

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Morocco's Experience with Gender Gap Reduction in Education

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## Abstract

This article presents a synthesis of the policies and measures for girls' education in Morocco and attempts to evaluate their results. It analyzes a wide range of initiatives and provides an overview of their relevance and impact in the Moroccan context. In Morocco, the lack of educational opportunity for girls is still evident, despite significant actions taken by the government. The article identifies the most promising approaches and priority areas for the development of girls' education. Its purpose is to provide an analysis of the situation of gender and education in Morocco, and to take stock of the extent to which gender equality and girls' right to education are protected and promoted. It also aims to reflect upon and discuss the scope of the legal framework in terms of the provisions of gender equality under law. The article also identifies and discusses the root causes of school attrition and illiteracy among women and the most important hurdles that require urgent attention, further proposing a meaningful integration of the gender perspective in schools and in the overall education system. This article advocates for full and equal educational opportunities for all, girls and boys alike, in policy and in practice.

## Keywords

Education, gender gap, girls, equality, illiteracy, development

## Introduction

First, a distinction between "gender" and "sex" is in order. Unlike sex, gender is not a physical attribute; rather, it is a social construct determined by cultural beliefs, social norms, attitudes, values, traditions, and practices of a given society and refers to gender roles, functions and relations between men and women. According to Judith Butler (2004:42), "*gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized.*"<sup>1</sup>

A principal historical outcome is that one's socio-economic position in society is based on one's gender (cf. Andersen, 2003). Feminist theorists generally aim to account for women's status in society based on the contradictory dynamics of power and knowledge, and they appeal for social justice and affirmative action to resolve resulting inequities. Yet, the basic theoretical hypothesis of gender-based hierarchies entails that the experiences of both girls and boys are crucial. Weaver-Hightower (2003) asserts:

*Until recently, most policy, practice, and research on gender and education focused on girls and girls' issues. This is as it should be, for in every society women as a group relative to men are disadvantaged socially, culturally, politically, and economically. All of these realms, of course, are integral to the study of schooling.* (p. 471)

Gender gaps between men and women exist in all societies, including developed ones, and they are an outcome of cultural, educational, legal, social, and economic discrimination suffered by the female population. Gender equality is attained only when all forms of inequity

<sup>1</sup> Citation from Undoing Gender, by Judith Butler (2004: 42)



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are removed, and equal opportunities are provided to women and men alike so that they can equally contribute to and benefit from economic growth and social development.

Gender equality is a basic concept that applies to all contexts and policies, including those relevant to the right to education (Kabeer, 2005; Stotsky et al, 2016). In education, gender equality should not be confined to access only, but rather must occur at all levels of education. Gender equality necessitates equal opportunities for both boys and girls to access learning but also requires equality in teaching and learning activities, in the quality of education provided, in academic achievement and eventually equality in employment opportunity and earnings.

These facts about gender have contributed to highlighting the issue of girls' education nationally and internationally. For example, foremost among the basic objectives of the Millennium Challenge Goals is to achieve universal primary education (goal 2) for all.<sup>2</sup> This article investigates ways in which the concomitant indicators can contribute to women's emancipation and empowerment. Principally, research shows clearly that the status of women in a country determines the degree of development of that nation.

However, while girls' education is considered an imperative for economic and social development, there are still very serious inequalities between boys and girls in developing countries like Morocco. Eliminating these inequalities is a priority for the international community and national actors alike, who see a proliferation of international, national and local initiatives in this field, from which we can draw lessons, as we shall see in due course.

Gender issues in education have started to gain importance and manifest themselves in many parts of Morocco, albeit in varying degrees. Despite the obvious importance of gender as a social identity that influences an individual's learning experiences and perceptions, and despite the fact that all students are "gendered" and thus potentially impacted, attention to gender issues in education appears to have been overlooked in favor of other educational variables until recently. Teacher training, which is a vital process for examining key teaching and learning issues, pays little attention to gender. As shown in Ennaji (2013a), teacher education textbooks, for example, allocate minimal space to gender issues and at times give the topic stereotypical and imprecise treatment (see also Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). Sanders (2002) notes that in many countries "gender equity [...] is in the earliest stages of consideration" (p. 242). Morocco is no exception.

In an ideal world, this gender-centric approach should be introduced in all domains, including in all disciplines of the teaching profession. However, this often does not occur for four principal reasons: i) lack of instructor background knowledge, ii) lack of interest in gender issues, iii) time constraints, and iv) erroneous and spurious beliefs that gender problems no longer exist.

Like previous research (Boutieri, 2016; Sadiqi, 2003), this study shows that educational actors and structures do not pay enough attention to gender, despite the fact that concerns continue to grow for gender relations and roles. The political and cultural environment and continually shifting education strategies and demands seem to be responsible for this neglect. Building on these ideas, the purpose of this article is to provide a reality-check on the conditions of girls' schooling in Morocco and to determine and debate the most critical hurdles that preclude girls' educational parity. Additionally, it aims to assess the challenges, the role of the State, the scale of the achievements already made, and to reflect upon how to shield and support gender equality in education.

To fulfill these aims, I will use Intersectionality theory, first highlighted by Crenshaw (1989) and developed by Collins (2008), as a theoretical framework. It stresses the intertwined forms of oppression based on gender, education, race, class, politics, age, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, or appearance. These regular types of oppression may overlap in women's lives, leading to complex impacts. From the perspective of this article, intersectionality theory helps understand that women's rights and access to education are linked to their role, voice, and participation in society. Women's education impacts numerous elements that govern their social status, including social dependency, political marginalization and economic

<sup>2</sup> The UN education 2030 agenda for action seeks to help countries achieve SDG 4 on education, which states that girls and boys, women and men, must be equally empowered 'in and through education'. According to the 2018 Global Education Monitoring Gender Report, considerable progress is being made in enrolment levels in education. Yet, gender inequality takes many forms and shapes, and more action and surveys are needed to tackle gender inequality in education.

discrimination. It plays a pivotal part in advancing their role in society. The questions that arise here are: What is the current status of women's education in Morocco, and what are the existing barriers? Could the political reform as context and the new constitution as a means to guarantee women's rights increase school enrolment ratios and literacy among women and girls? What is the role of the international community in setting the agenda? Have the reforms started to shift the cultural norms in favor of girls' education?

