



MOROCCO CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH ASSESSMENT BRIEF

Photo by Carlos ZGZ

Youth are the foundation of a prosperous future for Morocco. However, they confront growing risks from a combination of education; economic and workforce development; civic engagement and participatory governance; and community resilience challenges.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

To understand these challenges more clearly, YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE) conducted a cross-sectoral youth assessment (CSYA) that began June 2020, at the request of USAID/Morocco. The results of the youth assessment were intended to provide USAID/Morocco with a recent update on the current context for youth aged 15-34 and provide input into future strategies and programs within the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) framework, particularly regarding youth contributions to Morocco's development. The assessment paid special attention to advancing the 'Journey to Self-Reliance' (J2SR) via efforts to enhance youth participation in local and national governance and youth employability. Many of the findings can be applied more broadly for anyone working with youth in Morocco.

The assessment consisted of a desk review and virtual field research, necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team reviewed 40 documents, conducted 31 key informant interviews (KIIs) across different target groups, conducted six focus group discussions with various key stakeholders that focus on youth issues and implemented an online youth survey that was completed by 135 youth across the three targeted regions: Tangier-Tétouan-Al Hoceima, Marrakesh-Safi, and Béni Mellal-Khénifra.

FINDINGS

The findings present a remarkably consistent profile of youth needs, priorities, and challenges. Results from the data collected during this assessment are summarized below.

Education

Despite Morocco's high levels of access to education, more than half of the country's students leave the education system early or without proficiency in the skills required for the labor market. While Morocco's primary school gross enrollment rate (GER) is 116 percent¹ and its primary completion rate is near 99 percent, only 66 percent of students who enroll in lower secondary education complete the three-year cycle. Only 34 percent of upper secondary entrants graduate, only 11 percent take the baccalaureate exam and an estimated 431,876 youth dropped out of school in 2018, of which nearly three-quarters were girls. Most youth in Morocco lack French and English mastery, which creates barriers, especially at the tertiary education level.

Box 1. Bright Spot for Education

Reading for Success - National Program for Reading

Launched in 2015, the Reading for Success - National Program for Reading (RFS-NPR) is a USAID/Morocco program in partnership with the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research that develops and tests the most effective approaches to strengthen students' Arabic reading skills in targeted primary schools. USAID/Morocco has contributed to the program by developing a new Arabic language curriculum for grades one through four based on the phonics-based approach and highly interactive activities; training teachers on proven best practices and teaching methods; creating remedial and extra-curricular reading activities to be implemented in schools and community centers and increasing family awareness of the importance of reading for their children's future. As a result, the program has reached approximately 690,000 students in grades one through four with the new reading instruction method and with more children in those grades reading at a grade level with comprehension.

¹ Gross enrollment rates include students of all ages in that grade, including repeaters. As a result, the total enrollment can exceed the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education—leading to ratios greater than 100 percent (<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/114955-how-can-gross-school-enrollment-ratios-be-over-100>).



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Economic and Workforce Development²

Youth employment is precarious and fragile. About 73.3 percent of active 15- to 29-year-olds have no medical coverage, and 80 percent work without a contract. Over 50 percent of working youth are employed in commerce, other market services, and administration and nonmarket services, principally in urban areas. Almost 82 percent of active youth earn salaries under 3,000 Moroccan dirham (MAD) per month (under US\$275),³ while 93 percent of young women earn less. About 63 percent of employed youth used personal and family relations to secure their job. Youth unemployment rates rose from 24.9 percent in 2019 to nearly 27.0 percent in the first quarter of 2020. Women face higher unemployment rates (35 percent), and women, aged 15-35, represent nearly 83 percent of unemployed women. The economy is shrinking, with GDP growth rates declining to 2.3 percent in the past two years. This situation is now exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.

There is insufficient formal employment, particularly in areas of interest to youth like business, tourism, and information and communication technology (ICT). Vocational schools lack enough teachers, materials, equipment, and infrastructure to support effective student learning. Curricula are often misaligned with private-sector needs, and vocational skills are more difficult to access outside of urban areas. Weak support networks and systems, a complex business start-up process, and inadequate access to credit hinder the promotion of an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship. Despite this, starting their own businesses was the top priority for youth who participated in this assessment.

Box 2. Bright Spot for Economic and Workforce Development

Career Centers' Project

The Career Center's Project established six career development centers linked to universities and the vocational training system. It also incorporates workforce readiness training into the Moroccan tertiary education system, vocational training system, and workplaces as well as a Virtual Career Center that offers online services for young Moroccans who cannot visit the physical centers. As a result, over 200,000 youth have benefitted from Career Center Services, and over 1,283,000 users have visited the Virtual Career Center. Additionally, over 120 staff from partner institutions received training to prepare them to staff future Career Centers.

² Abdelhak Kamal, "National Youth Policies: The Case of Morocco," SAHWA Policy Paper, no. 14 (2016).

³ Decree no. 2-19-424 of June 26, 2019, provided in the official bulletin no. 6790 of June 27, 2019, that the legal minimum wage, starting July 2019, would be approximately MAD 2,698.83 per month in the sectors of industry, commerce, and liberal professions and MAD 1,903.72 per month in the agricultural sector (<https://www.cnss.ma/fr/content/le-salaire-minimum-de-b%C3%A9n%C3%A9fice-des-allocations-familiales-augmente>).

Civic Engagement and Youth Voice

Lack of engaging political platforms and lack of resources were consistently cited as the top two barriers to civic engagement across all age segments. Female survey respondents cited the lack of resources (e.g., financial, transportation) as the main barrier to civic engagement, followed by a lack of engaging social media platforms and a lack of awareness about the importance of engagement for local development. For men, the main barrier was a lack of interest in civic engagement followed by a lack of engaging social media platforms with ways to become civically active. A lack of resources was cited as the third most important barrier.

