



# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MARRAKECH - SAFI

MOROCCO

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This field diagnosis gives an overview of women's access to their rights, in the region of Marrakech-Safi, through scrutinizing the effectiveness of gender equality policies in Morocco with different types of local actors. Gender-based violence (GBV) was examined with regard to early marriage and the different parties involved in perpetuating the problem.



Civil society actors and policy makers in the Marrakech region are mobilized against gender-based violence



The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF) is a non-profit independent organisation launched in 2013. It is structured as a Network of networks bringing different kinds of gender equality actors in the Euro-Mediterranean area with the aim of:

- Advancing in the common fight for equal rights of women and men to participate in political, economic, civil and social life;
- Eradicating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls;
- Encouraging a change in attitude and behaviour for gender equality.

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Government of Catalonia  
Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation  
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#### Field diagnosis: Gender-based violence in Marrakech - Safi (Morocco)

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April 2017

This field diagnosis is part of the Axis 1 "Strengthening the capacities of equality actors" of the Priority Solidarity Fund "Women for the future in the Mediterranean" funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, in the framework of the project "Developing Women's Empowerment" labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean.

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MOROCCO



## Local clusters of gender equality actors<sup>©</sup> mobilized since 2016



- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>A</b> Region of Marrakech - Safi (Morocco)          | <b>D</b> South of Giza District (Egypt)             | <b>G</b> Mount Lebanon Governorate (Lebanon) |
| <b>B</b> Wilaya of Oran (Algeria)                      | <b>E</b> Southern part of the West Bank (Palestine) | <b>F</b> Governorate of Irbid (Jordan)       |
| <b>C</b> Governorates of Monastir and Sousse (Tunisia) |   |  |

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation sets up local clusters of gender equality actors coordinated by associations every year, in the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country).

Each local cluster of gender equality actors<sup>©</sup> chooses a target territory that can be a region or a province or a metropolitan area of a large city. Subsequently, the local cluster's members define a topic related to gender equality that they consider a priority in this target territory.

Each local cluster is made up of 5 actors working in favour of gender equality in the target territory: associations; research or education institutions; local or regional authorities or ministerial departments in charge of advocating for women's rights; media and enterprises and trade unions. Their mission is to mobilize the gender equality actors through data collection, consultations and exchange of experiences. Thus, they analyse the situation related to the target topic and they follow-up the effectiveness of public policies in this area with a collective and participatory approach.

This bottom-up approach leads to produce a diagnosis of the situation that highlights the main obstacles to achieve gender equality, and to design a collaborative and replicable field project to address those obstacles. A first call for proposals was launched and local clusters were set in Oran (Algeria), Giza (Egypt), Irbid (Jordan), Mount Lebanon (Lebanon), Marrakech - Safi (Morocco), West Bank (Palestine), Monastir and Sousse (Tunisia). These local clusters focus on two main issues: women's participation in political life and combating violence against women. This document presents the diagnosis with regard to Marrakech - Safi.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Morocco has been responsive to its obligations under international human rights laws. Hence, it has managed to implement women's rights measures domestically and generally promote women's human rights and gender equality. Morocco is party to most international human rights conventions: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Morocco has also been responsive to a number of international instruments which fight discrimination against women and the reinforcement of gender equity and equality as crucial factors for equitable human development.

Over the last decade, Morocco has made considerable progress in terms of democratic governance sensitive to gender, which was institutionalised in 2014. Within this context, in its preamble, the new Constitution of June 2011 consecrates the following: the universal and undividable character of human rights, calling for their preservation; the supremacy of international conventions signed by Morocco on national legislation and Morocco's involvement in harmonising its own legislation with the regulations of these conventions; the protection of categorical rights (mainly those of women, mothers, children, the elderly and people with specific needs); and the institutionalisation of equality, parity and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

In addition to the significance of changes made to the Constitution, there is a series of laws, regulations and governance programmes related to gender equality.

There are also many reforms, the most important of which in the field of gender equality and equity are:

- the institutionalization of Budgeting Related to Gender (BSG);
- the creation of the Gender Observatory in the Civil Service (OGFP);
- the implementation of the Government Plan for Equality (PGE), IKRAM, (2012-2016) in June 2013 as an instrument to enforce the National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality (SNEES) adopted in 2006;

- the Equality and Equity Agenda (2011-2015) in priority areas;
- the reform of the Election Law; and Recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Authority (IER).<sup>1</sup>