To answer these questions, reveal hidden hurdles and progress made in girls' education at the pre-school, primary and secondary level, I used semi-structured interviews and observations of the respondents at school and in the public sphere. The aim was to grasp their perceptions and opinions about the root causes of illiteracy among women, the obstacles they encountered, and the progress made if any. I interviewed 12 female students and 12 of their parents (6 mothers and 6 fathers), and 4 female teachers, one female school director, one president of a woman's association and 2 male administrators at the Ministry of Education. Most of the interviews took place during spontaneous discussions with these participants in the focus group. The age of the respondents varied between 14 and 65, and the interviewees were all from the region of Fez, albeit from different socio-economic backgrounds. To write this article, I also relied on previous publications on this topic, on official reports, newspaper articles, social media commentaries, and the experience of girls in my surroundings.

The article is organized as follows: The first section discusses the impact of the international community. The second section addresses the education gender gap in Morocco. The third one deals with the root causes of this gap. Section four assesses Morocco's endeavors to reduce the gender gap in schools, and section five analyzes the data collected in connection with the current situation of gender in Moroccan schools.

#### **The Impact of the international community on the education gender gap reduction**

United Nations (UN) bodies seek to implement basic human rights including education for all. Article 26 (1) of the Universal Nations Declaration of Human Rights stated,

*Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (UN, 1948) promulgate*

Since then, declarations and treaties have been circulated to put these goals into action. The International Bill of Human Rights includes provisions on compulsory and free elementary education and on non-discrimination in education based on gender, race, or ethnicity (UN General Assembly, 1948). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN General Assembly, 1979) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989) encapsulate the most inclusive legal commitments relating to both rights to education and to gender equality. The Jomtien Declaration (UNESCO, 1990), Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000b), and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs; UN, 2000) go significantly beyond the human rights declarations in their breadth. They insist on child care and education, learning programs for all young people and adults, and the enhancement of the quality of education, while the Dakar Framework for Action and MDGs also comprise specific time-defined targets.

The commitment to gender equality in MDG (UN, 2000) contained (a) Goal 2: achieving universal primary education — Target 3: pledge that, by 2015, children in all countries, boys and girls alike, will be able to take a full course of primary education and (b) Goal 3: uphold gender equality and women's empowerment — Target 4: eradicate gender inequality in primary, secondary, and tertiary education by 2015.

The Asia and Pacific Regional Framework for Action, promulgated by the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education for All 2000 Assessment (organized in Bangkok on January 17—20, 2000) stated,

*It is essential to eliminate systemic gender disparities, where they persist, amongst girls and boys, throughout the education system — in enrolment, achievement and completion; in teacher training and career development; in curriculum, and learning practices and learning processes. This requires better appreciation of the role of education as an instrument of women's equality and empowerment. (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 100)*

The recently established sustainable development goals confirm once again the world's pledge to attaining equal opportunities and fostering quality education for all, gender equality, and empowerment of women and girls by 2030 (UN Development Program, 2015). The achievement of these goals will necessitate considerable funds, political will, and unrelenting and sustained efforts by all stakeholders (Somani, 2017). These international declarations and treaties have had a positive impact on the schooling of girls and on the empowerment of women in Morocco, as we shall see below.

### The gender education gap in Morocco

According to the High Commissioner for Planning (HCP), the illiteracy rate in Morocco in 2017 was 36.5% (females 47.6% and males 25.3%). Women are more affected by illiteracy than men, especially in rural areas where more than half women are illiterate. In these areas, only one out of ten girls attends secondary school, and the implementation of compulsory education in these areas remains a monumental obstacle to overcome for Moroccan authorities (Auletto, 2017). The number of girls attending schools in rural areas is only 26%, while for boys it is 79%, and evidence reveals patterns in school enrolment ratios and literacy that are strongly divided along gender lines (Boutieri, 2016; Ibourk & Amaghous, 2014).

I do not claim that all Moroccan girls are underprivileged. Girls from privileged social backgrounds have been able to benefit from excellent education. Neither do I claim that the situation of all boys is much better. Boys from socio-economically deprived areas – in rural zones and provincial towns – are also in dire need of improvement. Poor infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, and poverty of families affect boys, as well. There are multiple cases of uneducated and unemployed boys doing odd jobs in the informal economy or not doing anything at all (Ennaji, 2013b).<sup>3</sup>

Although overall access to education has increased, and many more young girls are now pursuing higher education, these advances have failed to eradicate the gender gap. Enrolment ratios of females lag behind those of their male counterparts at all levels of education, as the following graphs from the Ministry of Education show.<sup>4</sup> (figure 1)

Morocco: Enrolment Ratio in Primary and Secondary Schools, 2016

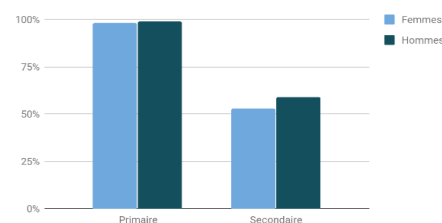


Figure 1. Enrollment ratio in primary and secondary schools

For the sake of comparison, despite efforts, at the primary school level, there is still a gender gap between the schooling of girls and boys; at the secondary level, the gap is more significant: 51% for girls, and 59% for boys. Success at the secondary level is similar, where 66% of girls and 70% of boys succeed.

Progress has been made at the literacy level, especially for students aged between 15 and 24, as the graph below illustrates: Between 1990 and 2016, the youth literacy rate has jumped from 29% to 62% for girls and from 55% to 82% for boys in 2016 (see Rodriguez, 2017; World Bank Report, 2017).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the US Department of Labor report : <https://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2012TDA/morocco.pdf> (accessed on Oct. 7, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> See the data on the website of the Ministry of Education: [https://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/Statistiques\\_sypedag.aspx](https://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/Statistiques_sypedag.aspx) (accessed on Aug. 2, 2018).

Also see the indicators by the High Commission for Planning: <http://bds.hcp.ma/indicators/3> (accessed on June 22, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> See this World Bank Report: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/09/13/early-childhood-education-in-morocco> (accessed on Aug. 5, 2018).

