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COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS)

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ACRONYMS

CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DG	Democracy Governance
DO	Development Objective
DOJ	Department of Justice
EU	European Union
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FSN	Foreign Service National
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOM	Government of Morocco
HDI	Human Development Index
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDH	National Human Development Initiative
INL	International Narcotic and Law Enforcement
IR	Intermediate Result
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
S&T	Science and Technology
SIBE	Sites of Biological and Ecological Interest
US	United States
USDH	United States Direct Hire
USG	United States Government
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism

I. CONTEXT, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

On April 2, 1957, the United States and Morocco signed an agreement which commemorated the beginning of U.S. economic assistance to Morocco. Since then, USAID investments in water and irrigation contributed to the construction of the Mohammed V and Mechra Homadi dams, transforming thousands of hectares of semi-arid wasteland in the Oriental Region into productive use. As the Ministry of Health's principal partner in family planning, maternal and child health for over 30 years, USAID has supported Morocco in lowering maternal mortality rates and improving child survival. Investments in microfinance and urban planning resulted in access to credit for thousands of entrepreneurs and infrastructure improvements to urban neighborhoods in Northern Morocco that modernized communities while maintaining the traditional social fabric.

Today, Morocco remains a stable Monarchy and vital ally to the United States. Since taking the throne in 1999, King Mohammed VI introduced various reforms, including the creation of a reconciliation commission on past human rights abuses; enhanced status and rights for women; and economic reforms intended to increase foreign direct investment. The United States and Morocco share a cooperative bilateral relationship built on recent achievements, such as the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement, U.S.-Morocco Science and Technology Cooperation (S&T) Agreement,¹ the Millennium Challenge Cooperation Compact and significant non-NATO security cooperation. On September 13, 2012, the U.S. Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for Morocco launched the Morocco-U.S. Strategic Dialogue, one of only six such bilateral agreements in existence. As a formal institutionalized framework, the Strategic Dialogue establishes and enhances ongoing collaboration on political, economic, security, education and human rights issues.²

Reflecting a long history of collaboration and partnership, the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy is a focused plan to work side-by-side with the Moroccan Government, civil society and the private sector to enhance progress towards key reforms. The Government of Morocco (GOM) responded to the Arab Spring by reforming the constitution and laying out an ambitious agenda of political, economic, and social reforms. Implementing this reform agenda, while maintaining stability and security throughout the country, is of utmost importance. The United States seeks to help the GOM achieve its stated reform goals and respond to the needs of Moroccan citizens. USAID/Morocco's goal for the 2013 – 2017 strategy is to **advance Moroccan initiatives for peaceful reform**. This goal will be achieved through the following development objectives:

- DO 1: Employability of target youth enhanced
- DO 2: Increased civic participation in governance
- DO 3: Enhanced educational attainment for children at the primary level

Developed in consultation with the GOM, international donors and other USG agencies, this strategy will help foster greater employment, wider civic participation, and a better-educated population. While Morocco has made substantial progress on a number of human development index indicators, an under-employed workforce, a general lack of trust between civil society and government, and poor education attainment continue to hinder inclusive growth. However, a reformist constitution and strong political will have positively positioned Morocco for accelerated progress towards development goals.

¹ The U.S.-Morocco Science and Technology Cooperation (S&T) Agreement was signed in 2006 by Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Environment and Science Claudia A. McMurray, and allows for bilateral collaboration on a broad array of science issues with government agencies, national research centers, academic institutions and private corporations in both countries. US Department of State, Media Note, Office of the Spokesperson, November 14, 2006.

² US Department of State, Notice to the Press, September 13, 2012, Launch of US-Morocco Strategic Dialogue.

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

Morocco's substantial progress in strengthening growth over the past decade has contributed to a solid macroeconomic performance and reduced poverty. With a recent history of macroeconomic stability and low inflation, Morocco has seen real GDP growth of approximately five percent over the past decade. Despite a relatively positive macroeconomic picture, the IMF notes that "the major challenge for Morocco remains that of achieving a GDP growth rate that will help reduce unemployment and improve living standards while ensuring medium-term fiscal sustainability."³ "Much still remains to be done to reduce unemployment, in particular among the youth, and further improve social indicators such as the literacy rate and equal access to basic infrastructure, health services and education."⁴ Over the past 12 months, Morocco's performance has been challenged by economic slowdown in Europe, high oil and food prices and a lower than average agriculture production. Implementing the needed reforms to create more inclusive growth is therefore essential to preserving solid economic performance in a challenging external environment.

