

WORKING PAPER / 2019.01

Sub-Saharan Migrants' life conditions in Morocco in light of migration policy changes

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WORKING PAPER / 2019.01

ISSN 2294-8643

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February 2019

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ABSTRACT

Reinforced security at the European Union borders led many migrants from sub-Saharan countries to settle in Morocco. For years, Morocco's migration policy has adopted a security approach towards irregular migration through the containment, mistreatment and deportation of migrants. However, on 9 September 2013 the government announced a new National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (NSIA) whereby a more human approach to migration would be adopted. The NSIA aimed to ensure equal opportunities for the migrants, improve their access to economic, cultural and political rights, and change the perception of migration in society. The article looks at the reasons behind the change in Morocco's migration policy. It further explores, through migrants' and Non-governmental organisation perceptions, how migrants' status (illegality/legality) and the socio-political conditions within the country affect their potential integration or/and exclusion. This paper concludes with policy recommendations to improve the migration policy and migrants' living conditions.

1. INTRODUCTION

For decades, Morocco has been perceived as a transit place for migrants and refugees from Africa on their way to Europe. Many continue to attempt journeys to European countries in search of better living conditions. However, reinforced security in the European Union (EU) has caused many migrants to stay indefinitely in Morocco. Migrants from sub-Saharan African countries have populated urban centres in Morocco, transforming the country from a transit area to one of alternative settlement. For years, Morocco's migration policy has adopted a security approach towards irregular migration, culminating in the containment, mistreatment and deportation of migrants. In return, Morocco receives significant grants and signs generous agreements with the EU.

On 9 September 2013, the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, announced a new National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (NSIA). This strategy consisted of a new migration policy and promised a humanitarian approach to migration management and possible integration of migrants within the Moroccan society. The official Moroccan discourse framed it as a new humanitarian policy, emphasising a participative approach in its endorsement and stressing its effect in changing the migrants' lives and tackling human trafficking. The 2014 Census data show a moderate increase in immigrants, from 0.17% to 0.25% (Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2009b, 2014). While the data do not account for illegal migration, the number of migrants in Morocco remains low when considering the Moroccan emigrant population of 4 million in 2012 (Berriane, de Haas, & Natter, 2015).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the circumstances surrounding changes in the Moroccan migration policy and explore how migrants' status (illegality/legality) and the socio-political conditions within the country affect the migrants' potential integration or/and exclusion. The first part of the paper examines the evolution of the Moroccan migration policy and explores the motivation and limits of the new migration policy announced in 2014. On one hand, changes in Morocco's 'geopolitical culture' (Cherti & Collyer, 2015) influenced the adoption of the new migration policy. While it endeavoured to improve its relations with the EU via multiple bilateral partnerships, Morocco adopted the new migration policy as a soft power strategy to reinforce new southern partnerships and improve its image both regionally and internationally. On the other hand, local development and civil society activism shed light on the harsh treatment of migrants in Morocco, which tarnished the country's image globally and pushed for the policy change.

Based on migrants' narratives and local organisational perspectives, the second section of the paper shows how socio-political conditions and legal status affect the potential integration or marginalisation of migrants. Integration is an overlapping process spread across different cultural structural and institutional areas, with various outcomes (Korac, 2003, p. 54). Integration is also a reciprocal process – a result of cross-cultural interaction – whereby newcomers are admitted in the host society. It occurs at the community level; therefore, preparation is required to face the changes brought about to the host society due to the resettlement of immigrants (Korac, 2003, p. 52; Vrečer, 2010, p. 489; Wilkinson, 2013, p. 1). Following Ager and Strang (2008), I adopt a multidimensional, comprehensive approach to integration which is based on the local, individual approach. This includes "employment, housing, education, health, citizenship, rights and social connection within and between groups" (as cited in Vrečer, 2010, p. 491). Understanding the circumstances of migrants in a given country should include an analysis of the policies imposed by the state, the socio-political conditions they live in and

how their existence is shaped by the surrounding views of illegality (Willen, 2007, p. 6). Thus, this contribution examines migrants' access to work, health and housing services, education and their relationships with the local population. I argue that despite the promises of the new migration policy, a political and societal deadlock creates a barrier to integration, thus limiting its positive effects on the migrants' lives.

