



Migration Profile

MOROCCO

A. Executive Summary

Morocco has been a country of emigration since the 1960s, with a reported 2.8 million Moroccans having moved abroad (2014). Initially, it was mostly low-skilled workers who migrated to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but then a shift occurred as high skilled workers began moving to the United States and Canada. This has served to alter the view of Moroccans from guest workers to more permanent residents in their new countries. Within Morocco, internal migration has resulted in an increasing percentage of the population that resides in urban centres (63.5%). A decrease in productive land, in conjunction with the economic and social opportunities that city centres offer, have encouraged this shift from a rural to a predominantly urban way of life.

Given its geographic location, Morocco is both a destination and transit country for international migrants. Migrants come from Sub-Saharan Africa, France, and Algeria because Morocco provides higher salaries, borders with Europe, and also offers better employment opportunities. At the end of 2017, there was a total of 95,800 migrants, most of whom came from France (36,129), followed by Algeria (13,711), Spain (4,200), Tunisia (2,643), and Syria (2,098). Many irregular migrants travel from Sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco with the hope of crossing into Europe. Upon reaching Morocco many stay, however, due to restrictions imposed by Europe, as well as the migrants' inability to pay for their ongoing journey. As of May 2019, UNHCR registered 2,505 asylum-seekers and 6,489 refugees, marking a 64.18% increase from the beginning of 2016. Of those, 34% are under the age of 18, and more than half of the refugees (55%) are from Syria. Arabic speakers account for 75% of the refugee population. Migrants typically leave their country of origin due to poverty, lack of regular employment resulting in limited options and little opportunity for education.

The flow of irregular migrants also increases their vulnerability to trafficking. Between 2010 and 2012, MSF treated 697 survivors in Morocco, 122 of them in Oujda, and 575 in Rabat. These reports do not include sub-Saharan migrants who are subjected to trafficking at a rate that is believed to have doubled in recent years. At the same time, the number of Moroccan children who are exploited in the country for labour, sex trafficking, domestic work, and begging has decreased.

The legal framework for migration in Morocco includes: the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, the 2004 Judgment of the Court of First Instance of Tetouan on the crime of illegal immigration

and emigration and the encouraging illegal immigration, the 2003 Law n°02-03 on the entry and stay of foreign nationals into Morocco, emigration and irregular immigration, the 2003 Law n°65-69 on the Labour Code, and the 1958 Code of Moroccan nationality modified in 2007. These laws are implemented by various government branches, as well as the IOM, UNHCR, and Arab League, among others. Civil society entities, such as Group for the Defence and Accompaniment of Foreigners and Immigrants and Moroccan Association for Human Rights, have also been at the helm in protecting refugees, migrants, in addition to providing consulting services for the implementation and legislation of new migration policies.

Significant efforts are being made to adopt a more humanitarian approach to migration policy and its implementation, including the 2013 National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum by the Council of Government. The implementation, however, has not always been successful.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Morocco is located in Northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The population (35,561,654) is mainly distributed along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. Most of the population (63.5%) live in urban regions, with 3,752,000 living in Casablanca. Almost all (99%) are Arab-Berber and identify as Muslim. The remaining 1% identify as Christian, Jewish, Baha'I, and other religions. Since 2017, social tensions in Morocco have increased due to lingering problems related to high youth unemployment, income inequality, limited access to health services and corruption. These social tensions often provoke protests in the less developed parts of the country.

II. Internal and International Migration

Morocco became a country of destination for migrants in the mid-1990s, though its overall immigrant population is low. In 2014, for example, in a population of over 33 million, only 0.2% were foreign immigrants. In 2008, a reported 60,000 foreign nationals held a valid residence permit. Most migrants came from France (16,000) and Algeria (more than 12,000). At the end of 2017, a total of 95,800 migrants arrived in Morocco, most of them from France (36,129), followed by Algeria (13,711), then Spain (4,200), Tunisia (2,643), and Syria (2,098). Their reasons for migration included family reunification (40%), work (37%), or education (23%). Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and elsewhere travel to Morocco on a visa to pursue studies and find jobs in unskilled and skilled trade sectors. Most work in construction, or as receptionists in call centres, and as domestic workers. Those who come to Morocco as graduates, often find new opportunities as doctors, artists and entrepreneurs.