Net enrolment Rate, Junior Secondary Education (2008-2013)

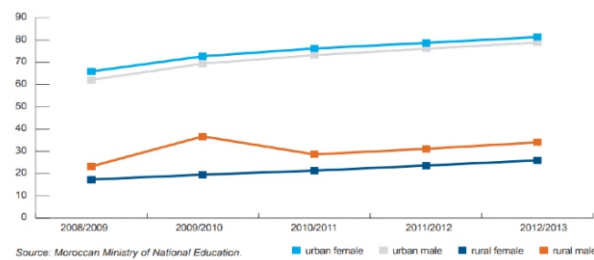


Figure 2. Net enrolment rate, junior secondary education

Youth Literacy Rate across Gender (age: 15 -24)

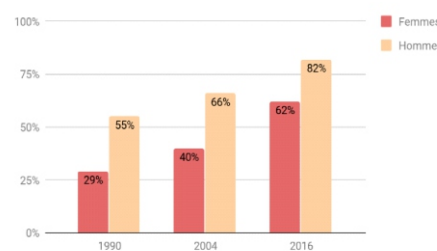


Figure 3. Youth literacy rate gender

Despite these achievements made in the last two decades, women's education still lags behind, and the literacy rates remain low. According to the World Bank 2016 report, just 10% of girls reach the university level,<sup>6</sup> but the numbers are increasing each year due to the opening of new schools and girls' dormitories (see discussion on Dar Taliba below).<sup>7</sup> (figure 2 & 3)

### The root causes of the gender inequalities in education

The major hurdles that hamper girls' and women's education in Morocco may be summarized in the following points. First, preschools are a rare commodity in rural areas and those that exist in urban centers are privately owned. "Lack of pre-schools means Morocco's children are at a disadvantage from the start", states Louis Witter (2018). In 2015–2016, only 43% of Moroccan children aged 4-5 were attending preschool and only 27.9% in rural zones. The quality of preschool structures varies immensely: poor districts tend to have poor preschool education while wealthy ones tend to have better quality education. Ahmed Falah, supervisor of a preschool in Timoulilt village (East of Marrakesh) pointed out to me: *"the situation in our preschool leaves much to be desired. It lacks in infrastructure: there are no computers, no pedagogical games, a shortage of books; additionally, the teachers lack adequate training."* It is noticeable that the absence of quality programs and supervision of teachers at this level hinders improvements in quality and reliability.

Second, parents from lower-income layers of society rarely pay attention to their children's education. Such positive interaction and encouragement from parents is scarce in Moroccan disadvantaged families because of low-education parents, large families, bad housing conditions, and lack of sensitization of parents about the importance of their care for their children (See World Bank Report of 2017).

UNESCO Institute of Statistics groups factors hindering girls' education into the following

<sup>6</sup> See this World Bank Report: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/09/13/early-childhood-education-in-morocco> (accessed on Jul. 29, 2018)

<sup>7</sup> See this article by Maria S. Rodriguez (2017). Five Facts about Women's Education in Morocco. The Borgen Project, 9 March 2017. <https://borgenproject.org/womens-education-in-morocco/> (accessed on 12 July, 2018)

<sup>8</sup> See the link to this article: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/lack-of-pre-schools-means-morocco-s-children-are-at-a-disadvantage-from-the-start-1.696651> (accessed on Aug. 4, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> It is actually my hometown village, situated at 10 miles from Beni-Mellal city.

<sup>10</sup> See note 6.



main categories<sup>11</sup> : i) socio-economic factors, such as poverty, direct school costs, working children, underage marriage, or cultural factors that impact the choices of families and students, such as parents' level of education, attitudes to girls' education, girls/women's roles, traditional/religious beliefs, , etc. and ii) political and institutional factors, such as education policies determining budget allocation, quality of syllabi, stereotypes in curricula/ textbooks, school context, distance to home, school canteens, sanitation facilities, teachers' attitudes and practices, school security, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Third, inequalities are also attributed to: the under-representation of women in education leadership positions, the inappropriate school infrastructure, and the misrepresentation of gender in textbooks (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014).<sup>13</sup> Cultural norms and the level of economic development continue to multiply the obstacles facing girls in their educational pursuit, as well as the interaction between a conservative culture and economic structures that have resulted in the country seeing lower levels of women's literacy and enrolment rates compared to other regions with similar income levels (see Boutieri, 2016). Meanwhile, Jordan and Tunisia have generally made more significant improvements than Morocco in reducing illiteracy and narrowing the gender gap.<sup>14</sup>

Fourth, the gender gap is also largely due to the archaic cultural norms, especially in rural areas, where traditional gender roles are prevalent. Many rural people do not yet see the importance of educating a girl. Additionally, most schools in rural zones are miles away from homes, and thus, become inaccessible in the winter because of the poor infrastructure.

Fifth, there is the language problem in the rural region, where Berber (Amazigh) is the mother tongue of most people (Ennaji, 2005, Chapter 3). Because standard Arabic is the main language of instruction, many girls prefer to stay at home because they cannot follow the lessons. Although Berber is recognized as the second official language after Arabic, most teachers appointed by the government in these areas do not speak Berber, which makes the learning experience impossible for Berberophone girls (Sadiqi, 2014: Chapter 5).

In Morocco, as in many other countries of the region, obstacles preventing girls and women from enjoying their right to education relate to all the above, including socio-economic, cultural, and religious factors. Other significant root causes include lack of, or weak implementation of compulsory education. Low enrolment and high school drop-out rates because of early marriages and patriarchal ideology are common. Girls' retention in schools is an equally serious issue. There are high drop-out rates, mainly during the transition from primary to secondary levels. If the school environment is remote, unclean, and has no sanitation and hygiene facilities, the girls tend to drop out. If the girls fail, they may simply give up altogether and go back home. Likewise, teachers rarely receive enough training utilizing the gender approach.

As the 2016 UNDP report states, education in North Africa is likely to be split into two parts in the future: very expensive private education, enjoyed by the better-off minority, and poor quality government education for the majority. Boys are sent to private schools which are believed to offer education of a better quality while girls are sent to public schools of lower quality. We are beginning to witness this tendency in Morocco. Such a divide would be risky for girl's education, because there is a tendency to pay for boys' education but not for girls', as girls are believed to be meant only for a life as a mother, and not a career where they could earn money. One of the effects of these deeply rooted traditions is a vicious circle whereby very few women receive the quality education needed to become policy-makers - and thus education policy remains male-dominated.