The national unemployment rate of 10 percent masks significant disparities among women and youth as well as employment challenges in urban geographic areas. Representing 44 percent of the working population,⁵ Moroccan youth have largely been excluded from the country's recent economic growth. With unemployment rates estimated at 22 percent among males and 38 percent among females, educated urban youth are more susceptible to unemployment and are frustrated with the inability of the Moroccan education system to adequately prepare them for the workforce. In March 2013, Moroccans gathered more than 3,000 people in protest—many of them urban educated youth—because of growing frustration with the difficult employment environment⁶.

Morocco has made significant progress in terms of access to education for both males and females. This positive development, however, has not transformed into a successful transition of young people to the labor market. Only 18 percent of young women are actively engaged in formal employment, and approximately 80 percent of Morocco's unemployed are within the ages of 15 to 34 years old. These figures expose the overwhelming incidence of disengaged or inactive youth, which is estimated at over 40 percent.

With the aforementioned statistics directly influencing perceptions of economic opportunity among youth, the Moroccan Government is now confronted with growing calls for greater political and economic inclusion. Much of the social unrest in 2011 was brought about by disaffected youth who were struggling to find not only employment, but relevance within their societies. With too few economic opportunities frustration grows. Nonetheless, substantive reforms were set in motion prior to and after the Arab Spring. Such reforms include the decentralization of political power through regionalism, a shift toward greater democratic accountability through the devolution of power to elected government, and increased economic competition through privatization of significant monopolies coupled with greater empowerment of the competition agency. All of these reforms are in various stages of implementation, and the GOM has firmly stated its intent to usher in a more open and accountable form of governance.

PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

³ IMF Concluding Statement of the Article VI Consultation - Morocco, July 2011.

⁴ IMF Press Release No. 12/489, December 2012

⁵ World Bank. 2012. "Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation." The World Bank.

⁶ Agence France-Presse. March 31, 2013. *Thousands March Against Morocco Government.*

Despite its lower middle-income status and relative political stability, Morocco's governance indicators continue to fluctuate. Morocco's income-adjusted 2012 Human Development Index (HDI) score ranks it below Syria, Egypt and the average of other Arab states. It ranks in the bottom quartile of many government effectiveness indicators such as human rights, press freedom and gender indices. For these reasons, the Arab Spring in Morocco was characterized by calls for wide-ranging political reforms and greater government responsiveness. In response to demands for greater democratic freedoms, the King promised further political reform and promulgated a new constitution, which passed with overwhelming support. The new Constitution contains a number of historic steps including the empowerment of the Prime Minister as "Head of the Government," independence of the judiciary, amplifying the role of civil society and the insertion of important text on human rights.

Undoubtedly, the operating space for important reforms in democracy and governance has expanded in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Civil society is mobilized and constitutionally empowered to effect political change and key parts of the government are keen to meaningfully engage citizens in policy-making. The constitution also gives priority to decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities to provide services to citizens for more inclusive local development. Given this unprecedented democratic opening, Morocco is well positioned to make significant improvements to democratic processes, allowing the country to implement its reform agenda in a pluralistic and sustainable manner.

The new Moroccan Constitution calls for greater input into governance by civil society through "participatory democracy." Due to the experience of past projects in Morocco and civic participation best practices from work done around the world, USAID is in a unique position to help Moroccan Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and public institutions nurture civic participation in public decision-making during this critical juncture in Morocco's democratic evolution.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL REFORM

Poverty reduction and social inclusion are key objectives of the Moroccan Government. Over the past ten years, the Moroccan Government introduced bold reforms in the security sector and launched broad social initiatives to address poverty and social marginalization. As part of this effort, the National Human Development Initiative (INDH), a grant program for NGOs in areas of high poverty and social marginalization, is being implemented side-by-side with reforms in education, employment, as well as political and civic participation. Such efforts contributed to steady declines in poverty rates over the past 10 years, with rural poverty rates at approximately 14 percent. While Moroccan programs to reduce poverty are ambitious and progressive, initiatives to improve social indicators, particularly in education, require continued investment by the Moroccan Government and international donors.

Morocco has made great strides in increasing access to schooling through its launch of the National Charter for Education and Training in 2000. Primary net enrollment reached 94 percent as of 2010 and the ratio of females to males in primary school climbed to 92 percent by 2008. The female enrollment rate reached 84 percent in 2004 and the primary completion rate is now 90.6 percent (89.8 percent for girls).