In terms of the work done in relation to eliminating gender-based violence (GBV), Morocco started a process to review the Code of Penal Procedure, as well as the incrimination of conjugal physical and sexual harassment in 2013,<sup>2</sup> the abolition of Articles 494 to 496, and the intensification of penalties for crimes of rape and moral conduct targeting women. These will help the harmonisation of the related legislation with the international obligations of Morocco and the regulations of the 2011 Constitution. Furthermore, in 2002, Morocco launched a countrywide programme to eliminate GBV.<sup>3</sup>

Morocco has headed progressively towards more and more active participation by citizens (men and women). Within this context, it should be noted that there is more access of the citizens to the political sphere as a result of various reforms made at the national and local level<sup>4</sup> which are undoubtedly oriented towards more “de-concentration, thorough democratisation, development acceleration [...] and good governance.”<sup>5</sup> The report on total regionalisation submitted to the King in March 2011 includes no fewer than six measures in favour of gender equity. Furthermore, the amendments to the Municipal Charter of 2009 enhance the promotion of women rights and gender equality. They impose to the local and regional authorities the development of Municipal Development Programmes based on respect for a set of criteria, including governance, gender and people’s participation with equal opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, living conditions of Moroccan women, especially in distant and vulnerable areas, show that the progress made in terms of rights is theoretical only. There are social and regional differences relating to enjoying these rights. Indeed, with the existing challenges, the results of the different engagements, particularly in the area of Marrakech-Safi, remain below expectations.

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1 The mission of the Equity and Reconciliation Committee in Morocco, created in 2004, was to shed light on serious violations of human rights in Morocco between 1956 and 1999, rehabilitate the victims, analyse the institutional causes at the origin of these violations and make recommendations for reforms to ensure this will not happen again.

2 This only concerns what happens in the workplace.

3 Bill on combating all forms of violence against women (withdrawn from the Government Council in November 2013); the Government Agenda for Equality on the Horizon of Parity, whose axis 2 aims to combat all kinds of discrimination and violence against women (2012-2016); the launch of the Multi-Sector Programme of the Fight against Gender-Based Violence through the Empowerment of Women and Young Girls, TAMKINE, with 13 ministerial departments, NGOs and 8 UN agencies involved (2008-2011); and the National Plans to Combat Violence against Women (2002 and 2004).

4 Cf. [www.mem.gov.ma/Actualites/2011/aout/pdf/Bilan.pdf](http://www.mem.gov.ma/Actualites/2011/aout/pdf/Bilan.pdf), p. 9.

5 ADVISORY COMMISSION ON REGIONALISATION. *Report on Regionalisation / Volume 1*, p. 5, 2011.

6 Create an advisory committee called “Committee of Parity and Equal Opportunities” within the Community Councils - law 17-08 modifying and completing the Common Charter; take into consideration the gender approach in the participative approach for the community development plan; create a support fund to promote women’s representativeness.

## B. DIAGNOSIS OF GBV IN MARRAKECH

### **Federation of the Leagues of Women's Rights (FLDF) - Marrakech**

The diagnosis was conducted by the FLDF in partnership with the research group on women's studies at the Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech. The FLDF defines itself as a feminist social movement federating various groups of women around the values of equality, human rights, social justice, solidarity and democracy. It aims at continuing education, gender equality and citizenship grouping women and men. It gathers them to work together in the fight against the social construction of the relationships between men and women built by history, education and culture and based on the male domination and the female discrimination. It is a social movement for equality and citizenship open to all the citizens and civil society associations, who works for human rights and in the respect of international standards, particularly gender and opportunities equality.

The FLDF - Marrakech is part of the Réseau de femmes solidaires (Network of solidarity women) whose objectives are:

- Advocacy and lobbying for fair and just laws for Moroccan women based on true gender equality in all areas of law: social, economic, cultural and political.
- The struggle for a comprehensive law to combat violence against women.
- To work on the ratification of all treaties and international covenants and agreements on women's rights and their suitability with the local legislation and raise reservations on these laws.
- Enhancing cultural, social and economic conditions of women.

### **1. Objectives of the diagnosis**

Within the context of the pilot action, the diagnosis aims at examining the local democratic governance with respect to women's human rights in the area of Marrakech-Safi. More specifically, the diagnosis scrutinises the effectiveness of gender equality mechanisms and procedures as well as addressing the problem of GBV, particularly in regards to early marriage and the different parties involved in perpetuating the problem.

It should be noted that the FLDF Marrakech, in the framework of the field project which it implemented following the elaboration of this diagnosis, is working on a detailed study on gender equality and GBV to serve as an advocacy tool for policy-makers and local actors.

## 2. Methodological framework of the diagnosis

To achieve the main goal of the study, a review of documents provided by various actors in the area was carried out to draw a picture of the current situation concerning women's human rights. The literature review included an examination of different impacts of the local political practices in terms of gender equality on women, men, boys and girls, specifically in terms of protection and the fight against GBV.