### **Morocco's endeavors in the domain of girls' education**

The socio-economic and demographic profile of the Moroccan woman indicates a society currently undergoing change. Since he accessed the throne in 1999, King Mohammad VI has

<sup>11</sup> Source: Gender-Sensitive Education Statistics and Indicators, available online at: [http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=5017\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=5017_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)  
Accessed on 23 January 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. UNESCO experts workshop (2010). URL : <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002107/210798e.pdf>  
(accessed on Aug. 7, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> See the link to the article of Llorent-Bedmar (2014): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071171.pdf>  
(accessed on Aug. 4, 2018)

<sup>14</sup> See Farzaneh, Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam, Valentine (2013).

made a number of educational reforms that resulted in a remarkable rise in the literacy rate, as mentioned above. Morocco is known for being one of the most progressive states in North Africa because of advancements of women's rights and emancipation. Since 2000, it has witnessed a reform of its educational system and vast national campaigns, by the government and civil society organizations (NGOs), to increase women's literacy rates. Hundreds of women's NGOs are actively involved in enhancing literacy programs and girls' education (Ennaji, 2010).<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the State has launched adult literacy programs at the national level (*mahw l-'uummiya*), which provides classes in local mosques and schools. Although the program is open to both men and women, mothers of school-aged children have the highest attendance rate. These classes give mothers the opportunity to complete the schooling they never had the chance to do. They help them do math, read and write, and enable them to assist their children with their homework.

The State has recently decided to open preschools in many zones; the Ministry of Education announced on July 18, 2018 the launching of a vast national program for the generalization and reform of preschool education in Morocco for the period 2018–2028.<sup>16</sup> Preschool education, which halves school attrition, improves success by at least 50% throughout the school trajectory and significantly increases human capital and life expectancy, according to the High Commission of Planning. In 2014, nearly 995,000 children aged 3 to 5 years attended preschool, which corresponds to an overall preschool attendance rate of 48.7%, as demonstrated by the 2014 national survey on preschool education, produced by the High Commission for Planning in October–November 2014. The private sector hosts 94.5% of preschool children, compared to 5.5% for the public sector, according to the survey. This indicates that access of children aged 3–5 years to preschool starts at an average age of 3, giving rise to a preschool of 1.5 years, on average.<sup>17</sup> In a recent declaration, the new Minister of Education Said Amzazi launched the *Tayssir* generalization program which aims to achieve a school enrolment of 100% in preschool by 2027–2028.<sup>18</sup>

Preschool education has expanded over the last three decades mainly in cities as an alternative to the traditional schools like the *Msid* and the *Kouttab*, which provide Islamic style education. These traditional structures teach children the moral values of Islam as well as basic literacy and math. In 2015–2016, there was 60% enrolment in modern preschools. According to the World Bank, enrolments in preschool structures have multiplied remarkably over the past 17 years with +10% increase between 2001 and 2013 for children aged 4–5.<sup>19</sup>

A National Cooperation Program was established to offer preschool facilities to children (4–5) from poor families. By 2014, the program had created about 779 preschool structures, chiefly in rural zones, with more than half pupils being girls. The Ministry of Youth and Sports also contributed to this endeavor by creating other kindergartens and nurseries where approximately 47% attendees were girls (Roderiguez, 2017). Likewise, substantial efforts have been made to improve the quality of primary education for children aged 6–11 years. Hundreds of schools have been built, and the enrolment rate for girls in primary schools increased from 54% in 1995 to 98% in 2016. According to the World Bank, Morocco's gender parity index is less than 0.95 at the primary level, indicating a narrowing gender gap.<sup>20</sup>

According to Mohammed Hassad, ex-Minister of Education, the primary school enrollment rate reached 99.1% during the school year 2016–2017 compared to 92.1% in just 2008–2009. On August 7, 2017 in the House of Representatives, he stated that primary education had reached near full enrolment in Morocco. According to ministry figures, the school enrolment

<sup>15</sup> One of the most well-known civil society organizations that invests a lot in education in rural areas is "Fondation BMCE pour l'Education". It has built over a hundred schools across the country.

<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://www.medias24.com/MAROC/SOCIETE/184496-Un-budget-annuel-de-3-MMDH-pour-ameliorer-l-enseignement-prescolaire-au-Maroc.html> (accessed on Aug. 5, 2018)

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://maroc.ma/fr/actualites/hcp-lenseignement-prescolaire-reduit-de-moitie-les-deperditions-scolaires-et-ameliore-dau> (accessed on Aug. 5, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> See the summary of the Minister's declaration: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/09/253846/said-amzazi-morocco-education/> (accessed on Sept. 28, 2018)

<sup>19</sup> See this World Bank Report: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/09/13/early-childhood-education-in-morocco>

<sup>20</sup> See note 5 above.

rate for girls jumped from 90.3% in 2008–2009 to 98.5% in 2016–2017.<sup>21</sup>

For the junior high school level, the general enrolment rate increased by 17%, from 70.6% in 2008–2009 to 87.6% in 2016–2017. For girls, this rate rose to 84.7% in 2016–17, compared to 64.9% in 2008–2009. "Despite this evolution, more needs to be done to reach full enrolment," said ex-Minister Hassad.

With regard to the qualifying senior high school level, the enrolment rate stood at 66.6% in 2016–2017, compared to 50.2% in 2008–2009, an increase of 16%. For girls, it reached 63% in 2016–2017, compared to 45.8% in 2008–2009.<sup>22</sup>

Morocco also endeavored to overcome these difficulties and improve its education system on the basis of international recommendations. For example, pursuant to UNESCO's recommendation of "an investment of 6% of gross national product (GNP) in the field of education,"<sup>23</sup> the State launched various programs and policies of non-formal education with the aim to help massive numbers of out-of-school students and drop-outs. The principal objective of these programs was to provide the children who left school with a second chance. Around 50% of girls officially attended these non-formal education classes, mainly from the rural zones, hence substantially increasing the number of literate girls over the last two decades.

