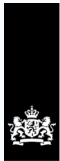




Diaspora Engagement in Morocco

Understanding the Implications of a Changing Perspective on Capacity and Practices

Migration policy brief | No. 10



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Introduction

Morocco is one of the most prominent emigration countries with about 3 million Moroccan citizens living abroad, mainly in European countries. Since the 1960s, when the “guest worker” programs leading to large numbers of migrants to Europe was in full swing, the Moroccan government established strong ties with its citizens abroad. However, this relationship has not been an easy one. Up until the beginning of the 1990s, the Moroccan government aimed to control Diaspora members and strived to prevent them from integrating in the destination countries as well as from participating in the political field in Morocco (de Haas 2007). Morocco’s attitude towards its emigrants has changed considerably over the years. In the early 1990s, Morocco acknowledged the permanent settlement of Moroccans

in the destination countries which consequently led to a reconsideration of Morocco’s relationship with its Diaspora. Accordingly, the focus shifted from controlling the Diaspora to including it in a Diaspora engagement policy (de Haas 2007). The main implication of this shift is that the Moroccan government started to put emphasis on the successful integration of Moroccans abroad, while encouraging them to stay in contact with Morocco through economic, social and cultural activities. The change in vision was also reflected in institutional arrangements, policies and programs developed in the recent years concerning Diaspora engagement. In this policy brief, we aim to map the current state-of-art in Morocco considering Diaspora engagement based on desk research and interviews conducted with government officials and international organizations in Morocco in December 2010.



Map 1. Map of Morocco (Source: United Nations Cartographic Section, 2008)

The Moroccan Diaspora

Moroccan emigration evolved at an unprecedented pace starting from the 1960s. As a result, today Moroccans living abroad represent around 10% of the total population of the country, and constitute the largest and most dispersed African immigrant population in Europe (de Haas 2009). The modern Moroccan emigration history that started with the exodus of low-skilled male workers witnessed diversification over the years due to immigration restrictions and decreased demand for low-skilled labour. Subsequently, family reunification and formation became the main ways of migrating and led to a feminization of emigration, and the increased emigration of children. Since the 1990's, emigration of medium and highly skilled individuals to the United States and Canada has also considerably increased. As a result of these new trends and the transition from temporary to permanent migration, today a large multifaceted Moroccan Diaspora consisting of professionals from different sectors has been established.

Currently, France hosts the largest group of Moroccans, which accounts to just over a million migrants (1,046,564) (Khachani 2011). As a consequence of the former labour migration agreements, large Moroccan communities also exist in the Netherlands (247,587), Belgium (267,614) and Germany (117,552). Spain and Italy have become destination countries for Moroccans in recent years, and now host a considerable number of Moroccans (Italy 400,432/ Spain 557,000). A smaller number of often highly qualified Moroccans live in the US (27,427) and in Canada (44,621). Other Arab countries host around 185,413 Moroccans, with 45,109 in Algeria and 29,883 in Saudi Arabia. A little more than 8000 Moroccans live in sub-Saharan African countries and around 767 in Asia and Oceania (Khachani 2011).

A Changing Perspective on Diaspora Engagement in Morocco

In the last a few years Morocco has built its Diaspora engagement strategy based on the idea that Moroccan citizens abroad can and should integrate successfully in the resident countries while maintaining contact with Morocco. This comprehensive perspective is observed to be accepted by the governmental institutions concerned with Moroccans residing abroad. We see that the vision of compatibility between host country integration and home country loyalty has led to two main streams of objectives and policy making. The first set of policies aim at supporting Moroccans' well-being and integration in economic, social, cultural and political domains in the destination countries, while the second set of policies focuses on engaging the Moroccans residing abroad in economic and social activities oriented towards Morocco specifically.

In 2007, the Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad (Ministère des Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger) was (re) founded¹ to follow up on this Diaspora engagement strategy and to strengthen the coordination between the key stakeholders such as the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (Le Conseil de la Communauté Marocaine à l'Etranger, CCME), Hassan II Foundation, Directorate of Consular and Social Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation), Ministry of Labour and Professional Education, Regional Centre for Investment (Ministry of Interior), Moroccan Council of Ulemas for Europe and Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity.

¹ The Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad has a history dating back to 1990, however since then the ministry went through several changes and disruptions. For more information on the history of the ministry, see Belguendouz 2006, Brand 2006.