Despite these achievements, Morocco's education attainment indicators are and school retention rates are low. Primary and secondary school dropout rates remain high and national literacy rates are among the lowest in the region (59.5 percent in 2008; 43.3 percent in rural areas; 48.1 percent among women). While enrollment rates in primary education are nearly universal for grade one, only 18 percent of first-graders are expected to graduate from high school.

The GOM recognizes these shortcomings and views scholastic achievement as a catalyst for broad-based growth, civic engagement and effective democratic processes. Supporting the Moroccan commitment in making the necessary investments for improving education is therefore a long-term element of USAID initiatives which reinforces all aspects of the CDCS. USAID will focus on tackling the fundamental challenges in the education system at its foundation through primary grade education, and as youth prepare to enter the workforce. Education achievement is the building block of a vibrant citizenry that can actively and effectively engage with government and build a strong democratic foundation for supporting long-term sustainable development.

GENDER EQUALITY

Since the current King's ascension to the throne, women's rights have expanded significantly in the political, economic, social, and health domains. Nevertheless, Morocco ranks 129 out of 135 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2012. Of the four components of the index, Morocco fares worst on women's "political empowerment" (other components include economic participation, education, and health), with trends pointing downward since 2009. The 2011 Constitution sought to create new laws and encourage the implementation of existing mechanisms to enhance women's political and economic participation. It guarantees not only political equality, but also civic, economic, social, cultural and environmental parity. Article 146 of the Constitution explicitly calls for greater participation by women in local governance, requires the development of public budgets that reflect gender considerations and directs political parties to elevate the participation of women in party management and elections.

Despite the Constitution's pronouncements, women remain underrepresented in elected office, making up less than one percent of commune presidents. Although the percentage of women elected in local elections increased by 22 percent between 2003 and 2009, they still make up only 12.4 percent of elected local government representatives. Women also remain an underutilized economic resource in Morocco, as is the case throughout the MENA region. This trend is particularly true in the rural areas where women's participation in the labor force remains less than 10 percent.

Accordingly, USAID's strategy will seek to directly increase women's political and economic inclusion in the targeted sectors. Women's rights groups and female activists are well organized in Morocco and USAID, together with the U.S. Embassy, began a women's empowerment dialogue with women's rights activists in 2012. Building on this initiative, USAID democracy and governance programs will directly support women's rights advocacy groups, and work with political parties to increase women's participation in local and national elections. Education programming will incorporate specialized measures aimed at female retention rates at the primary level. Economic growth activities will work to reduce gaps between men and women in the labor market by identifying and reducing barriers to the successful transition of females from education to employment.



A. GOAL STATEMENT: ADVANCE MOROCCAN INITIATIVES FOR PEACEFUL REFORM

USAID’s CDCS goal is to advance Moroccan initiatives for peaceful reform. Given Morocco’s progressive response to citizen grievances brought forth through the Arab Spring, this goal is a direct reflection of USG support for key aspects of the resulting reform agenda. The Government and people of Morocco show clear commitment to democratic change and are working towards enhanced citizen participation in achieving greater social and economic opportunity for all citizens. Moreover, USAID’s 50-year relationship with the GOM and the recent strategic dialogue have forged a partnership that allows the two governments to work together on important issues key to peaceful reform in Morocco and overall stability throughout the North Africa region.

The GOM reform agenda targets employment for youth, citizen participation in governance, and education improvement as top priorities for public investment. The Head of Government as well as the Monarchy are moving forward with the development of ambitious plans to achieve these goals. As a result, various ministries are now working with donors, including USAID and development banks, to establish and implement plans that will accelerate the reform process. To capitalize on host country momentum and make local solutions an inherent part of the CDCS, USAID will partner with the GOM, civil society, and private sector to build capacity of local institutions and support progress towards priority development goals.

B. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE 1: EMPLOYABILITY OF TARGET YOUTH ENHANCED

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Morocco is in a paradoxical situation: Large numbers of graduates are unable to find jobs commensurate with their education and training, while employers complain of skills shortages and mismatches. Youth make up 30 percent of Morocco’s population, about 10 million people. Youth unemployment rates estimated at approximately 28 percent have historically resulted in serious social and political tensions.⁷ Moreover, without a trained workforce capable of increasing productivity⁸, Morocco cannot generate sufficient prosperity through private sector growth. Unemployment rates are disproportionately higher for graduates from open enrollment

⁷ B. Boudarbat and A. Ajbilou, 2009, “Youth Exclusion in Morocco: Context, Consequences, and Policies.”