Nearly 70 percent of surveyed youth believed their needs and opinions are not taken into consideration by government programs and services targeting youth. This finding was supported by KIIIs with leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), who noted that the lack of opportunities for youth to engage in civic activities along with cultural challenges around being taken seriously makes youth feel disenfranchised. Youth-led organizations are more common in urban areas, with 43 percent of urban youth reporting that these programs are available in their community compared to only 11 percent of youth from rural areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section summarizes recommendations that can help address the assessment findings.

Short-Term

Educational reform takes time, and many changes require long-term investments. However, some short-term momentum can be achieved by:

- **Promoting quality education for youth** building off existing programs that are currently addressing the need for improved foundational skills, updated curriculum, and pre-service teacher training.
- **Scaling up existing programs** that link schools, higher education institutions (HEIs), and technical and vocational education and training (TVETs) to the job market by working with the private sector to create internships, apprenticeships, and work-study programs.
- **Scaling up in-school communications programs** that feature successful TVET graduates—especially youth with disabilities and women.
- **Promoting youth entrepreneurship** by supporting business development services to increase the chances for youth business start-up

survival and the growth of youth-led micro-, small-, and medium-size (MSM) businesses.

- **Focusing on entrepreneurial inclusiveness** by setting aside a portion of funds to support business start-ups and expansions led by young women and youth with disabilities.
- **Funding local (i.e., regional, provincial, and communal levels) labor market surveys** that are sector-, subsector-, and firm-specific, pointing to value chain gaps, niche opportunities, and opportunities for subcontracting and joint ventures between small and larger firms.
- **Including a mechanism in projects** to provide grants to youth-led organizations that can strengthen their capacity to grow.
- **Harnessing the influence and untapped potential of social media activists and influencers** to increase awareness of opportunities, mobilization, outreach, advocacy, and learning.
- **Engaging youth and local communities in cocreation seminars or workshops** where the outcomes focus on concrete interventions that can be incorporated into USAID programming.

Long-Term

- **Continuing to strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher-training programs** for primary and secondary school teachers with emphasis on effective pedagogy and support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) to scale up training at the national level.
- **Designing and/or scaling up flexible out-of-school accelerated learning programs** for youth, especially youth who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs) and particularly in rural areas, that promote literacy and numeracy and offer certificates of achievement recognized by the MOE that are linked to income-generating activities that incentivize youth participation.
- **Providing technical assistance to national, regional, and local government** on proven models of intervention in youth job creation, inclusive growth, youth entrepreneurship, and all aspects of the program cycle linked to positive youth development (PYD).
- **Helping uncover underexploited or unexploited and youth-friendly income-generating and entrepreneurship activities** via labor market and value chain assessments and community youth mapping that can help identify gaps viewed as opportunities, and then helping youth to understand the promise of these opportunities and generate excitement about new prospects.
- **Strengthening existing programs** and, when indicated, building new pathways for youth individually and via youth-led organizations to participate more actively in their societies through subnational institutions and mechanisms at the regional, provincial, and community levels (e.g., by training local officials on principles of PYD and how to use local mechanisms to enhance inclusion).
- **Providing technical support and training to youth-led and youth-serving CSOs** to promote community-led initiatives to proactively engage government institutions on specific issues of direct concern to those communities (e.g., enhanced sports facilities, trash collection, support for community day care, outdoor market hygiene).
- **Continuing to strengthen the capacity of entities that engage youth** (CBOs, CSOs, youth-led groups), especially those that have been marginalized, so they become active participants in local governance activities in ways that facilitate scaling up of local initiatives (e.g., securing youth inclusion on local committees, holding youth workshops to train youth on organizing, advocacy, and communication).
- **Boosting the participation in civil society of female youth** (especially those in rural areas and with disabilities) to help address acute gender disparities by (1) including benchmarks and quotas for female youth participation in relevant USAID activities, (2) incentivizing local and regional governments to increase youth participation in governance, and (3) supporting communication advocacy efforts by youth and women's groups.
- **Continuing and enhancing donor coordination initiatives** that go beyond information-sharing and prioritize closer alignment of complementary projects while documenting and disseminating best practices and lessons learned using a learning agenda to build synergies and improve effectiveness of activities funded by USAID and others.
- **Developing a community of practice amongst youth-serving organizations** so they can share lessons learned and increasing coordination on ways to build youth resiliency by strengthening assets and agency and promoting youth participation in civil society.

CONCLUSION

This brief offers a glimpse of aspirations and challenges of Moroccan youth and recommendations elicited from assessment findings for areas that present the best opportunities to meet pressing youth priorities. Investments in the youth population will prove to be critical as the country moves closer to self-reliance.



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About YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation

The USAID-funded [YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation](http://www.youthpower.org) (YP2LE) activity deepens the integration of positive youth development (PYD) evidence and best practices into youth programming, ensuring more sustainable change. PYD is a widely accepted philosophy and approach that, when applied appropriately, ensures youth are empowered to reach their full potential. The PYD approach builds skills, assets, and competencies; fosters healthy relationships; strengthens the environment; and transforms systems. YP2LE activities are designed to examine the impact of cross-sectoral youth programming in collaboration with USAID, YouthPower implementing partners, PYD researchers, youth-led and youth-serving organizations, individual young change-makers, and other relevant stakeholders. The goal of this three-year activity is to give practitioners the information, tools, and resources they need to develop high-quality, impactful, and sustainable youth programs allowing empowered youth, working with supportive adults, to create the kind of sustainable change in individuals and systems that leads to self-reliance. YP2LE achieves this through a four-pronged approach that includes research, a learning network, digital platforms and champions, and rapid-response technical support. For more information, visit [youthpower.org](http://www.youthpower.org).

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