Furthermore, the principles of equality and equity have been an important tool for gender main streaming in the Moroccan budgetary reform plan. A gender-sensitive budget framework was established in 2002 and a new finance law was passed in 2014, which integrated the gender dimension in the budgeting mechanism. In 2006, the government enacted the "National Strategy for Gender Equality" that provides a practical approach for the reduction of gender disparities in all sectors and seeks to promote girls' education and women's rights to counter the multiple inequalities they experience (Ibourk and Amaghous, 2014). Subsequent to this strategy a new program, the "National Strategy for Equity and Equality", was adopted for the period 2012–2016. It involves eight pivotal areas, namely equal access to education and health services, fighting against all forms of gender-based discrimination, equal access to decision-making positions, institutionalizing gender equality, improving the living conditions of women and girls, providing equal opportunities in the job market, and the social and economic empowerment of women (Boutieri, 2016).

As the amended 2011 Constitution guarantees more freedom to civil society today, many NGOs continue lobbying for women's legal and political rights and advocating for literacy and eliminating gender inequalities in all sectors. Their work is generally supported by the government. Most programs that aim to reduce the gender gap in education are funded either by the government, the European Union, or the World Bank through ministries, governmental organizations and NGOs, or by the private sector which supports programs led by local NGOs (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2010).

In 2008, Morocco officially approved CEDAW without any reservations, in a speech made by King Mohammed VI, with the aim to enhance the legal position of women on the basis of the principle of equal opportunity and the application of international declarations ratified by Morocco (Ennaji, 2016). This decision is an important indication that Morocco is committed to gender equality and to combating all sorts of violence against women.

Significant measures have been taken by the State to promote gender equality in the educational system through the National Program for Promoting Human Rights Culture in Schools.<sup>24</sup> The government, however, has not taken any actions against parents who do not send their daughters to school. Moroccan human rights NGOs endeavor to reduce gender inequalities in education through projects enhancing girls' education in all areas and through surveys and reports on discrimination, violence, and sexual harassment in schools (Ennaji & Sadiqi, 2011).

In Morocco, the most noteworthy public policies concerning gender equality in education

<sup>21</sup> Source: <https://int.ma/mohammed-hassad-taux-de-scolarisation-primaire-a-atteint-991/> (accessed on 29 July, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> See Note 7

<sup>23</sup> Source the Moroccan Francophone magazine Tel Quel: [https://telquel.ma/2018/08/01/exclusif-coup-daccellerateur-pour-le-deal-saham-sanlam\\_1605985/](https://telquel.ma/2018/08/01/exclusif-coup-daccellerateur-pour-le-deal-saham-sanlam_1605985/) (accessed on 1 August 2018).

<sup>24</sup> See this source: <https://www.diplomatie.ma/Portals/0/july%202012/CDH-English.pdf> (accessed on Aug. 4, 2018).



are the Charter for Education and Training (2000) and subsequently the Najah Emergency Plan (2009) which was put into effect in order to speed up the attainment of the Charter's goals (Ibourk & Amaghousse, 2014).

#### **Charter for education and training (2000)**

In addition to combating illiteracy, upgrading the quality of education, and improving schools' infrastructure, the Charter for Education and Training emphasized the generalization of education and its compulsory aspect in order to eradicate the gender gap, especially in rural areas which suffer from the highest rates of gender inequality. In order to attain these objectives, the Charter implemented various measures, namely:

- adopting a gender approach in the State's budget;
- revising textbooks in an attempt to eliminate gender stereotypes;
- adopting a gender perspective in the textbooks;
- creating scholarships for female and male students on an equal footing;
- providing school transportation to girls residing in rural areas;
- building more schools, canteens and boarding schools to foster girls' enrolment;
- distributing one million school bags to students, nearly half of whom are girls;
- giving flour and oil to needy parents who send their children to schools;
- integrating human rights and citizenship education in the education sector, including curricula, syllabi, academic books and programs;
- appointing the central commission for human rights as a coordinating body in charge of the education programs.

The major challenges encountered in implementing these measures were essentially the gender stereotypes and attitudes toward girls' education, the low household earnings which obliged children, especially girls, to seek job opportunities in order to make an income. Other difficulties were the lack of basic education infrastructure and equipment, the soaring drop-out rates and insufficient financial resources.

#### **The Najah emergency plan (2009 - 2012)**

In order to resolve these problems, the Najah (Success) emergency plan, was adopted in 2009, as a national strategy, to step up the application of the Charter and attain its objectives. Mainstreaming gender in education was one of the major goals of this strategy. The plan started from a thorough assessment of the gender situation in order to determine the issues and establish realistic goals. Gender equality, which is politically and financially supported by the State, development partners and UN organizations like the UNESCO, has been promoted through several programs.

The Najah Plan focused on limiting drop-out rates, reviewing syllabi and textbooks, mainstreaming gender and training teachers on gender issues with emphasis on rural zones. It built 600 boarding schools, provided 650 school buses, and increased the number of scholarships and canteens by 8 times, helping more girls to attend school.

Many measures were taken in order to lessen the impact of socio-economic difficulties on education and to make education accessible for all and guarantee gender equality. This goal was evident in three initiatives:

- The "Million District Initiative": which focused on basic education in urban and rural areas.
- A support program to ensure equal chances in order to facilitate compulsory education through the provision of direct financial assistance to poor families. Around 280,000 students (girls and boys) benefited from this program during the school year 2009-2010, which led to a remarkable increase in the enrolment rates in elementary schools (10.5%) and a 71% fall in the drop-out rates. (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014).
- Distributing free school meals, uniforms and providing transportation: 1,024,105 students benefited from school meals while 86,422 benefited from uniforms during the 2009-2010 school year. School transportation was provided in collaboration with local partners. This program also aimed at increasing the granted amounts of scholarships. (Llorent-Bedmar, *ibid*)

### Massaar program (2013 -)

In 2013, the Ministry of Education decided to build a smart education data system. It issued Massaar Program which provides an ID number to every student between the ages of 6 and 18. It is an initiative which aims to provide identification for all school-age students and openly links them to the attendance assessment and school learning. With Massaar system the Ministry provides the opportunity to track all students' academic performance and experience. By assessing such data, the Ministry can come up with relevant policies and recommendations which can help to attain educational goals like gender gap reduction and improve student achievements. Massaar also offers many advantages to parents and students by providing access to targeted data such as grades and transcripts. Parents can access the timetable of their children, including attendance and exams. They can also directly interact with the school teachers and administrators. Likewise, teachers and school managers benefit from communication with parents and students and are able to track their performance (Abdul-Hamid, 2017).