Besides this legal flow of migration, there is a flow of irregular migration,, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, and mostly young males with an average age of 27.7 years. Morocco has visa-free agreements with some countries, for example Senegal and Mali, which makes entry from there easier. Many migrants coming from Sub-Saharan Africa are fleeing political and economic crises and hope to make it to Europe, though without a visa, many will become stranded at the borders. As Morocco is often seen as a transit country by European

governments, it has been put under a lot of pressure to control the flow of irregular migrants. Despite the low number of foreign nationals in Morocco, migrants are still subjected to mistreatment. In 2003 the National Council for Human Rights passed legislation intended to halt police violence against irregular migrants and their deportation to Morocco's borders. This drew attention to the need for access to justice and basic services for irregular migrants. Since the early 2000s, a period of economic growth in Morocco, more migrants originally transiting toward Europe began to settle in Morocco. Media outlets report on the difficulties that migrants face as they try to integrate into Moroccan society. Many of the reports include incidents of violence and growing tensions between immigrants and Moroccan citizens. Moroccans often view sub-Saharan migrants stereotypically as poor, dangerous, easy to exploit, and carriers of disease. Many believe that the continued influx of migrants will continue to destabilize the country's social system.

Beginning in the early 1990s, migration from rural to urban areas accelerated substantially. In 1991 the urban population rose steeply, from under a third (29.3%) to almost half (48.4%) the total population. This shift from rural to urban life has since become the dominant pattern of internal migration in Morocco. The push factors include reduced water supplies and degraded or scarce arable land in rural areas, in addition to rural areas lacking health and education services in comparison to urban areas. Men tend to migrate for economic reasons and women for family reasons. Over the next couple of years, it is believed that Morocco will continue this transition from a predominately rural to a more fully urban country. Rural employment is often constrained due to the scarcity of land, as the economy in rural areas is focused on agriculture, though low agricultural productivity poses a threat to sustainability. Coupled with water and drought challenges, and in addition to the long-term effects of climate change, this may drive the population to become even more urban centred. Interestingly, educated households from rural areas are less likely to migrate internally compared to less educated households. This difference stems from educated individuals having more difficulty in securing a job once they make the move to an urban setting, where they will have to settle for lower-skilled jobs. The internal push to migrate increases as economic conditions worsen.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

Since the 1960s, Morocco has been one of the top countries for emigration. In 2014, it was reported that 2.8 million Morocco-born migrants resided abroad, most of them (2.4 million) in Europe. Additionally, the sum of remittances sent to Morocco is among the largest in the world. In 2011, for example, remittances amounted to €5.3 billion, most of this (81%) coming from European countries. The main destinations for Morocco emigrants include France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In the 1980s, restrictions imposed by these four countries resulted in an increase of the migration flow to Italy and Spain. The more highly skilled workers moved to the United States and Canada. In the 1960s and 70s, Moroccan migrants tended to be low-skilled workers seeking employment mainly in agriculture, construction, and caregiving. Late in 20th century, migrants primarily chose France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain. More recently, there has been a shift, as increasingly urban and literate Moroccans are migrating to the United States and Canada, especially Quebec. This shift also marks a change in attitudes from Moroccan migrants as guest workers, as

increasingly they are anchoring themselves within the economy of their destination country as fully contributing members.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)

As a result of Morocco becoming a destination country for Sub-Saharan migrants and also continuing to be a transit country for migrants travelling to Europe, there has been an increase in the number of forced migrants. Moreover, increasing restrictions in Europe have resulted in many migrants now forced to remain in Morocco. As of May 2019, the number of people registered with UNHCR was 8,994 persons (2,505 asylum-seekers, and 6,489 refugees), marking an increase of 64.2% from the beginning of 2016. Of those registered, 34% are under the age of 18, more than half (55%) are from Syria, and most (75%) are Arabic speakers. Most of the refugees are settled in eight cities: Rabat, Casablanca, Oujda, Nador, Temara, Kenitra, Tangier, and Marrakesh. Casablanca's airport is the main formal entry route into the country, as many African countries do not require a visa for short stays. The principal entry point for irregular immigration is Oujda, which borders Algeria. Outbound routes include the Strait of Gibraltar and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

Within Morocco, refugees are able to find work in informal sectors, especially if they are located in or close to urban cities such as Rabat and Casablanca. Cities such as Nador, located near Melilla and Oujda, are key deportation locations, and also places where it is harder to find work in informal sectors. Women and children refugees living in Nador are more vulnerable to sexual violence and human trafficking. Those living in urban cities often have more support from civil society organisations. NGOs such as MSF are beginning to improve their support in Oujda, making it possible for refugees to have better access to health services.