⁸World Bank, Morocco: First Economic Competitiveness Support Program Development Policy Loan.

university programs (22 percent or 112,200 people), as well as graduates of secondary school (22 percent or 330,000 people) and vocational training institutions (20 percent or 62,000 people)⁹. This cadre of unemployed youth with education degrees of 9th grade or above is best positioned to drive the desired structural transformation of the Moroccan economy. USAID will target this population by adopting a pro-growth strategy with a view of achieving greater productivity and competitiveness as a means for stimulating economic growth and job creation.

To date, the private sector has played a largely passive role in developing human capital with only a handful of businesses actively engaged with education providers. Employers, educators and bureaucrats all possess differing views of what skills are required to enter the labor market and whether new entrants actually possess these skills upon graduation. Access to internships, mentoring programs, and other skill-building opportunities are only accessible to a small minority. A recent survey conducted by the Harvard Business School on behalf of USAID noted the proliferation of graduates lacking the skills required for the modern job market.

Current Moroccan workforce development institutions are located in different ministries and organizations, funded through separate sources, and have distinct service delivery mechanisms. There are also few country-wide performance measures to track and analyze workforce development efforts. This absence of metrics makes it difficult for the GOM to track the results of significant investments in education and adjust programming appropriately. There is also a lack of information regarding market needs – which industry sectors are growing and creating jobs, which employers are expanding their workforce, what specific skills are required for existing jobs and what employers’ expectations are for their new hires. Such information is necessary for a workforce system that is capable of producing human resources that meet the demands of an evolving job market.

USAID RESPONSE

USAID is proposing to enhance youth employability by focusing on the transition from education to employment for university and vocational students and recent graduates. The Mission will take an integrative approach to help Morocco adopt demand-led education and training systems that are both flexible and aligned to high-impact sectors and industries. USAID has opted not to target specific sectors as the majority of the planned activities, including career centers and labor-market information, are sector agnostic by nature. In addition, USAID will work closely with the Ministry of Employment to strengthen its planning and monitoring and evaluation capabilities, while advocating for flexible hiring practices beneficial to youth.

Like many missions, USAID/Morocco has viewed information technology (IT) as a cost efficient means for scaling successful interventions. Looking ahead, USAID will continue to leverage technology not only to reach more beneficiaries, but to fundamentally transform both the quality and outcomes derived from new services and delivery methods. Where possible, USAID will capitalize on career service platforms currently under development by companies such as Microsoft, Intel and Cisco. USAID will support the development and testing high-quality local content to be hosted on mobile systems and IT platforms accessible to millions of young Moroccans.

USAID recognizes that male and female beneficiaries face different barriers to employment. USAID will therefore customize activities to ensure equal access for beneficiaries with a particular attention on the actual outcomes for young men and women benefitting from project interventions.

⁹ World Bank, “Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation,” 2012.

IR 1.1: ACCESS TO QUALITY EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES IMPROVED

The disproportionately high rate of unemployment among secondary and post-secondary graduates is linked to labor-force and education-system factors and the challenging job growth situation. The absence of career services and the lack of integration of work preparedness in the curricula of Moroccan universities and vocational schools exacerbate the situation. Career counseling is also limited. The training institutes and career service programs that do exist are limited in scope and reach and private sector involvement is sporadic.

USAID will therefore focus on enhancing the quality of and improving access to career services. Building off consultations with the Ministry of Higher Education, USAID will facilitate partnerships between the Ministry, Moroccan universities and technical institutes, as well as local NGOs and business associations to develop demand-driven workforce development services that reach a broad range of youth. Emphasis will be placed on introducing best practices and sustainable models that can be replicated nationwide and incorporated systematically into existing workforce and career development structures.

US-Moroccan university partnerships, local mentoring associations and international firms will support a more comprehensive career development services approach to work-readiness at the vocational and tertiary levels. Private sector involvement through internship and apprenticeship programs will also create the necessary conditions for sustaining future USAID investments.

Activities under IR 1.1 will be implemented in an integrative manner to capitalize on the inherent links between career services, soft skills and internship programs. Private sector involvement will be fundamental in establishing high quality and sustainable services for Moroccan youth transitioning from education to employment. Public/private partnerships will be utilized to fill the skills gap at a sector level and to share the costs among multiple stakeholders.