The first part of the diagnosis is an overview of Morocco's progress in terms of its compliance with international human rights law, national legislation and implementation of laws at the local level in order to gather updated information about equality and equity in terms of women's access to their rights in the region. The second part of the diagnosis is a specific examination in relation to GBV and women's political representation in the region.

## C. FINDINGS OF THE DIAGNOSIS

### 1. Characteristics of the Marrakech-Safi Region

This study is undertaken at a transition phase between the old land division – Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz – and the new – Marrakech-Safi. Hence, most statistics will concern the region according to the last division. Thus, as far as possible, specific data on the new areas will be included. In any case, the area of the diagnosis is as identified by the competent authorities, in the old division or during the last administrative division by the National Human Development Initiative (INDH).

In fact, it is a region that used to be called Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz, in addition to two new provinces. The region of Marrakech-Safi is among the areas that have been created recently, according to the new division in 2015, which reduced the number of regions in Morocco from 16 to 12.<sup>7</sup> Its capital is the city of Marrakech. The division is almost the same as the past division in addition to the provinces of Safi and El Youssoufia. Hence, the surface area changed from 31,160km<sup>2</sup> (4.5% of total national territory) with a population of 3,102,652 inhabitants to 39,040 km<sup>2</sup>, with a density of 115.8 h./km<sup>2</sup><sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Law No. 47/96 related to the organisation of the region and to Decree No. 2.97.246 of 17 August 1997 establishing the number of regions, their surface areas and the number of representatives to be elected. Portail national du Maroc: [www.maroc.ma/NR/exeres/1D778FB6-AB3F-4017-A1D8-950EE475BE30.htm](http://www.maroc.ma/NR/exeres/1D778FB6-AB3F-4017-A1D8-950EE475BE30.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Haut-Commissariat au Plan.



The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation analyzes the gaps between laws and women's living conditions in the field

In terms of geography, the area of Marrakech-Safi is in the centre of the country. It is limited by the area of Casablanca-Settat to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the area of Béni Mellal-Khénifra to the east and the Atlas Chains to the south (Souss-Massa and the Tafilalet-Draa). The region includes a division and seven provinces, with 16 circles of 216 municipalities (198 rural municipalities and 18 urban municipalities), which represent 14% of all municipalities at the national level.

#### *a. Population*

In the last population count in 2014, the area of Marrakech-Safi was the third largest area with 4.5 million inhabitants (13.4% of the country's total population). The population of the area of Marrakech-Safi increased from 3,983,659 during the last count of 2004 to 4,520,569 in 2014, with 928,120 households, 8,636 foreigners and an average annual growth rate of 1.27%<sup>9</sup>.

#### *b. Age groups*

The area of Marrakech-Safi is characterised by a relatively young population, according to the population count of 2014, the population under 15 in the area of Marrakech-Tensift-Al

<sup>9</sup> "Notice on the first results of the General Count of the Population and Housing in 2014". Publications by the Haut-Commissariat au Plan. Available at: [www.hcp.ma/downloads/RGPH-2014\\_t17441.html](http://www.hcp.ma/downloads/RGPH-2014_t17441.html).

Haouz represented 38%. Now the rate is similar to the national average of 26%, this obviously represents a great potential, but also important possibilities, such as risk of instability.

### *c. Urbanisation*

According to the last population count, the urbanisation rate in Morocco stood at 60.3% in 2014, compared to 55.1% in 2004. There is no doubt that the region has undergone important urbanisation due to rural exodus and to the expansion of the urban centres; however, the region retains a strong rural predominance (42.9%). This calls for specific actions related to the nature of the needs of the areas and of the populations involved, not only in terms of basic infrastructure, which has been neglected for a long time, but also at the level of the approaches that could guarantee the population's involvement.

In addition to these obstacles, there are the difficulties of housing precariousness, vulnerability and poverty with their corresponding consequence, such as illiteracy, limited access to healthcare, difficult living conditions, poor infrastructure, especially in rural areas, etc. Hence, in 2007, the area of Doukkala-Abda was among the poorest regions, with far more poverty in vulnerable rural areas while, among urban areas, Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz was one of the poorest urban regions. These two regions are also first in terms of illiteracy rates and school dropouts.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Marrakech-Safi is the second region at the national level in terms of housing precariousness, just after Grand Casablanca, where the population lives in traditional houses (1.1% and 11.5%), rural type houses (0.3% and 4.9%) or ghettos (10.6% and 6.6%), according to the Haut-Commissariat au Plan (HCP – High Commission for Planning).