Residence country oriented objectives and activities of institutions

There are two destination country specific priorities for the Moroccan government since it has recognized the permanent settlement of Moroccan migrants in the destination countries. First, the Diaspora's loyalty to the country is aimed to be preserved by the formation of a strong national identity. In this matter, especially the second- and third- generation Moroccan migrants occupy an important section. Policies focus on preserving a Moroccan identity through linguistic, religious and cultural dimensions. Second, Morocco has the objective of restoring the trust of Moroccans residing abroad towards the Moroccan government, and defending their interests by promoting their legal, social and humanitarian situation in the countries of residence. More specifically, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as unaccompanied children, prisoners and single parents are supported by legal assistance in cooperation with resident country institutions and consular services.



Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Table 1. Resident country oriented objectives and activities of institutions

Name institution/ Ministry involved	Objectives and Activities
Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad Department for economic and socio-cultural activities	National identity formation for the descendents of Moroccans residing abroad Preservation of moral and material interests of Moroccans residing abroad in Morocco Promotion and organisation of social, cultural, educational, artistic and recreational activities related to the Moroccan Diaspora Eg.: Organisation of the National Day of Moroccans Abroad Organisation of cultural weeks in destination cities Establishment of cultural centres in residence countries - Centres were founded as a space for dialogue between Moroccans and partnership between regional and local authorities - Currently found in Brussels, Barcelona, Paris, Montreal and Tripoli
Migrant Rights Centre (Centre Droits MRE)	Dissemination of information regarding migrants' rights through trainings, conferences and a specialized library regarding legal documents about migration Capacity building of non-governmental organisations in the field of migrants' human rights Creation and intensification of existing cooperation with international, national, and regional organisations dealing with rights of migrants
Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (independent advisory institution with administrative and financial autonomy founded in 2008)	Identification and analysis of problems of Moroccans abroad resulting from emigration - working groups dealing with topics of women's rights and new generation, citizenship and political participation, culture, education and identity, administration and public policies, culture and religious education, and scientific, technical and economic competences
Directorate of Consular and Social Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation)	Protection of rights, interests and properties of Moroccans residing abroad Organisation of cultural events
Hassan II Foundation (financially autonomous, non -profit institution founded in 1990)	<u>Education, cultural exchange, sport and youth</u> Educational activities relating to the Arabic language, national culture and religious instruction (with a focus on descendents of Moroccan migrants abroad) - Construct, acquire and equip, if necessary, schools, socio-cultural centres Organise summer camps and travels to Morocco for Moroccan descendants living abroad - Cultural exchange of young descendents of Moroccans abroad <u>Legal and social assistance</u> Provide financial, medial and/or legal assistance to those who are in need
Moroccan Council of Ulemas for Europe (Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs)	Promotion of dialogue between all religions and beliefs as well as openness to the different cultures of European societies Provide spiritual support to Muslims and guide the youth against extremism and deviation. Help young people to grasp and assimilate the purposes of Islam Raise awareness of Muslims settled in EU about the values of tolerance, moderation, and peace advocated by Islam Participate in the training and supervision of imams in Europe to learn about the historical and social specificities of each country Monitor its services for full consistency with the laws of the countries of residence Send preachers (wâiz) and religious guides (mushaffi) during the time of Ramadan

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Morocco oriented objectives and activities of institutions

Morocco oriented governmental initiatives aim to engage the Moroccan Diaspora for the country's economic, social and human development. First, Moroccans living abroad are encouraged to make investments in Morocco, and concrete programs (eg. FINCOME program) are launched in order to mobilize their competences for scientific and professional objectives. The government puts emphasis especially on durable development, new technologies and

territorial development through which Morocco can be better integrated with knowledge economy. Another way of better engaging the Diaspora to achieve development in Morocco, according to official statements, is to enhance the communication between Moroccan associations abroad with their equivalents in Morocco and local authorities. Through this communication, the government aims to support partnerships which can consequently lead to local development projects.