IR 1.2: IMPROVED ALIGNMENT OF WORKFORCE PROGRAMS TO MARKET NEEDS

To understand the impact of workforce development programs, data is needed to track participant characteristics, services, and outcomes. Morocco invests heavily in training and upgrading the skills and competencies of its labor pool with little information on job market requirements. The Ministry of Employment, in coordination with the World Bank and European Union, is therefore embarking on a series of reforms that prioritize the establishment of a labor market information system and observatory to help forecast job growth and better target public investments in workforce development.

USAID will work with the aforementioned parties to help the Ministry acquire better data, but more importantly, use this data to improve the performance of workforce programming. Morocco's workforce development institutions must use labor market information to inform policy-makers, educators, private sector companies, and job seekers. Current information on trends and private sector demand will determine USAID support and help the GOM to align workforce investments with high priority sectors, thereby reducing the skills mismatch.

Problems with labor law and labor rigidity make maintaining a formal workforce a costly undertaking. Youth are disproportionately affected by these constraints as firms are hesitant to hire candidates with little to no experience. USAID will collaborate with the Ministry of Employment and other relevant actors in identifying and advancing creative and flexible working arrangements that incentivize the hiring of Moroccan youth. Such arrangements are not only instrumental in exposing youth to the world of work, but also encourage the private sector to hire new entrants by mitigating the inherent risk and costs associated with new hires.

C. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASED CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Economic exclusion, restrictive political space, corruption and the absence of the rule of law are all factors that generated public outcry for change throughout the North Africa region during the Arab Spring. In Morocco, however, citizens did not take to the streets to call for a fundamental break with the political system. Instead, for the first time in Morocco's modern history, a diverse coalition of Islamists, secular urban professionals, educated unemployed, feminists, Amazigh (Berber) groups, and others united in demanding a more transparent and responsive government that prioritized the needs of citizens.

King Mohammed VI responded to the protests by announcing a path to reform that included a new constitution and accelerated parliamentary elections. The Constitution contains a number of historic steps, including devolution of power, and progressive reforms concerning the judiciary, civil society, and human rights. The Moroccan Government is now developing laws to implement the Constitution's provisions.

Such a progressive and large reform effort takes time and resolute instruction to implement over the long term. Prospects for true devolution of power, transparency in government and the implementation of constitutional reforms will be met with skepticism if the GOM does not move forward in a timely manner.¹⁰ Particular concerns include:

1. Political parties unresponsive to citizen demands,
2. Limited ability of civil society to engage constructively in policy formulation and oversight,
3. GOM capacity to respond to and incorporate increased citizen-input in policy-making.

Although the path to reform requires increased efforts on the part of the government, specific constitutional requirements have created an incentive for Morocco's political elite to promote more inclusive governance. For example, Article 12 of the new Moroccan constitution states that *"The associations [and NGOs] interested in public matters ... contribute, within the framework of participative democracy, in the enactment, the implementation and the evaluation of the decisions and the initiatives of the elected institutions and of the public powers."* Thus, civil society and political parties are now constitutionally empowered to participate in governance. By increasing the capacity of civil society to engage the government on behalf of citizens and facilitating the development of institutionalized mechanisms of civic participation in government decision-making, Morocco will be better situated to implement its reform agenda in a peaceful and sustainable manner.

USAID RESPONSE

USAID will assist political parties in becoming more responsive and representative while supporting civil society organizations to build their management, organizational and advocacy capacity. This model will increase the legitimacy of two primary mechanisms for civic engagement in Morocco and advance efforts for more inclusive democratic participation. Capacity building for targeted Ministries and local government entities will in turn facilitate citizen participation and ensure sustainable participatory governance.

In addition, opportunities for cross portfolio collaboration to foster improved development outcomes are significant. Focus areas for advocacy will include youth inclusion, education policy, and women's rights. Encouraging youth participation in civic activity became a major component of the USAID 2009 – 2013 Strategy, and future programming will take advantage of past gains. Education reform is one of the highest priorities of the Moroccan Government and education quality is a major grievance of Moroccan citizens. Supporting civil

¹⁰ See Ahmed Benchemsi, "Morocco: Outfoxing the Opposition," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 23, No. 1, January 2012."

society efforts to influence the education reform agenda through advocacy is a way to help foster positive dialogue on an important issue.