### *d. Healthcare*

The UNICEF report “Levels and Trends in Child Mortality” shows the following at the national level: the death rate for children under five decreased from about 57,000 in 1999 to about 24,000 in 2013, with an annual backward rate of 4.2%<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, life expectancy improved clearly (76.51 years in 2014); and the share of healthcare expenses as percentage of GDP (6.0% in 2011) has more than doubled.

### *e. Maternal mortality*

At the national level there has been a clear decrease in maternal mortality. For every 100,000 births, deaths related to maternity went down from 227 (186 in urban areas and 267 in rural areas) during

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<sup>10</sup> HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AU PLAN. Poverty Map. 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Even though Morocco is still doing worse than some of its regional neighbours.

the period 1994-2003 to 112 (73 and 148, respectively) in 2010.<sup>12</sup> However, the region of Marrakech-Safi (now, Marrakech-Tensift Al Haouz and Doukkala Abda) are among the regions (of nine) that were selected by the Ministry of Health in 2012 for a health action plan as they represented rates lower than the national average in terms of pre-natal consultation, childbirth in a supervised environment and child malnutrition.

#### *f. HIV*

Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz is one of the regions where the disease continued to increase. Indeed, with Souss-Massa-Draa (classified first on the list) and Grand Casablanca (third), these regions account for 54% of known cases at national level. The epidemic affects mainly women and sex workers, which no doubt raises the issue of health security but also the question of GBV.

#### *g. Education*

At the national level<sup>13</sup>, it is estimated that full reach for primary education will be achieved by 2016 as schooling rates of the 6-11 age group reached 99.5% during the school year 2013-2014, with a schooling rate for girls between 6-11 of 99.1%.<sup>14</sup> In the region of Marrakech-Safi these figures are similar to national figures even though we notice that the region was dragging behind other comparable regions in 2014 with 93%, suggesting it will have difficulties achieving the national objective of 100% for 2016.

However, there are more women in higher education cycles in specific subjects related to humanities, but they are not adequately represented in faculties/institutes of science, medicine, commerce and engineering. Analysing the figures related to the feminisation of students at the Cadi Ayyad University (UCA), the first university at the national level and the only university in the Maghreb and North Africa to have a ranking among international institutes of scientific excellence, including SC Imago Institutions Rankings (SIR) and Thomson Reuters, confirms the data on education trends among young girls. Indeed, the UCA now includes 14 establishments in four student cities: Marrakech, El Kelaâ des Sraghna, Essaouira and Safi, the whole territory of the new seventh region of the kingdom, Marrakech-Safi. UCA has over 75,000 students (46% of them are young girls) and employs over 15,000 teachers/researchers (15% of them are women) and 800 employees in the administration (44% of them are women). However, when considering the number of women in

<sup>12</sup> MINISTRY OF HEALTH, DIRECTORATE OF PLANNING AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES. *Sample population and healthcare survey*. EDPR, HCP, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> [www.statistiques-mondiales.com/esperance\\_de\\_vie\\_par\\_pays.htm](http://www.statistiques-mondiales.com/esperance_de_vie_par_pays.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Report of the High Education Council.

decision-making positions, the first university in Morocco is far from filling the gender gap. The UCA has never had a woman president, only one woman as vice-president, one dean, one vice-dean and two general secretaries. Heads of departments or heads of units in the “Ivory Tower” institutions are almost exclusively men, especially in strategic departments such as finance.

## 2. GBV

Concerning the fight against all forms of GBV and the related legal framework, it is regrettable that there is no law that criminalises GBV.<sup>15</sup> This is one of the reasons that contribute to perpetuating the problem in Morocco. The dramatic figures revealed in the study conducted by the HCP in 2011 show that 62.8% of women between the age groups of 18 to 64 in Morocco were victims of different forms of violence in the year preceding the study.<sup>16</sup> This shows a generalised acceptance of domestic violence as well as a fear of the legal system, whose attitudes are commonly uncertain. Furthermore, another report in 2011 showed that in the case of violence against women, the aggressor is generally the spouse in eight cases out of ten.<sup>17</sup>

A study was conducted on the prevalence of violence in public places in the city of Marrakech for UN Women and UN Housing within the framework of the project Secure Cities and Girlfriends of All (VSAT in French), in which FLDF participated in 2013 in two pilot districts, El Bahia and Sidi Youssef Ben Ali-Nord. It led to the conclusion that the public space is where all kinds of GBV occur and that women were the main victims, regardless of their age. Indeed, respectively, 83.17% and 75% of the women (aged 18 to 24 years) and 67.25% and 68.63% (aged 25 to 60 years) asked in these two districts declared themselves to have been victims of violence in the street during the year preceding the study.