Table 2. Morocco oriented objectives and activities of institutions

Name institution/ Ministry involved	Objectives and Activities
Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad Department for economic and socio-cultural activities	Monitor actions which facilitate the definitive return of Moroccans residing abroad - Establishment of "maisons des MRE" to support returnees as well as families of migrants staying in Morocco Encourage associational life Eg.: Capacity building of migrant associations' organisational skills Present project ideas of migrant associations that can contribute to the development of Morocco Mobilization of competences - Establishment of Deutsch-Marokkanisches Kompetenznetzwerk (German-Moroccan network of competences) - FINCOME (Forum International des Compétences Marocaines à l'Etranger) in cooperation with Ministry of Education Inform Moroccans abroad on investment opportunities in Morocco
Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (Founded in 2007)	Encourage the participation of Moroccans abroad in the political, economic, cultural and social development of Morocco
Hassan II Foundation Legal and social assistance unit	Management of an internet based "Platform of Services for Moroccans Residing Abroad" (Plateforme de Services pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger)
Economic development unit Cooperation and partnership unit	Monitor and evaluate the Moroccan economic environment, informing potential investors and returnees about the economic sectors in Morocco and assisting these with their investment projects
Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity	Develop cooperation with governments, non-governmental organisations and international organisations specialised in migration issues in Morocco and countries of residence "Opération Transit": responsibility taken over from Hassan II foundation Operations during the summer holidays and logistical assistance: facilitate traffic and circulation of Moroccans residing abroad between the port of entry and their final destination Set up assistance and reception centres
The Moroccan Government	Support and facilitate the transfer of monetary and in-kind remittances and investment made by Moroccans residing abroad - Establishment of Bank Al-Amal (Micro-credit bank) - Reduction of transfer rates by the establishment of Overseas Bank Offices of "la Banque Populaire" - Free of cost transfers for six months after the economic crisis in 2009 - Possibility of having foreign currency bank accounts accessible to Moroccans residing abroad

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

In addition to the concrete objectives and activities for the well-being of Moroccans residing abroad and mobilizing their potential contribution to development, there is an inclination towards better understanding emigration and evidence based policy making in Morocco. The Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad, for instance, aims to centralise information and statistical data on migration. They aim to follow migratory movements and to study the living conditions of Moroccans abroad. Moreover, the Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad and the directorate of Consular and Social Affairs negotiate and monitor international agreements regarding Moroccans residing abroad (eg. Labour migration and social protection). Finally, the Council of the Moroccan Community abroad is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating Morocco's policies related to Moroccans living abroad and to contribute to the development of a national strategy of global and multidimensional migration by providing bi-annual recommendations to the King of Morocco.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this policy brief, we mapped how the responsibilities and activities of various organizations dealing with Moroccans residing abroad are divided. The main distinction regarding the objectives that are aimed to be achieved through these activities and policy perspectives is made between the successful integration of the Moroccan Diaspora in the residence countries and their participation in home country affairs to contribute to development. Likewise, the minister of General and Economic Affairs stated in an interview in 2007 that according to the new view of the government, Moroccans abroad "are no longer considered simple remittance providers for the origin country, but real actors of economic and social development and economic ambassadors of Morocco in their receiving countries" (cited in Belguendouz 2010 in French). The most striking observation one can make regarding institutional arrangements is that Diaspora engagement policies in Morocco are managed and implemented by numerous organizations. On the one hand, the multiplicity of organisations shows that a high level of importance is accorded to emigrant citizens; on the other hand, it reveals that diaspora engagement is managed in a dispersed way, where specific issues related to emigrants are dealt mainly by existing institutions that are not always specifically targeted at migrants but intervene when necessary. Moreover, in several cases there is not only an overlap between the responsibilities of organizations, but a shift between the responsibilities of organizations. For instance, the project facilitating the arrival of Moroccans residing abroad to Morocco during summer time has shifted from the Hassan II Foundation to the Mohamed V Foundation for Solidarity. On a different note, one example

of different actors involved in the same programme was the Moroccan FINCOME. In this case, some parties involved invite skilled Moroccans abroad to come back permanently while others suggest staying in the receiving countries to support marketing for Moroccan products, thus disposing the lack of a coherent vision (Belguendouz 2010). In this context, coordination and communication between various governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with different subjects related to Diaspora engagement becomes a major challenge.

For the effectiveness of policies, a coherent vision needs to be established and managed by an institution in constant communication with responsible parties involved in the execution of policies and programs. In that sense, the re-establishment of the Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad is of high significance. However, for long-lasting efficient Diaspora engagement policies, the sustainable functioning of this ministry is indispensable. Considering the institutional history of this ministry and how it went through several changes, and was closed for some years before being reopened again since it was opened for the first time in the late 1990s, one of the main objectives of the Moroccan government should be to provide the necessary conditions for dialogue and cooperation.