IR 2.1: MORE RESPONSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties are among the most established mechanisms for achieving peaceful democratic change. The new Moroccan Constitution now delegates more power to elected, thus increasing the possible influence of political parties. In addition to the opportunity offered by recent reforms, political parties themselves – cognizant of the need to reform to be successful in future elections – have expressed significant interest in continued assistance.

Moroccan citizens have long been detached from political parties due to a lack of clear policy vision or consideration for citizen involvement, particularly by women and youth, in public-policy making. USAID will help political parties to improve their credibility by increasing the transparency and accountability of their internal operations, developing platforms reflective of citizen needs, and enhancing the involvement and leadership of youth and women in politics. The effective use of public opinion to inform policy agendas, the development of youth and women branches at the national and local levels and the development of individual plans to strengthen internal party capacity will be emphasized.

In addition, USAID will enable political parties to support and increase the political participation of women in their activities. Women continue to be absent particularly at the level of party leadership, resulting in the exclusion of crucial voices from the political debate in Morocco. USAID will help political parties take the necessary steps to include women’s voices in internal policy and strategy discussions thus expanding their constituency base and developing platforms that better meet the needs of all Moroccans.

Support to CSOs under IR 2.2 will also help achieve goals of women’s participation in politics. There are a number of dynamic CSOs, particularly women's associations that advocate for women's political rights. By organizing activities targeting the government and political parties of both majority and opposition, women’s groups have managed to introduce important reforms, including those of the Electoral Code on female representation.

Several assessments and program evaluations concluded that a more sustained, focused and localized effort is required to further enhance the responsiveness and integrity of political parties. Accordingly, USAID efforts will provide long-term assistance targeting local branches of political parties to ensure citizen engagement at the grassroots level. Further assistance will build on past successes and established networks to achieve the overall development objective.

IR 2.2: CIVIL SOCIETY CONTRIBUTION TO PUBLIC POLICY INCREASED

Civil society engagement is a key part of both incorporating citizen views into governance and monitoring the implementation of democratic reforms. Although numerous, the majority of Moroccan CSOs have limited capacity to influence public policy. According to the 2011 CSO Sustainability Index, “the bulk of CSOs are small and the sector is not currently evolving in terms of improving service delivery and local governance or influencing policy.” To increase their ability to peacefully influence the reform process, CSOs need a comprehensive package of capacity-building support.

Building on its experience, USAID will enhance CSO organizational capacity and financial integrity by improving their ability to develop sustainable financial plans, maintain transparent organizational structures and increase technical capacity for more focused advocacy or governance oversight. Moroccan CSOs recognize their deficiencies and seek continued capacity building support. Evaluations of the most recent USAID civil society

project noted that in order for this effort to be successful, CSO capacity building should be delivered through an integrated package of training, funding and technical assistance, and culminate in a specific advocacy effort. Accordingly, USAID will provide capacity development and mentoring to CSOs working in targeted reform areas, such as government accountability and women’s empowerment, and when appropriate, award direct grants to suitable projects.

Although Morocco ranks 129 out of 135 countries in the Global Gender Gap report, a number of initiatives launched over the past ten years have laid the foundation for expedited progress in this area. Article 19 of the Constitution addresses the principle of gender equity stating that “... Morocco shall endeavor to achieve parity between men and women...,” and Article 30 says “...The law provides for measures conducive to the promotion of equal access of women and men to elected office...” The Ministry for Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development initiated the plan “IKRAM” in July of 2013 to create new laws based on the constitutional reforms that advance women’s rights. Political will for increased participation of women is expressed at the State’s highest levels, and public figures often stress the need for greater involvement of Moroccan women in public affairs. USAID will therefore support civil society actors that can serve as watch dogs to ensure effective and consistent implementation of existing laws while encouraging and facilitating new efforts for decreasing gender gaps in all three of the CDCS development objectives.

USAID will also support the Moroccan Government’s efforts to develop or enhance mechanisms for civic participation in policy making. Reform must be the product of both citizen demand and a state capacity to incorporate citizen input. Among partner Ministries at the national level, Parliament and/or local government bodies, solicited civic engagement in policy formation will increase the government’s responsiveness to citizen demands. Through government-to-government financing and/or technical assistance, USAID will work with GOM entities, such as the Ministry for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society, to create the appropriate enabling environment for active CSO engagement in public policy. As more civil society organizations become engaged in political dialogue, reform efforts will become more credible.