When it was first launched, Massaar was met with negativity by many students, parents, and administrators because they found it too technical and difficult to access. I have talked to several students and parents who spearheaded the campaign against Massaar and asked them about the real motives behind their attitude. They all stated that the technology might betray them, and the grading mechanism might make them fail.<sup>25</sup>

What these students did not know is that all the administrators have to do is to fill in the computerized sheet with the grades teachers give to students. Then, Massaar automatically provides the total grade, free of bias, and irrespective of gender. On the contrary, a teacher may make errors, while a machine cannot.

Thus, Moroccan students reacted negatively at the beginning, expressing an illogical fear of the use of computers and programs like Massaar at school. The purpose of Massaar is actually to offer equal access and guarantee transparency and gender equality. Today, most students, parents, administrators, and teachers appreciate it. With this system, parents can access their children's grades and keep track of progress in their studies, as mentioned above.

### Strategic vision of the 2015–2030 reform

This reform emphasizes the role of parents in the promotion of education for achieving schools of equity and quality. One of its recommendations is the elaboration and implementation of the Tayssir program, which provides needy parents, especially in rural areas, with financial and material support on a yearly basis to help with the schooling of their children and to increase student enrolment in primary schools. The aim is to ensure access to education for all. Through this generalization of education program, the government seeks to reach a school enrolment of 100% in preschool by 2027–2028,<sup>26</sup> to reduce the rate of school drop-outs from 5.7% to 1% in rural primary schools by 2024–2025, and to further cut the number of drop-outs from 12% in secondary schools in both rural and urban areas to 3% for the 2024–2025 school year.

The implementation of these social programs is likely to contribute to the improvement of the level of schooling of students and to the reduction of the school drop-out rate. Let us now move on to discuss and analyze the current situation on the basis of the latest developments and the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents elucidated from the collection of data.

### Analysis

The respondents of the focus group had varying levels of education, which influenced their answers, decisions, and perceptions of girls' education – that is, their ability to understand the benefits of education for girls and to take advantage of opportunities offered to them through the schooling system and the facilities provided, as shown in the following table:

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<sup>25</sup> See Omar Bihmidine (2014).

<sup>26</sup> See note 11.

Table 1. Names and characteristics of participants in the interviews<sup>1</sup>

Interviewee	Place of Origin	Gender	Age	Education	Social Class
Amina	Fez city	F	41	Primary	Working cl.
Samira	Fez city	F	31	University	Middle Class
Aicha	Fez city	F	65	University	Middle Class
Kenza	Fez city	F	32	High school	Middle Class
Nawal	Fez city	F	29	University	Middle Class
Rabiaa	Imouzzar	F	37	University	Middle Class
Rabha	Imouzzar	F	36	Primary	Farmer
Karima	Imouzzar	F	25	High school	Farmer
Khadija	Sefrou	F	44	University	Middle Class
Ratiba	Sefrou	F	34	University	Middle class
Yamna	Fez city	F	46	University	Middle Class
Halima	Sefrou	F	54	University	Middle Class
Zahra	Fez city	F	17	High School	Working cl.
Saadia	Fez city	F	17	High School	Working cl.
Ilham	Fez city	F	14	High School	Working cl.
Malika	Fez city	F	15	High School	Working cl.
Zineb	Fez city	F	16	High school	Working cl.
Asmae	Fez city	F	16	High School	Working cl.
Salma	Imouzzar	F	14	High school	Working cl.
Atiqa	Imouzzar	F	15	High School	Working cl.
Najia	Laanouser	F	17	High School	Working cl.
Hakima	Imouzzar	F	18	High School	Working cl.
Assia	Imouzzar	F	18	High School	Workingcl.
Loubna	Sefrou	F	14	High School	Working cl.
Ali	Sefrou	M	53	University	Middle Class
Mohamed	Sefrou	M	29	University	Middle Class
Driss	Sefrou	M	28	High school	Working cl.
Yahya	Fez	M	33	Primary	Working cl.
Rachid	Menzel	M	43	University	Middle Class
Azzedine	Ouled Tayeb	M	54	University	Middle Class
Hamid	Ouled Tayeb	M	50	Primary	Working cl.
Ahmed	Fez city	M	54	University	Middle Class

As we shall see below, since King Mohammed VI's access to the throne in 1999, the action of the State and civil society has impacted public education programs on literacy and girls' education. A network of boarding houses for girls (Dar Taliba "Home for the Female Student") initiated by Mohammed VI Foundation, is enabling girls to access education by appeasing

<sup>1</sup> Respondents' names were anonymized

parents' worries about rural girls studying far away from home. According to Yamna, 46, director of a boarding house in Fez, "these facilities are very helpful for girls because parents would not send their daughters to school and stay away from them if they were not in a reputable dormitory". These institutions were created within the framework of the government program called "Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain (INDH)" launched by King Mohammed VI in 2005. The INDH program recognizes Moroccan parents' concerns and has responded to their needs taking into account local beliefs and values. By 2017, the government has built up to 130 girls' boarding houses across the country (Hicks, 2017). The latter provide free accommodation and meals for underprivileged children and "peace of mind for the parents." (Hicks, *ibid*). They are generally funded by the local councils, the Ministry of Interior through the INDH, the European Union, and some foundations and charities. These institutions have lately become widespread in the country.

The creation of girls' dormitories across Morocco is giving female students new opportunities to learn. "I am good and safe here. There's no school in my rural area, so this is the only way I could pursue my studies," says 18-year-old Assia, whom I interviewed when she was in her second year of senior high school (Lycée). Her classmate Najia, 17, told me: "I come from Laanouser, a distant rural village that has no school for children beyond primary level. My mother is illiterate and she insists on me finishing school. I want to go to university and train to become a doctor. I have to work very hard".

During the week, students study in their school and live in the dormitories, and are allowed to visit their families on the weekends. These institutions are in high demand, as there is competition for places. Samira, 31, the assistant director of the boarding house added: "last September, we received more than 100 applications for just 60 beds; we actually had to turn down many people because we could not accommodate them all here."