### a. Sexual violence

This kind of violence is the most common in public spaces and it is exercised in multiple ways.<sup>18</sup> 79% of participants in Bahia and 74% of participants in SYBA-Nord have experienced

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15 Indeed, a bill 103 – 13 related to conjugal violence was submitted to the Government General Secretariat on 16 September 2013, which raised many negative reactions mainly by associations. It was developed by a mixed Commission integrated in the Ministry of Justice and Liberties (MJL) and the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development (MSFFDS). This project was to be submitted to the Government Council on 7 November 2013. The Head of Government decided to create of a special commission that would review this project; its conclusions have not been submitted to date.

16 HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AU PLAN. *Main results of the sample National Survey on the Prevalence of Violence towards Women*, January 2011. Available at: [www.hcp.ma/Conference-debat-consacree-a-l-etude-de-la-violence-a-legard-de-femmes-au-Maroc\\_a66.html](http://www.hcp.ma/Conference-debat-consacree-a-l-etude-de-la-violence-a-legard-de-femmes-au-Maroc_a66.html); see also, UN WOMEN. *Moroccan Government Release Extensive Gender-Based Violence Study*, 10 January 2011. Available at: [www.unwomen.org/2011/01/moroccan-government-releases-extensive-gender-based-violence-study/](http://www.unwomen.org/2011/01/moroccan-government-releases-extensive-gender-based-violence-study/).

17 LIGUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DES DROITS DES FEMMES-INJAD. *Gender-based violence. Annual report for the Conference of 21 May 2011*, based on statistic data in collected 2009.

18 Whistles, obscene words, "chat-up", "tailing".

some kind of sexual harassment. In the area of Bahia, 1.62% of the women declared they have been victims of rape attacks.

*b. Psychological violence and physical violence*

It is the second type of violence experienced by women in the public space. In fact, 29% and 35% of women in Bahia and SYBA-Nord, respectively, declared they have been insulted/verbally harassed in public spaces at least once during the period of reference.

Physical violence, mainly thefts by means of force, occurred with 19% and 28% of the women in Bahia and SYBA-Nord, respectively, and physical aggression against 10% and 5% of the women in the two places. The most serious forms of violence, such as murder attempts or threats/attacks with a weapon or dangerous object, represent quite dramatic rates: 6% and 5% in Bahia, 11% and 7% in SYBA-Nord.

In other places in the region, the situation is even worse. Indeed, we can say that GBV is a phenomenon that is becoming characteristic of the region. Accordingly, when analysing the statistics gathered from associations, which aim at raising awareness of/fighting gender-based violence or assisting women victims of violence, it was noticed that all types of violence are present everywhere and in great proportions. Out of the 39 women received in Chorouk at Benguérir association assistance centre in 2014, 10 were victims of physical violence from their partners; 9 were victims of economic violence, as their partners or ex-husbands refused to assist them and pay them their due pension. Also, 5 women were victims of psychological violence, where their partners refused to recognise their union or recognise the children born of their union; and 2 women were victims of sexual violence (rapes) and 1 woman was abandoned after an extra-conjugal pregnancy.

Cases of violence by type treated by the TWIZA Assistance Centre in Benguérir between the beginning of March and the end of August 2014

Type of violence	Number of cases	Percentage
Physical violence	19	10.64%
Sexual violence	18	10.08%
Economic violence	10	5.65%
Legal violence	06	3.36%
Psychological violence	03	1.68%

Source: Vigilance Center TWIZA

When looking more closely at these figures, we see that more violence is committed against young women (19% under 25 and 23% between 25 and 45), with little to no education (20% of women with no education, 15% with primary level education and 11% with secondary level education). Moreover, the aggressors come from all socio-professional environments (14% are farmers, 6% civil servants, 15% liberal professions, 4% retired and 6% unemployed).

Moreover, a quick comparison of the figures of 2014 and those of the previous two years shows that there is an evolution in terms of types of violence in the same city. Indeed, physical violence ranks first in the types of violence for 2014 (10.64% for 19 cases) while it was the third type of violence in 2010 (20% for 47 cases). Additionally, sexual violence acts go up to second rank in the types of violence in 2014 with 18 cases, instead of 7 cases in 2010.<sup>19</sup>

Concerning the fight against violent acts and sexual exploitation of children<sup>20</sup>, a high number of studies and programmes were accomplished jointly by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), institutional partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), even though their recommendations are almost never taken into consideration, and the actions undertaken lack synergies and concentration. The statistical data relating to the issue of violence and exploitation of underage children in Morocco is lacking; in general, the only available data is the one which is collected by associations. In 2003, ECPAT international<sup>21</sup> had drawn attention to the problem of prostitution of underage children in the cities of Essaouira and Casablanca. Moreover, a study by UNICEF in 2003 about the sexual exploitation of children in Marrakech shows that "61% of underage prostituted girls and boys are aged between 16 and 18, 32% between 14 and 15 and 7% between 10 and 13." Finally, the children of the study come from poor families (62%) and single-parent households for most girls (61%), most often between three to seven children, from families where the father and the brothers have low-paid jobs in handicrafts.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Statistics provided by the TWIZA association in Benguérir.