The paper concludes with some suggestions for a better application of the migration policy and improvement of migrants' living conditions.

2. METHODOLOGY

The material for this article is based on research conducted in 2016 in four Moroccan cities (Rabat, Oujda, Nador and Meknes). The research consisted of semi-structured interviews with migrants and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Its broad aim was to understand migrants' motivations for staying in Morocco and to get a perspective on the NGOs' activities and migrants' life experiences after the adoption of the new Moroccan migration policy in 2013. This paper presents the perspectives of migrants and NGOs on the services provided by the state to facilitate migrants' integration. It also reveals migrants' experience of their interaction with public spaces and the local population. The migrants who participated in this study were nationals from Senegal, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They were traders, caregivers, street vendors or unemployed. The individuals in the sample were educated to at least a high school level and had initially come to Morocco to continue onward to a European country. Due to changes in their circumstances, they remained in Morocco and have been there for a few years. They were both documented and undocumented migrants and those who had attempted to get residency permits but had been unsuccessful. This choice allowed for exploring different experiences of living in Morocco. All names mentioned in the article are pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are used to protect the real identity of the individuals interviewed. Members of migrant organisations that provide support and aid to migrants in different cities were also interviewed to grasp the role of civil society in helping migrants in Morocco.

The cities were chosen owing to their importance to the migration project and because they offered a comparative perspective on migrants' experiences in different settings. Oujda is the entry point from Maghnia in Algeria and a common place for deportations. A large portion of the population depends on agricultural activities and remittances from Europe (Guitouni, 2012, p. 7). Previous studies have documented the lives of sub-Saharan migrants in camps near Mohamed I University or in the Sidi Maafa forest (Schapendonk, 2011, p. 145; Stock, 2013, p. 107). At the time of the research, the state had destroyed the camps in Oujda. The province of Nador, which is about 17 km from Melilla, Spain, is an exit point. Close to the central Rif mountains in Northern Morocco, this region has long been marginalised due to its continuous rebellion against the government. In addition to remittances from Europe, a large portion of the population gains revenue from one of the world's largest cannabis plantations, the Rif (Bermant, 2015, p. 264). For this research, I visited one of the camps in the forest, where about 128 migrants still live.

Rabat is home to national and international organisations and legal and illegal sub-Saharan African migrants. Most migrants in Rabat seek better job opportunities and have been present for years in the city's outskirts and poor neighbourhoods. I also conducted interviews in Meknes, located in the central northern part of Morocco. Meknes does not have migrant organi-

sations, and Sub-Saharan migrants are forcibly transported there, far from the borders, by the police. As migrants are a mobile population, their experiences in other cities, such as Tangier, an exit point to Europe, are included.

3. MOROCCO'S MIGRATION POLICY

3.1. The Moroccan migration policy before 2013

Throughout the twentieth century, Morocco was considered an emigration country, with 10% of its population residing outside the country. Consequently, Morocco's migration policy was focused on the diaspora and encouragement of remittances. When Spain joined the EU in 1986, border regulation increased in the Mediterranean and the importance of irregular migration was emphasised, which changed Morocco's role in the region. While migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco has always existed, migratory flows to North Africa increased in the 1990s due to political developments. Civil wars and economic recessions in West African countries led many migrants and asylum seekers to pass through Morocco on their way to Europe (De Haas, 2006, p. 77). The European Council's inclusion of a 'migration clause' in 2002, whereby the joint management of migration was to be included in partnerships between the EU and its bordering countries, further stressed the role of Morocco and other countries bordering Europe in containing and stopping irregular migration (Natter, 2013, pp. 17–18).

