MAD)	119,000

*Non-recurring expenses

The organization's current budget is roughly 80,000 MAD and the proposed changes would require an additional 36,000 MAD. This budget increase is due to the addition of the community liaison, digital specialist, and financial officer positions. Over time, as the organization implements the suggestions laid out in the proposed plan, these

additions are certainly feasible. Depending on an actual increase in sales and sponsorships, Association Al-Amal may need to adjust when the positions are added, for example only adding one position per year.

Barriers to Entry/Potential Obstacles

The proceeding is a list of foreseeable operational, logistical, economic, social, political, or other challenges/factors that may hinder the success of the international development plan. This section will aid in implementation, as the members of Association Al-Amal can prepare and be ready to react to these potential issues, leading to a more sustainable project.

- Potential political unrest in Morocco could affect the work of NGOs. This is a consideration given the relative instability of the geographic region.
- Lack of ability to forge additional partnerships and donors due to limited funds or competition from similar programs within Morocco or worldwide.
- Lack of social acceptance. Islamic Society is still incredibly patriarchal and there may be social resistance to the work of association Al-Amal, especially in the rural areas surrounding Meknes. Thus there may be a shortage of local buy-in.
- Local and National government resistance. Depending on political ideology, Association Al-Amal may be targeted for focusing too heavily on women's rights.

Conclusion

The past eight months in Morocco have been an incredible learning experience. Coming to Morocco, I was unsure of what to expect concerning the status of women in the country and was not quite sure how my individual contribution would fit into the overall work of Association Al-Amal. Association Al-Amal has laid the foundation for advocacy on behalf of women in Meknes and it certainly fits into a wider global recognition for the advancement of women's rights. It has certainly been a pleasure to work with and for the women of Association Al-Amal. I feel confident that the preceding international development plan in its totality, or in part, could aid Association Al-Amal in improving its current work, and I am enthusiastic about the organization's progress in the future.

On my first day at the association, I remember thinking I was totally in over my head. First and foremost, there was a huge communication barrier. I spoke no Arabic or French; they spoke very little English. Communication was going to be a challenge to say the least. Yet, there I was offering to volunteer my time to serve as an English teacher and intern, on the operational side of the organization; it was certainly going to be an eventful eight months.

The operational structure of the organization was much less structured than I had anticipated. In Morocco, the mindset, as it relates to any sort of advocacy or non-profit work, is anything is better than nothing. This was hard for me to grasp coming from the United States where things are much more structured and organized. I did not expect things to be run just like in the U.S., but I was able to demonstrate how some structure

was good and could benefit the organization. There was a good amount of adjusting from both sides.

I began by organizing the facilities, to create separate work spaces for the different types of products, placing embroidery in one area, ceramics in another, and prepared goods like rose water and spiced couscous in a different space. This way there could be a clear distinction between where each type of task was taking place and the women could divide themselves accordingly. I also created a template for labels in order to properly identify the rose water, oregano water, and argan water as well as the various types of couscous. These types of improvements were accepted by the women, and I believe they saw the value in organizing in this manner. This was my first realization that I could be a valuable contributor in a non-abrasive manner. By offering such suggestions, the Executive Director and Associate Director began to ask my input on other things within the organization and I was assigned additional duties.

My other role major role was teaching English, which became like a second job during my time in Morocco. I created my own lesson plans and activities for each class. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching was that each student was at a different level in her knowledge of English. Sometimes I had to prepare two versions of each topic to cater to both the beginner and intermediate levels. Many of the women told me that I had a knack for teaching which was encouraging, but often times I was unsure if my methods were effective. The communication barrier also made this a challenge as well. There was a good amount of back and forth between multiple languages. There tended to be a progression from an English word to Formal Arabic, or *Fusha*, (which I was studying)

next to *Darija* (the Moroccan dialect) then French (with the help of a dictionary), and finally we arrived back to English. This certainly helped my language acquisition and the women definitely got enjoyment from hearing me attempt to speak *Fusha* and *Darija*. Because there was a clear effort on both sides, it made for a comfortable learning environment where mistakes were accepted and corrected. Together we were able to work towards a common goal, and it was truly rewarding to see individual improvement in the women as the weeks progressed.

Going to the association every week became one of my favorite components of the program, and I looked forward to going and working alongside the women. They taught me different types of embroidery and on the weekends I joined the cooking classes and learned how to make Moroccan couscous, pastilla, and *melwi*.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my time with them and I loved getting to know each of their stories and the role that the Association played in their lives. For many of them, the Association was a respite from their everyday duties and responsibilities in the home. They came to the Association to meet with other women and better themselves. I listened to the women freely discuss politics and aspects of Moroccan society that they disagreed with and wanted to effect change in. Many of them never imagined being this active, but it serves as a source empowerment for them. This is necessary for the maximum potential of the country to be reached. If women are not included, then the country is missing out on half of its promise.

Based on my work at Association Al-Amal Morocco and the knowledge I gained in my academic classes on the *Geostrategic Importance of Morocco* and *Islamic Society*

and Politics, I can say that Morocco is well on its way to achieving its goals for national literacy and a stronger economy, as long as it continues to make women a central focus and priority. The global context of women's inclusion is also spurring much development in this regard. There is heightened pressure from the international community for states to recognize the rights and equal opportunity of women. As a result, in Morocco there is a growth in the role of civil society and emphasis is being placed on reforms to improve the human condition. Association Al-Amal is just a tiny contributor, but a vital one, especially for the region of Meknes.

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