These boarding houses allow many girls to escape early marriage which is quite common in rural areas. According to research, over 34 000 girls under 18, which is the legal age for marriage, quit school to get married.<sup>27</sup> Yahya, 33, an employee at the Fez boarding house said that since the institution was opened in 2006, all the girls completed school, except for one who did not because she got married at 17."

The ramifications of such hurdles as early marriage for Moroccan girls are multiple. As mentioned above, although most girls (99%) finish primary education, this figure diminishes to 80% for the secondary level, and drops to 50% for the baccalaureate level (end of high school level). Yet, in rural zones, only around 18% of girls complete their secondary education. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, the illiteracy rate for rural women is around 42%, according to official statistics.

Azzeddine, 54, director of primary education at the Ministry pointed out: "the integration of girls in schools is having a significant impact because parents are now more convinced than ever before that it is necessary to send their daughters to school and help them to complete their education." According to official statistics, between 1998 and 2013, the number of girls who have obtained their baccalaureate certificate increased from 32% to 54% overall (Auletto, 2017). There is also evidence that girls outperform boys particularly in high school education (Auletto, *ibid*).

For girls, the benefits are obvious. "I think it's sad that some parents don't let their daughters finish their education," says 29-year-old Nawal, who teaches French at Lycée Sidi Brahim in Fez. "Boys and girls are born equal, and many women have proved it, including myself."<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, as shown by one of the interviewees, Amina, a 41-year-old widow, mother of three daughters: "without the financial help of the government, I would have been unable to send my daughters to school, for I am poor and my income is very limited. With this support, I intend to encourage my daughters to finish secondary education at least."

Many young female students from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds have benefited from the help of the government and civil society organizations, as this statement made by Loubna, a 14 year-old junior high school student, indicates:

*My cousin and I attend the same high school. We collaborate and we consult each other on many things. We are doing fine. We study hard in order to succeed. My mother is a*

<sup>27</sup> See Ennaji and Sadiqi (2018) on the issues of child marriage in North Africa.

<sup>28</sup> From the April 2017 print edition. Source: <http://www.theafricareport.com/North-Africa/morocco-a-safe-space-for-girls-to-learn.html>

*housewife with no income. My father is a manual worker with a very low income. Thanks to the government's program Tayssir, my father receives a monthly allowance, and I also take free lunches at the school canteen. These measures are helpful, as they allow me to learn and to enjoy school.*

Despite compulsory education laws and open admissions policies, schools are still inaccessible to many parts of the female population. Barriers to girls' education are not only found in school administrations but also in the home, in the marketplace, and in the wider society. In secondary schools, enrolment remains relatively low because of school attrition.

Thus, considerable progress towards gender equality in education has been made due to initiatives taken by the government and to the efforts of civil society associations in implementing the mid-term strategic work plan. However, these endeavors still need to be augmented to guarantee gender equality in education.

In the face of the public education crisis and one way of alleviating the problems of overcrowded classes, the government nowadays encourages the private sector, as stated earlier. As a result, private schools are flourishing in the big cities. At the primary level, private school enrolment has risen from 4% in 1999 to 15% in 2015, according to ministry figures. "In large cities, 70% to 80% of students are enrolled in the private sector," says Sylvain Aubry (2014), from the Research Center Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>29</sup> However, quality is not always guaranteed even in the private sector (Kadiri, 2016).<sup>30</sup>

One of my interviewees, Kenza, a 32-year-old mother, decided to take her only child out of public school the day she found out that the teacher of her 9-year-old daughter was absent for three weeks, and the pupils were left without any learning. She said: "although my salary is small, I'm ready to pay for her private school, which is a good Arabic-French bilingual institution with competent teachers." Another interviewee, Rachid, a 43-year-old administrator pointed out that "the State has the necessary means to ensure access to school for all. That's why we pay taxes. However, everyone flees the public sector, so the government should reduce our taxes drastically."

The reasons why city dwellers are abandoning public education are multiple. Aicha Chenna, head of the Association of Women's Solidarity, which works for the rights of children and single mothers, whom I interviewed, told me: "Buildings are in ruins, overcrowded classes reach 50 students per class sometimes more; teachers are absent; violence is rampant in schools; the public institutions are in a deplorable state."

According to Amal Aldoseri, member of the UN Committee on Children's Rights (CDE), the Committee has tried to draw the Moroccan government's attention to the growing privatization of education and its negative consequences, especially for underprivileged girls.<sup>31</sup> "They have to explain why, for more than a decade, they have supported and encouraged the development of private, for-profit, private education, thus tripling the number of children enrolled in private schools, and participating in further widening the gap between girls and boys and inequalities in access to quality education, which will further divide society between the rich and the poor," she added.

A new report titled "A school of social justice" issued by the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, is meant to contribute to the reflection carried out on the renewal of Morocco's development model towards a more specific just and inclusive model. Indeed, social inequalities aggravated by school inequalities, pull the whole society down. The goal of providing all children and young people with the necessary conditions to access quality education based on their merit alone is the foundation of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision.

This approach is in line with the demands of the Sustainable Development Goal 2, which was approved by all United Nations member states – including all Arab countries – in 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Source: [http://globalinitiative-esr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Visual-privatisation-in-education-in-Morocco-updated\\_fr.pdf](http://globalinitiative-esr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Visual-privatisation-in-education-in-Morocco-updated_fr.pdf) (accessed on July 12, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> See Ghali Kadiri's article published in Le Monde: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/11/21/au-maroc-la-disparition-des-ecoles-publiques-accelere-la-marchandisation-de-l-education\\_5035293\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/11/21/au-maroc-la-disparition-des-ecoles-publiques-accelere-la-marchandisation-de-l-education_5035293_3212.html) (accessed on July 12, 2018)

<sup>31</sup> For more on this issue, see this discussion: <http://www.right-to-education.org/fr/blog/porter-les-enjeux-de-la-privatisation-de-l-education-au-maroc-devant-l-onu> (accessed on Aug 3, 2018).



Achieving these goals – which range from eliminating illiteracy and gender-based discrimination in all sectors, to ending poverty and hunger – will require the involvement of all dynamic actors of society (including government, NGOs, media, and the private sector) which are capable of producing technological solutions and willing to support the vision of no child left behind, for every child has the right to a proper education.