“Many significant achievements have been made in the area of education and training... Nevertheless, we still have a long, arduous journey ahead of us if we are to enable this sector to actually play its role as an engine for the achievement of economic and social advancement... We cannot but ask this pressing question: Why is it that so many of our young people cannot fulfill their legitimate professional, material and social aspirations? The education sector is facing many difficulties and problems... due to the adoption of [education practices] that do not [match] the requirements of the job market.”

King Mohammed VI
Speech to the Nation
August 2013

D. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE 3: ENHANCED EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Over the past 15 years, the GOM has undertaken significant education reforms that resulted in broad access to primary schooling for both boys and girls. The net enrollment rate now exceeds 95 percent (88.3 percent for girls)¹¹, and the primary school completion rate is near 85 percent (97.3 percent for girls).¹² However, these numbers mask deep problems in the education system that result in high levels of school dropout and low levels of academic achievement. During the Arab Spring, Moroccan citizens highlighted limited educational

¹¹ World Bank country data (2011)

¹² World Bank country data. Defined as the percentage of grade six students who pass to grade seven. This statistic does not account for dropout before grade six.

opportunities and the poor quality of education as major grievances. Nearly one million children ages six to fifteen are not in school and only 18 percent of first graders are expected to complete high school. The high number of dropouts at such a young age has a deep and wide-ranging effect on Morocco's long-term economic outlook. A lack of education perpetuates poverty, limits job opportunities and strains the social support system.

Early literacy is essential to overall academic success. Numerous studies show that children with poor reading skills are more likely to fall behind in school, setting the stage for future dropout. Moroccan students rank among the lowest achievers in reading both in regional and in international assessments¹³. A 2011 early grade reading assessment conducted in the region of *Doukkala-Abda* showed that:

- Only 34 percent of students in grades two and three read well enough to fully comprehend a grade-two level text;
- Boys and girls equally lack basic letter naming skills and are not able to sound out simple words; and
- 33 percent of second graders and 17 percent of third graders (21 percent for girls and 29 percent for boys both grades combined) could not read a single word of text in Classical Arabic, the language of instruction in the formal education system.

A multitude of factors contribute to low levels of early literacy. Irregular teacher practice in reading instruction and inadequate levels of teacher preparation are weaknesses in the education system. Insufficient reading materials for nascent learners and the absence of supplemental reading material for all students severely constrains the overall learning environment. Additionally, the language of instruction in Morocco, Classical Arabic, differs from what most children speak in the home (*Darija* or *Amazigh*), adding further complexity to the learning environment. These factors hinder success in primary school by keeping students from developing the necessary foundation for future learning.

In order to improve early literacy and help curb primary grade dropout rates, the Moroccan educational system must be adequately equipped to provide quality reading instruction. The Moroccan Government recognizes the need for improvement and shows commitment to educational reform. In the two speeches to the nation on the state of government services to young people, King Mohamed VI singled out the education system as the nation's highest priority.¹⁴ The MOE also has a remedial education program that, working through civil society organizations, allows school dropouts to catch up to grade level and return to primary school.¹⁵ Such momentum for educational reform provides a strategic opening for accelerated progress.

USAID RESPONSE

USAID will improve the learning outcomes of students and promote higher levels of educational attainment for children by targeting primary level learning achievement. Enhanced reading instruction and systemic improvements designed to support reading initiatives will be the basis of the USAID approach. Interventions will directly target teaching methods and learning materials at the school level, and capacity building at the institutional level. Initiatives to prevent school dropout in high-risk areas will also be implemented through coordination with civil society organizations and community-based groups. USAID will work the MOE to develop gender-sensitive reading materials and will ensure gender equity in the delivery of training programs. Special attention will be paid to training teachers in using gender-sensitive teaching methods in the classroom.

¹³ (PIRLS 2006, 2011)

¹⁴ August 20th, 2012 and 2013 Speeches to the Nation by King Mohammed VI.

¹⁵ While this second-chance program shows great promise, it suffers from underfunding and limited reach resulting in few learning options for functionally illiterate primary school dropouts.

IR 3.1: READING SKILLS OF PRIMARILY LEVEL STUDENTS IMPROVED

Increased reading ability among children at the primary level is the most effective way to improve learning achievement in any subject area. USAID's efforts will therefore focus on the inputs required to produce strong and independent readers by the end of the primary cycle.