In 2003, Morocco adopted its first official law to regulate irregular migration. Law 02-03 adopted a security approach leading to the criminalisation of migration and excessive penalties and imprisonment for illegally entering or leaving Morocco while excluding any protection or assistance (Elmadmad, 2004, p. 6; Natter, 2013, p. 16). Approved in a dire political context following the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on 16 May 2003, Law 02-03 is a replica of the French law of 2 November 1945 and does not consider the particularities of the Moroccan context (Belguendouz, 2005, p. 15). Law 02-03 contains an ambiguous clause referring to a 'threat to public security and order' which justifies abuses against migrants and foreigners. For example, pregnant women and minors can be expelled even though they are legally exempt from repatriation (Belguendouz, 2005, p. 16; Elmadmad, 2004, p. 6). Law 02-03 also resulted in the creation of the Directory of Migrations and Borders Surveillance (DMBS) within the Ministry of Interior and the elaboration of the national strategy on combating illegal migration. The restrictive policy served the European demand to control irregular migrants and was a tool for Morocco in its diplomatic relations with Europe. Internally, the official discourse, shared via the media, justified Morocco's policy by positioning it as a victim of its geographical location. Migrants were presented as an internal threat to security, thus increasing discrimination in the society (Natter, 2013, p. 24). Between 2003 and 2013, local and international NGOs assisted migrants who were victims of crackdowns and expulsions. Despite operating in a context of illegality and semi-illegality, they exerted considerable pressure on the government especially when the police crackdowns and deportations were excessive. The mediatisation of the mistreatment of migrants in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 brought international attention to the migrants' conditions. Consequently, these practices were shamed, and they reduced temporarily.

3.2. The new migration policy: motivation, aims and limits

On 10 September 2013, King Mohammed VI announced the adoption of a new migration policy. The aim was to depart from the previous security approach and adopt a human rights and humane approach to migration management. The recommendations of the National Human Rights Council (NHRI or CNDH in French) formed the basis of the new migration policy.

Soon after this announcement, a regularisation campaign – the first in a North African country – was announced. This campaign granted legal status to 16,180 out of 27,130 applicants, who were mainly Syrian, European and sub-Saharan migrants living in Morocco (L’Economiste, 2013).

The adoption of the new migration policy surprised national and international observers, and most have praised its positive aspects. In developed democratic states, civil society activism and consultative institutions form a powerful force that challenges the institutional order and contributes towards changing the state policy (Augustin & Jorgensen, 2013). Similarly, international treaties and conventions, international migration bodies and the locally adopted rhetoric of human rights affect the liberalisation of domestic policy (Norman, 2016, p. 424). Morocco is a hybrid system of authoritarianism and democracy that balances tradition and modernity to integrate social changes while preserving the deeply rooted political system. The monarchy along with chosen political elite govern the state and control economic and social reforms. In this hybrid system or semi-authoritarian state, the mechanisms that would liberalise laws in democracies are absent or controlled by the state. However, changes in policy can come from international pressure including human rights norms, international networks or the necessity to improve the regime’s international image to continue its survival (Norman, 2016, p. 424).

The change in migration policy can be explained by shifts in Morocco’s geopolitical culture, such as political events and the necessity for a new partnership. Second, civil society activism, NGOs, national institutions, and the media influenced the adoption of the new migration policy.

3.2.1. Morocco’s geopolitical environment

As stated above, the shift in migration policy can be explained by a change in Morocco’s geopolitical culture (Cherti & Collyer, 2015). The Arab Spring did not have a major effect on Morocco’s political system compared to other countries in the region. However, it did lead the monarchy to seek out new partnerships, such as alliances with the Gulf monarchies, as a contingency plan for securing mutual assistance to maintain economic stability, security and political legitimacy. Moreover, the Arab Spring protests led to the adoption of a new constitution in 2011. The constitution guarantees fundamental rights protections to Moroccans living abroad and to foreigners living in Morocco. The Western Sahara conflict also shapes Morocco’s diplomatic relations and foreign policy. The interruption of economic agreements with the EU (i.e. the EU–Morocco fisheries trade deal in 2011) and the continuous attempts by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to conduct human rights observations in the territory led Morocco to turn towards southern partnerships and non-traditional allies, such as Russia and China (Lamlili, 2016).