In relation to this, democratization and political liberalization in Morocco are of high significance. The country has gone through a process of liberalization in the last a few decades, and at least in principle, participatory governance has become an integral part of the country's strategy. Nevertheless, the actual practice of participatory governance and the Diaspora's engagement and democratic representativeness remain to be the issues that need to be addressed in further detail. Having observed a remarkable change in the attitude of the Moroccan government towards its citizens residing abroad, it is of great interest how new policies and projects are implemented and their success is supported in the coming years.



Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

References

Belguendouz, Abedkrim. 2006. *Le traitement institutionnel de la relation entre les Marocains résidant à l'étranger et le Maroc*. CARIM Research Report Analytic 2006/06, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.

Bilgili, Özge and Silja Weyel. 2009. Migration in Morocco: *History, Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Paper series: Migration and Development Country Profiles. Maastricht: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.

Brand, Laurie A. 2006. *Citizens abroad. Emigration and the state in the Middle East and North Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Haas, Hein. 2007. *Between courting and controlling: The Moroccan state and "its" emigrants*. Working paper 07-54. Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.

De Haas, Hein. 2009. *Morocco*. Country Profile no 16, Focus Migration. Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI).

Khachani, Mohamed. 2011. *La question migratoire au Maroc: données récentes*. Series CARIM AS, 2011/71, Robert Schuman Centre for Advances Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.

Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad. 2009. *A guide book for Moroccans Residing Abroad*, Rabat, Morocco.

Useful internet sources

Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad

<http://www.marocainsdumonde.gov.ma>

Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs

<http://www.habous.gov.ma/fr>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

<http://www.diplomatie.ma>

Ministry of Finance

<http://www.finances.gov.ma>

Foundation Hassan II

<http://www.alwatan.ma>

Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad

<http://www.ccme.org.ma/fr>

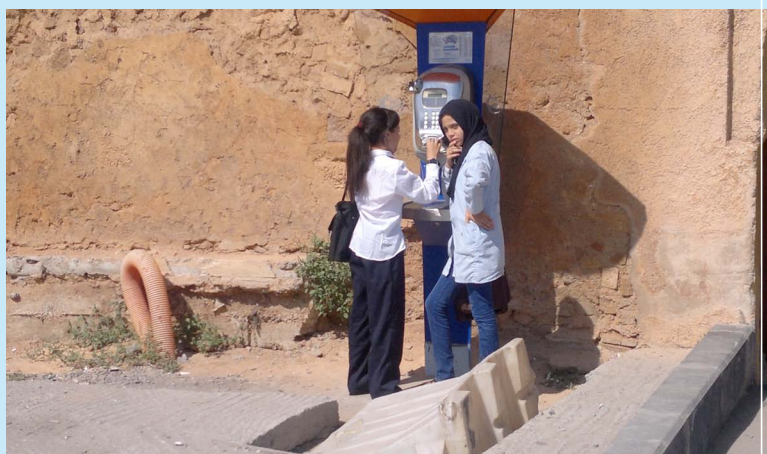
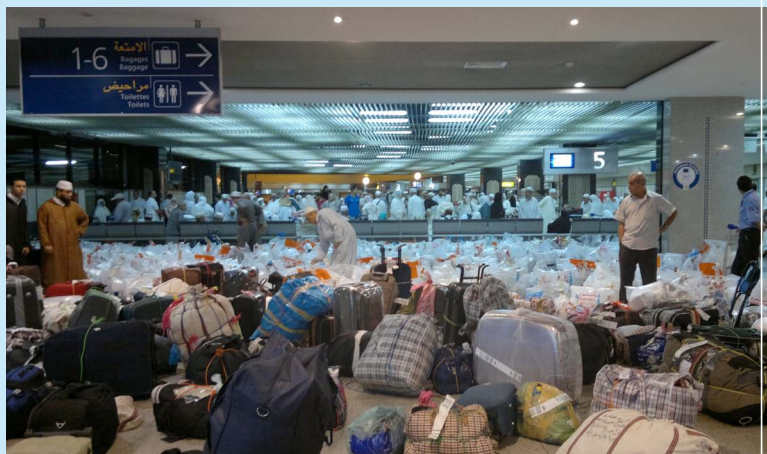
Authors



Özge Bilgili, PhD Candidate
Maastricht Graduate School of
Governance
Maastricht University



Silja Weyel, PhD Candidate
Maastricht Graduate School of
Governance
Maastricht University



The photos® are taken by Özge Bilgili in 2011 in Rabat and Cassablanca.