Effective instruction is enhanced by a teacher's ability to adjust instructional approaches to the needs of the students. For that reason, classroom-based assessment and monitoring of student progress will also be an important component of USAID support. By providing teachers with tools to identify and solve reading-related problems and allowing them freedom to create individualized instructional approaches, USAID will help create a learning environment that is more flexible and responsive to the needs of individual students. Community-based reading initiatives that support school retention will also be strengthened to reinforce the learning environment for reading and facilitate re-enrollment for primary grade dropouts.

Despite the praise Morocco has earned for women's rights, social pressures on girls are still very common in some conservative communities, particularly in rural areas where boys have the priority to go to school and girls are kept at home. Additionally, females represent less than 15 percent of teachers and school directors in many parts of the country. In order to foster gender parity in the educational system, focus will be placed on initiatives that address cultural barriers to continued education and encourage retention of girls in primary school.

IR 3.2: LEARNING DELIVERY SYSTEMS IMPROVED

To sustainably improve educational quality, it is essential to support the MOE in developing and implementing appropriate guidelines and policies for improved reading instruction. By improving pre-service teacher preparation, USAID will ensure that reading initiatives are sustainably implemented throughout the entire educational system. USAID will assist the MOE in setting clear standards and benchmarks for reading achievement, and create gender sensitive tools to assess student progress. Such initiatives will enhance the MOE's ability to monitor educational attainment and track student learning at the classroom level. As a result, provincial and regional education officials will have real-time gender disaggregated education data for better decision-making.

Education NGOs play a prominent role in the national literacy campaign. Due to the decentralization of education structures in Morocco, there is an increased trend towards civil society partnerships to deliver education services.¹⁶ To instill a culture of reading and facilitate a better learning experience, USAID will work with education NGOs to develop supplemental learning material and classroom libraries for use in traditional and non-traditional learning environments. Capitalizing on achievements from the current strategy, USAID will also harness Morocco's high levels of mobile phone coverage and a MOE program for education technology to promote reading through mobile-learning and other e-education methods.

¹⁶ M. BOUGROUM, ET AL., LITERACY POLICIES, *supra* note 17, at 13.

ILLUSTRATIVE INDICATORS

USAID/Morocco CDCS Goal Statement: Advance Moroccan Initiatives for Peaceful Reform
Freedom House Index
Political Stability (World Bank Governance Indicators)
Human Development Index
Development Objective 1: Employability of target youth enhanced
Number of youth gaining employment or extended internships as a result of USG assistance
% increase in private companies participating in USG-funded workforce development activities
Intermediate Result 1.1: Improved access to quality career development services
Number of learning institutions offering career services and job-readiness programs as a result of USG assistance
Number of participants successfully completing training in soft skills as a result of USG assistance (disaggregated by sex)
Number of participants actively engaged in mentoring networks (disaggregated by sex)
Intermediate Result 1.2: Workforce development programs aligned to market needs
% increase in participants receiving training through USG-supported public private partnerships and getting jobs
Number of private companies establishing workforce development partnerships as a result of USG assistance
Workforce development programs more accurately reflect the labor needs of growing industries in Morocco
Development Objective 2: Increased civic participation in governance
Freedom House Index in the World Political Rights sub-score for Political Pluralism and Participation
Voice & Accountability Score – World Bank Governance Indicators
Corruption Perception Index Score
Intermediate Result 2.1: More responsive and representative political parties
Number of USG-assisted CSOs that engage in advocacy and watchdog functions disaggregated by topics
Percent of women/youth represented in the parties' national and regional governing bodies
Intermediate Result 2.2: Civil society contribution to public policy increased
% change in organizational capacity assessment scores of USAID-assisted CSOs
% of advocacy campaigns assisted by the USG that result in policy or procedural changes by the government
Voice & Accountability Score – World Bank Governance Indicators
Development Objective 3: Enhanced educational attainment for children at primary level
Grade six (6) completion rates (disaggregated by sex)
Intermediate Result 3.1: Reading skills of primary level students improved
Proportion of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text (disaggregated by sex)
Proportion of students who, by the end of the primary cycle, are able to read and demonstrate understanding as defined by a country curriculum, standards or agreed-upon by national experts (disaggregated by sex)
Intermediate Result 3.2: Learning delivery systems improved
% of trained teachers demonstrating improved performance (as a stand-alone and triangulated with student performance measures)
Number of instructional, administrative or decision-making improvements at USAID-assisted educational institutions
% of teachers who demonstrate essential skills in teaching reading