The reforms implemented by Morocco since the 1999 have led to a shift in cultural norms and to a change in attitudes. They have raised awareness about the importance of educating girls, have strengthened civil society, targeted advocacy campaigns, activated political will, aided by dynamic affirmative action by the State and policy makers. The majority of study respondents have proposed stronger community commitment through gender sensitization of youth and teachers, revision of curricula and textbooks, and through socially influential people like women role models, progressive politicians, civil society leaders, writers, journalists, and artists.

All respondents insisted on the tremendous impact of girls' education. They argued that education is a basic human right and there is no reason to exclude girls from this right. One male education administrator by the name of Ahmed mentioned, "Obviously, educating girls is crucial, not because they are girls, but because they are human beings and they should be given the right to pursue their personal and professional development." Khadija, a female interviewee aged 44 stated, "Society is made of men and women. The latter also have the right to pursue their happiness and participate fully in public life and in development." Another respondent, Hamid aged 50, added that "educating girls is beneficial on all levels: personal, professional, family, and societal levels. Education is a powerful means to make a positive change in society."

Education has also developed the human capabilities of Moroccan girls. It has not only improved their lives, but also the lives of their families and communities at large. Excluding girls from education keeps them at a disadvantage, deepens the gender gap, and exacerbates their societies' underdevelopment. Halima, a female educator aged 54 stated:

*Morocco cannot develop or make any significant progress without educating its girls and women. Girls' access to education opens up doors and creates wealth and development in the country and across generations. Their success and well-being trickle down to members of their families and communities. Without equal education opportunities, a woman is denied moving towards her full abilities and deprives her family and community of their full economic and social capabilities.*

According to Zahra, a female high school student aged 17, "not having an education really limits girls from participating in many activities which could benefit society; education enables them to find jobs and to contribute to growth."

Ali, a male educator aged 53 explained,

*An educated mother will be able to raise better educated children. If a girl is educated, she will transfer that knowledge and values to all those around her resulting in a positive ripple effect. If she is educated, she will have a profession. If she brings home an income, the whole family will respect this woman much more than if she was just a housewife and taking care of her family and children.*

Families with educated girls have a wider perspective and a positive attitude toward society. Education has helped Moroccan girls to be confident, independent, earn self-respect in their community, and use their full potential. It has increased the work force and raised productivity and economic growth.

Most educated girls and women have often become role models who inspire others to pursue education and later a career. Education has provided them with the opportunity to confidently impact their lives and make a positive change in their families and wider

<sup>32</sup> As the Millennium Development Goals era came to a conclusion at the end of 2015, 2016 saw the official launch of the bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders in September of the same year at the United Nations. The new Agenda calls on countries to multiply efforts to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next 15 years. "The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success." Goal 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life long learning". Goal 5 seeks "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

communities. Education has become an important tool for women's empowerment, as it consolidates their role in society. Many of them have become community leaders and play an active role in development and public life.

In sum, educating girls has contributed to the decrease of poverty, illiteracy and health issues, thus contributing to the development of the Moroccan society and positively transforming attitudes. As Mohamed, a male educator mentioned in the interview, "It is utterly central to educate girls. Investing in girls' education and women's empowerment is among the most beneficial initiatives for development that a country can take."

## Conclusion

Two years after the launch of the bold seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, it is today more vital than ever that every effort must be made and that laws and policies be improved and implemented if girls and women are to exercise their right to education.

The evolution towards a society based on merit and social justice implies bridging the gender gap, and loosening the link between social origin and school capital. Education-training is at the heart of this problem. In other words, only personal merit should count, allowing the level and quality of training to make education a social ladder. Enhancing the quality of education, its benefits and its economic and social performance without neglecting anyone is an imperative in the perspective of a fair and sustainable human development model. Education, as the foundation on which this model is based, demands that we do not abandon the ambition to "bring all children to success, regardless of their social, territorial, gender or personal background."<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned above, the main causes behind hurdles to girls' education in Morocco are often poverty, tradition, and patriarchy favoring boys' education. However, these are not the main culprits. The faulty educational policies, inadequate resource allocation, and neglect of rural and human development since independence are also to blame. Combating this kind of discrimination will necessitate further reforms of legislation and policy, in order to guarantee equal access to all levels of education. A more effective implementation of the compulsory education law is urgently needed, as girls' access to and retention in schools remains low.

In addition to legal and education reforms, awareness-raising on gender issues among decision-makers, teachers, parents, students, as well as the general public is necessary in an attempt to fight against gender-based legal, social, cultural, and attitudinal discriminations. In general, Moroccans must change the way they view girls and women. Informing and sensitizing parents on the need to motivate and encourage their daughters, communicating with them, and carefully supervising their cognitive development from birth to the age of elementary school are of paramount importance.

I agree with the recent World Bank Report that "Morocco will reap long term economic and human returns by establishing quality standards of early childhood care and education, which will need to be set, monitored and enforced across the country."<sup>34</sup> This will contribute to the protection and support of children's development and guarantee equal opportunities to all regardless of gender or other variables.

This article has provided an overview of the state of the art concerning girls' education in Morocco, what has been done, and the greater efforts that are still badly needed. Much of the supporting evidence (data analysis, statistics, and ethnographic narrative) show that although some progress has been made, many issues persist and continue to leave many girls (and boys) behind. The problems that remain are harder on rural girls and women mainly because the rural areas have historically been considered "useless" by the government (Crawford, 2008). It is only by accompanying reforms in education by further investments, provision of the adequate infrastructure and democracy that education in Morocco will be gender-friendly and more inclusive. This will help build the human capital that can serve the country's development goals, contributing to greater productivity and improving people's living standards. Education, a key pillar from early childhood development to university, is essentially a confirmed medium for long-term human development and gender gap reduction.

<sup>33</sup> See the report of the Higher Council on Education, Training, and Scientific Research:

<http://www.csefrs.ma/publications/ecole-de-justice-sociale/?lang=fr> (accessed on 21 April, 2018)

<sup>34</sup> See the World Bank Report f 2017: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/09/13/early-childhood-education-in-morocco> (accessed on May 29, 2018)

Finally, this study corroborates the Intersectionality theory, as it confirms the fact that the multiple types of oppression based on gender, education, class, culture and age may overlap in women's lives, leading to complex outcomes. Girls' education impacts numerous elements that determine their social status and positively affect their lives. It plays a vital role in advancing their contribution in the wider society.

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