20 The efforts made by Morocco in terms of child protection are the following:

Law 04.00 on compulsory fundamental schooling;

Law 24.03 that amends the Penal Code in the regulations related to the underage status;

The Labour Code forbidding child labour under the age of 15 and limiting the work of 15-18 year olds;

The "INOAD" initiative implemented to fight against domestic work of young girls in 2007;

The "TAYSSIR" programme, which encourages families in vulnerable situations to send their children to school;

Creation of units to protect childhood in large cities;

Creation of units of follow-up of child labour within Labour Management in the Ministry of Labour;

The Action Plan for Childhood 2006-2015, Morocco, a country that deserves its children;

Creation of a National Observatory of the Rights of Children in charge of implementation and follow-up of the Convention of the Rights of Children.

21 Report of the Morocco section of the Group of NGOs for the Convention on the Rights of Children, following the initial report of the Kingdom of Morocco, April 2004, on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Children, concerning child trade, prostitution and pornography using children. [www.crin.org/docs/Morocco\\_ngo\\_report.doc](http://www.crin.org/docs/Morocco_ngo_report.doc)

22 Available at: [www.unicef.org/morocco/french/Exploitation\\_Sexuelle1.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/morocco/french/Exploitation_Sexuelle1.pdf), p. 14.

The National Observatory of the Rights of Children warned about the dramatic increase of rates of “street children” and pointed to serious gaps in terms of child protection. The Ministerial Commission for Children registered “a continuous growth” in the phenomena of abuse, violence and the exploitation of children within families, schools, institutions, in the street, at work (maids, in the informal sector), begging, selling drugs, delinquency, as well as in the area of exploiting children for prostitution, tourism and on the internet.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the data collected during the victimisation study within the VSAT project showed a dangerous public space for children. The study identified that the authority holders, parents and teachers are the first aggressors. The study also highlighted a significant prevalence of violence against children in public places. This violence can be in the form of insults and verbal aggression (15% of the children experience such violence in both pilot sites mentioned above), strikes and physical punishment (9.5% at Bahia and 14.3% at SYBA-Nord) and sexual harassment (2% against 5%).

### c. Child labour

The National Study on Employment, carried out by the HCP in 2013, concluded that child labour concerns 86,000 children aged 7 to 15, representing 1.8% of the total number of children of this age group. At the regional level, over 70% of working children were concentrated in four areas of the kingdom,<sup>24</sup> the region previously called Doukkala-Abda, with two of its provinces integrated into the new region of Marrakech-Safi, having over one quarter during the last few years. In 2013, working children in the region amounted to about 43% of the total at national level.

In terms of domestic work of children, “the maids”, there is a surprising contrast. While women's access to the labour market remains limited - in the third quarter of 2013 the rate of active women between 15 and 59 years did not exceed 20.93%<sup>25</sup> -, the available numbers related to employing underage girls are alarming. In fact, apart from data collected by NGOs, mainly associations,<sup>26</sup> working with this category of the population, and the national annual studies on child labour carried out by the HCP, there are no specific exhaustive studies on the phenomenon. In a 2014 report,<sup>27</sup> the international NGO Human Rights Watch criticised Morocco for not respecting the international conventions signed in terms of child protection and labour regulations.

23 MDIDECH, Jaouad. The new plan by Bassima Hakkaoui for the protection of childhood. *La Vie éco* (online), 28 April 2014. Available at: [www.lavieeco.com](http://www.lavieeco.com)

24 24.8% in Doukkala-Abda; 18.2% in Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz; 16.1% in Chaouia-Ouardigha; and 10% in El Gharb-Chrarda-Beni Hssen.

25 Haut-Commissariat au Plan.

26 Between 60,000 and 80,000 girls under 15, in 2010, according to the “little maids” group.

27 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. *Unquestionable Servitude: Domestic Child Labour in Morocco*. 2014.