Migrants often leave their country of origin because poverty and lack of regular employment limit their options, and they have no opportunity for education. Morocco is attractive in that it provides higher salaries, borders with Europe, and offers greater employment opportunities. Migrants who use Morocco as a transit country with a view to settling in countries such as Spain, do so in hopes of a higher standard of living, greater opportunities for education, and respect for human rights. Often, they are reuniting with family members who have already migrated. Generally, the push factors are more relevant than the pull factors as migrants settle in neighbouring countries before migrating toward Spain or even North Africa because the neighbouring countries offer a more stable life.

Media reports have concentrated on migrants entering Morocco on their way to Europe and are often stuck in Morocco due to the restrictions in Europe. Such reports highlight poor living conditions that many of the migrants face in Morocco, which include makeshift camps on a soccer field near a bus stop in Casablanca, with little to no sanitation, lack of heat, and the prevalence of lice and respiratory disease, all this in addition to being exposed to traffickers. Apart from such poor living conditions, interactions with the Moroccan officials are often hostile, and many migrants describe their treatment as inhumane, citing beatings and the use of excessive force.

In comparison with other African countries, Morocco has a relatively low number of internally displaced persons. In 2019, it was reported that 200 people were displaced due to disasters; conflict and disaster displacement was catastrophic in 2010, when that number reached over 15,000.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

The US Department of State 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report labels Morocco as a Tier 2 country. This indicates that the government does not meet the full minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. Between 2010 and 2012, more than a third (35%) of the survivors of sexual violence assisted by MSF, were victims of human trafficking networks. Specifically, between 2010 and 2012, MSF treated 697 survivors in Morocco, 122 of them in Oujda, and 575 in Rabat. Although there has been an increase in reporting of trafficking, many of the reports omit sub-Saharan migrants who are subjected to trafficking. In recent years, the number of sub-Saharan migrants has doubled and the number of women migrants has also increased. Female undocumented migrants are coerced into prostitution and forced labour in Morocco. The traffickers often keep the women in groups and in secret and inaccessible locations. In exchange for their “protection” the women must serve as prostitutes. It is not uncommon for women to eventually lose the support of their “protector”, resulting in them being forced to the streets of Rabat, Tangiers, Fez, Marrakech, and Casablanca, where they must beg as they carry their babies. The hub for these criminal networks is Oujda and the northern coastal town of Nador, where female migrants are forced into prostitution and begging. Nigerian female migrants transiting through Oujda are especially vulnerable and forced into prostitution once they reach Europe. Women and children from Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are also highly vulnerable to sex trafficking.

Moroccan children are exploited for labour, sex trafficking, domestic work, and begging. Boys are forced to work as apprentices in artisanal and construction industries. The number of child domestic workers has seen a decrease since 2005, although girls continue to be recruited from rural areas to work in the domestic services in the cities. Moroccans who are willing to migrate outward can be exploited by traffickers, some of whom are Moroccans, acting independently, while others belong to criminal networks that are often composed of migrants from Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire.

The government relies heavily on NGOs to address trafficking. Apart from enacting legislation, the government provides funding for programs to support homeless children in Meknes and Casablanca to prevent them from becoming victims of exploitation. The government refers victims to civil society groups that provide more specialized essential services to victims and people who are vulnerable to trafficking.

VI. National Legal Framework

The legal framework for migration in Morocco includes: the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, the 2004 Judgment of the Court of First Instance of Tetouan on the crime of illegal immigration, emigration and the encouraging illegal immigration, the 2003 Law n°02-03 on the entry and

stay of foreign nationals into Morocco, the 2003 Law n°65-69 on the Labour Code, and the 1958 Code of Moroccan nationality modified in 2007.

Law 02-03 guarantees most of the fundamental rights of asylum seekers and refugees, especially access to health care and education, and the right to remain and to work under certain conditions. It contains provisions against illegal emigration and immigration, and protections and guarantees, in particular those rights concerning children and refugees or protection against torture, which are provided for in international law. But it also has provisions that contradict international law, specifically concerning the issue of residence permits for refugees whose entry into the country is legally based. Moreover, the suspension of the BRA (the office for refugees and stateless persons) and the subsequent development of administrative practices that contradict Moroccan law have allowed serious violations of the fundamental rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Residence permits have not been issued to refugees since 2004, regardless of entering Morocco legally or illegally. Furthermore, applying for a work visa is contingent on proving legal status; without proper documentation, asylum seekers and refugees are unable to work in Morocco.