#### *d. Early marriage*

2014 was the opportunity to review the reform of the Moudawana, particularly in relation to this issue. According to the figures of the Ministry of Justice and Liberties (MJL), it is clear that the issue of underage marriage continues to be a serious phenomenon that concerns women's associations, which consider that this situation "reflects a conflict with the Constitution of 2011, a *laissez-faire* attitude to the culture of breaching the law and discrimination based on gender."<sup>28</sup>

Distribution of the applications for early marriages by age between 2007 and 2013

<b>Year</b>	<b>14 years</b>	<b>15 years</b>	<b>16 years</b>	<b>17 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
2007	348	2,730	9,865	25,767	38,710
2008	348	2,609	12,550	24,097	39,604
2009	359	3,111	12,407	31,211	47,088
2010	69	555	8,374	32,100	41,098
2011	309	2,676	12,771	31,171	46,927
2012	200	2,405	10,958	29,220	42,783
2013	97	1,515	13,010	28,886	43,508
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>15,601</b>	<b>79,935</b>	<b>202,452</b>	<b>299,718</b>

Source: "The Family Code after Ten Years", MJL

The data shows that the number of applications for marriage below the legal age for girls increased from 18,341 in 2004 to 21,660 in 2005, then skyrocketed to 35,152 in 2013, while it does not exceed 92 for boys in the same year, making 11.47% of the total number of marriage contracts. However, this data seems to contradict the national trends that show that marriage for men occurs on average between 30 and 34 years and for girls between 24 and 29 years in the different regions of Morocco. In fact, these figures simply highlight the differences existing between the different areas in the country. Indeed, the last population count revealed that marriage among young people under 18 is an almost exclusively female phenomenon (82.4%), that it is mainly rural (53.6%) and that it affects some regions more than others.

Accordingly, the highest average age for the first marriage at the regional level for men (over 33 years) is in Grand Casablanca and l'Oriental and the lowest is in Marrakech-Tensift Al Haouz

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum of the Coalition Spring of the Dignity on underage marriage on the 10th Anniversary of the Family Code.

(29.7 years). In the regions of Grand Casablanca, l'Oriental, Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate, Guelmim Essmimara, Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer, Tanger-Tétouan and Souss Massa-Draa, the average age of women when they marry is over 27. Women in the regions of Tadla-Azilal and Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz marry the youngest (under 25).<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, the report of the Federation of the Democratic League of Women's Rights (FLDDF) on this issue notes that among the cities where the number of applications for early marriage increased between 2006 and 2009<sup>30</sup> -in Mohammedia, for example, the number increased from 304 applications in 2006 (89.80% cases approved) to 431 in 2008 and 593 in 2009 (91.8% of cases approved)-, Marrakech is one of the cities with the highest rates of applications for early marriage. The number increased from 2,000 cases in 2006 to 2,974 in 2011 (60% cases approved in 2006 and 89.6% in 2010), a record if we compare these figures with those of the city of Casablanca, with 1,142 applications in 2005 (99% of cases approved)<sup>31</sup> or Guelmim with 100 cases in 2009, 122 in 2010 and 111 in 2011.

Within this context, a study conducted by the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), in the district of Bab Doukkala in Marrakech, quoted figures from UNICEF in 2005, which warn about the extent of the problem.<sup>32</sup> The results mainly showed that:

- 36% of married women married before the age of 18,
- 22% of women first became pregnant between 14 and 17 years of age,
- 3.8% of housewives were under 18.

The Moroccan associations for the protection and defence of women's human rights criticised the general acceptance of this practice and regretted that judges have approved early marriages more often since 2007, noting that “despite wide mobilisation of civil society for the reform of the Family Code, there are no measures adopted to reduce discrimination against girls.”<sup>33</sup>

In terms of the recognition of marriages, NGOs deplore the increase in the number of applications -that often obtain a positive ruling-, as well as the various extensions to make the

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29 HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AU PLAN. Morocco's Social Indicators. 2011.

30 Report of the FLDDF over the Ten Years of the Code of Family, p. 9.

31 Ibid, p. 12.

32 INITIATIVE NATIONALE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT HUMAIN (INDH). Programme to fight social exclusion at the level of Marrakech, District of Bab Doukkala.

33 Alternative reports of the associations, mainly the report on the implementation of the international Convention of the Rights of the Child, *Comments of the Moroccan Associations on the Government Answers*, p. 6, July 2014.



The research group on women's studies at the Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech has been actively involved in the diagnosis.

marriages legal, which show a sign of tolerance of these customary marriages -often involving underage girls- and represent open contravention of the law. NGOs' statistics show at the same time a dramatic increase in the rates of marriages below the age of 15 without the judge's authorisation and the new forms of marriage with contracts, particularly in the region of the study and still more dramatically in Kelai Sraghna. This means that the official figures often hide the real problem of all the forms of violence against young girls on the pretext of poverty, social morals and tradition.

### **3. Parity Indicators: Women's representation at the level of local politics**

During the last national elections in September 2015, women's participation beat records and revealed a strong involvement of women. As a result of the quota system, women were able to double their score in 2009 with 27% (6,673) of the seats in the municipal councils.<sup>34</sup> However, this participation is relative as the proportion of the women elected implies that parity is still an aspiration. Hence, despite all the temporary measures, the Regional Council of Marrakech-Safi includes only 36.8% of women elected, 27 out of 75 members; six of them are councillors. The new board of the Regional Council includes three women members out of a total of nine. The local councils of Essaouira and Safi include 35 and 51 members, respectively, and only seven are women. There are no women among the local councils' boards members.

Furthermore, despite the increasing presence of women as candidates, none of them was elected president of the council in a large city or region. In the three divisions in the prefecture of Marrakech, for example, and among about 500 candidates in the elections, there were

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<sup>34</sup> Though it can be considered that these results, in absolute value, are decreasing in relation to the previous elections.

fewer than 100 women. The women who are members of local or regional councils deal with social affairs or international relations but never finance, for example. Thus, the system that theoretically guarantees increasing the presence of women in the political sphere in Morocco does not allow women to take positions of responsibility.

Many programmes aiming to develop the municipalities do not even refer to the Equality of Opportunity Commission, which is supposed to strengthen women's presence and their representativeness within the local management sphere.

Moreover, the figures related to women's representation by level of education or profession showed prevailing numbers of women with a medium level of education, including: housewives, workers and women working in handicrafts (in the municipality of Marrakech, most women are seamstresses) and very few liberal professions. Finally, knowing how these women were selected to be on the election lists, one can wonder if there is any advantage to them being within the political parties, all trends combined, in terms of parity and political representation.

#### **4. Summary of Results and Challenges**

##### *a. Translation of women's human rights into reality is far from being accomplished*

Overall, despite the tolerant and ambitious spirit of the laws, real materialisation of women's human rights in practice, mainly in the area of the diagnosis, is far from satisfactory.

##### *b. Women facing many challenges at the social, economic and cultural levels*

The obstacles are varied and present at many levels. They are economic (vulnerable living conditions), social (a very high illiteracy rate, especially among women in rural areas), cultural (negative attitudes towards women's representation) and political (a widespread and tacit resentment towards generalising women's human rights).

##### *c. Gaps between de jure and de facto*

The objective of the correction strategies is to reduce the gaps between the two sexes in terms of rights and access to these rights, access to economic resources and opportunities, as well as political participation or presence in decision-making. However, relating to violence against women, particularly early marriage, despite the legal reforms and the political initiatives, women continue to have difficult living conditions. Their rights continue to be denied and their dignity abused.

*d. GBV is a serious issue in the region that threatens women's safety, well-being and their participation in public life*

GBV poses threats to women's well-being and obstacles<sup>35</sup> before them at many levels. Even though state efforts are remarkable, they remain insufficient. Generally speaking, it is regrettable that there is no public policy related to forms of violence towards underage girls at the level of the whole country but also in the regions, which would provide assistance to children. This policy would be, no doubt, very costly and hard to apply at all levels; but this is the only way to fill the gaps. In fact, the implemented plans of many state institutions are limited to raising awareness, communication and collecting information, which are insufficient to meet all the pressing needs. Providing assistance and protection for women victims of GBV is mainly done by NGOs and coalitions that do great work in prevention, raising awareness and assistance for the victims with very little support from the state and with no legal protection.

Furthermore, the high number of laws contributes to exacerbating different actors' criticism of the lack of real political will in terms of the fight against GBV. In terms of governance, it is regrettable to see so many actors, including the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Solidarity and Women, Ministry of Social Affairs, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Healthcare, National Observatory for Childhood and civil society associations, but also the lack of a clear strategy and an absence of coordination. This is in addition to the poor resources of institutions charged with the promotion and protection of the rights of women and young girls.

## **D. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Encourage a sincere political will with the appropriate tools that could translate these reforms into the everyday lives of Moroccan women at all levels.
- Advocate more serious reforms, particularly at the level of practice in the regions.
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to change cultural practices that limit women's capacities to access education, work and the political sphere.

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<sup>35</sup> Hindrances that reflect problems of identity related to the crises of the new world order (globalized economic crisis, war against "terrorism", increase in Islamophobia, etc., increase in conservatism, deterioration of the middle classes level).

- Enhance the role of the media in promoting the culture of equality.
- Promote gender equality strategies that highlight the importance of school to improve mentalities and to change negative perceptions towards women.
- Develop the role of religious institutions in terms of encouraging more tolerant and progressive reading of the sacred texts.



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