The government maintains efforts to punish, investigate and convict traffickers under Law 27.14, which sets out penalties of five- to ten-years' imprisonment for criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking. Child trafficking is further penalized with sentences of 20- to 30-years' imprisonment. The law defines the responsibilities of the State in the fight against trafficking, including the assurance that there are available resources, protection, medical services, psychological and social assistance, as well as accommodation for victims, rehabilitation, and legal assistance. Although the law is well developed and conforms to the international standards of anti-trafficking legislation, its enforcement is insufficient and weak. Moreover, the law imposes stringent penalties for trafficking, but the enforcement of those penalties often falls short. This can be attributed to limited training in the application of the law in human trafficking.

In 2013, Morocco announced its intention to adopt a more humanitarian approach to migration and asylum, including the creation of a ministerial department devoted to migration affairs, launching a program for the regularization of undocumented individuals living in Morocco, the distribution of the first round of refugee and asylum seeker cards, and the adoption of the 2013 National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum by the Council of Government. Despite such efforts to acknowledge and adopt legislation and policy, the poor treatment of Sub-Saharan migrants continues.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The main governmental institutions responsible for migration policy in Morocco include, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Justice, Delegated Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad, Council of Moroccan Community, Advisory Council on Human Rights. In 2019, the government established the National Commission on Human trafficking, and the working group is tasked with developing an action plan, prevention, monitoring, protection of victims,

evaluation, and other ad hoc tasks. The Ministry of Interior has a vital role in managing national migration policy and security for instance coordinating regularization campaigns for irregular migrants in 2014 and instituted measures to combat human trafficking and smuggling in 2017.

International Organisations

International organizations concerning migrants that operate in Morocco include: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNHCR, Arab League, African Union (AU) and Doctors without Borders. Even though the Moroccan government has made important strides in improving legislation for refugee and asylum seekers in the past years, the Refugee Status Determination process remains with the UNHCR and not with the Moroccan ministry. There are problems concerning the ability of UNHCR recognized refugees and asylum seekers in obtaining Moroccan residency permits. This reflects a prevalent discrepancy between international organizations and national legislation. While UNHCR collaboration with the Ministry of Interior authorities is fairly effective, UNHCR continues to advocate for the adoption of a national refugee law which will guarantee the establishment of a national asylum procedure.

The Catholic Church

Although the Catholic population in Morocco is relatively small (approximately 50,000) the Church is active in assisting migrants in Morocco, primarily through the programmes of Caritas Morocco. The organization offers assistance to migrants in the form of psychosocial support, the facilitation of access to education and the health system, as well as care and financial assistance in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. In addition, Caritas funds micro-projects and promotes revenue-generating activities focused on the protection of the most vulnerable.

Caritas has been working with migrant populations in Morocco since the early 2000s. Historically, more than 45,000 migrants have been assisted or accompanied by teams from the Caritas reception centres in Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier. In April 2016, Caritas Morocco launched a three-year project for migrants entitled Qantara (the Arabic word for bridge). The overall objective of the program was to enable people migrating to Morocco to both access and fully exercise their fundamental rights. The focus was to support their access to a range of common law services such as health, education and documentation. Civil society entities were also supported in facilitating the integration of migrants in Morocco through such initiatives as professional training, education and employment.

The Diocesan Delegation of Migrations (DDM) also assists and works with migrants to welcome them and to integrate them in the host society. Developed and implemented by the Catholic Church, this programme is also part of the National Strategy of Immigration and Asylum. It operates within the framework of the various conventions signed by Morocco for the protection and integration of migrants. The DDM works in Tangier, Nador, El Hoceima and Oujda, and among its main objectives is to assist migrants in vulnerable situations and provide them with medical and psychological support. This involves civil society and various local and national structures including hospitals, health centres, administrations,

etc., with the goal of reducing stigmatization and discrimination. In order to strengthen the impact of its communication activities and to create effective new narratives addressing the realities of migration, the DDM has recently established a dedicated Migration Desk to analyze and circulate testimonies and stories from the grassroots.

Other Organisations

The component structures and organizations of civil society in Morocco are crucial in providing input in the development and implementation of legislation and new migration policies. Advocacy groups such as GADEM (Group for the Defence and Accompaniment of Foreigners and Immigrants) and AMDH (Moroccan Association of Human Rights) continue to advocate for reforms in migration. Many of the advances in Morocco's migration policy, advocacy, and support result from work on the ground by civil societies work (international, Moroccan, and migrant-based associations) rather than pressure from foreign governments, especially European. Indeed, foreign pressure to externalise migration control causes many developing countries to take an oppressive policy approach towards migrants, rather than respect their fundamental human rights. Assistance provided by civil society organizations ranges from advocacy and legal assistance to health, psychosocial support, childcare, and access to education.

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