This turn towards southern and non-traditional partners to protect Morocco’s economic and political interests is also visible on the African continent. The relationship between the African Union (AU) and Morocco has been fractious since the Organisation of African Unity’s (OAU’s) recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1984. While relations with African countries were limited to diplomatic necessities under King Hassan II, relations prospered under King Mohammed VI. Trade with Sub-Saharan African countries reached 7% in 2014 while Morocco is the second largest investor in Sub-Saharan Africa (Cherti & Collyer, 2015, p. 60). During his visit to different African countries, King Mohammed VI emphasised the need for a south–south alliance and signed hundreds of economic, social and political agreements. Equally, these visits promoted a moderate Islam and advertised the developments in the country – a soft power strategy that succeeded in marketing a positive image. Morocco’s recent

request (July 2016) and later approval (January 2017) for re-entry into the AU punctuate this shift towards southern partnerships. Morocco's interest in the rest of Africa would necessitate better treatment of migrants in the country. Moreover, the Moroccan migration policy and regularisation campaigns are promoted during those visits to improve Morocco's image as a country with a good human rights record, which would help in gaining support for its position in the Western Sahara dispute (Alioua, 2016, as cited in Cretois, 2016; Bensimon, 2016).

3.2.2. Media and the role of NGOs

Local NGOs have provided basic services for migrants and refugees in Morocco since the 1990s. The harsh treatment and expulsion of migrants including women and children to Algeria in 2006 mobilised organisations, such as ABCDS (Association Beniznassen pour la Culture, le Développement et la Solidarité) in Oujda, to provide legal and moral support to migrants. However, the ominous context of Law 02-03 considered helping migrants to be a crime leading to the arrest and harassment of many NGO members. Human rights organisations, such as the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) and GADEM (Anti-racist Group for the Support and Defence of Foreigners and Migrants), and Sub-Saharan migrants' organisations, such as Conseil des Migrants SubSahariens au Maroc or Collectif des Communautés Subsahariennes au Maroc, advocated for migrants' economic, social and human rights for years (Natter, 2013, p. 22). However, the state did not recognise organisations created by migrants. An exception to these limitations is Organization Démocratique du Travail (ODT), a Moroccan labour union which created a separate migration section at the request of migrant community leaders. Tolerated by the government, the ODT became involved in pushing for migrants' working rights, especially in Rabat and Casablanca (Natter, 2013, p. 22).

The Moroccan regime curtails NGOs' activism and, based on its requirements, it rewards or/and punishes them through institutional policy and material inducements (Cavatorta, 2016, p. 92). The 2008 project on Freedom of Association in North Africa and the Middle East (FRIDE) juxtaposed two types of local NGOs to highlight their lobbying approaches and joint roles in pressing for change. Organisations such as the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH) adopt the moderate approach of lobbying the relevant authorities, while the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) assumes a more critical stance (Jacob, 2014).

The role of civil society in adopting several reforms since the ascension of King Mohamed VI to the throne has been prominent but remains limited. The monarchy establishes itself above all political parties and social actors (local NGOs and labour unions). For different reforms (e.g. Family Code Reform, Truth and Justice Committee), institutions, at the discretion of the king, appropriated societal concerns and implemented change according to the monarchy's needs (Cavatorta, 2016, p. 88). This is notably the case of the National human right council (known as CNDH in French). Created by the Royal Decree No. 1-11-19 of 1 March 2011, to succeed the Advisory Council on Human Rights, the Moroccan National Human Right Council was unilaterally created by the king without consulting the legislative bodies. The mandate of the institutional sphere of competence remains vague and lacks independence in the appointment of its president and other members (Alkarama, 2016). Despite these limitations, the National Human Right Council became an intermediary voicing NGOs' concerns and criticisms. This is particularly true for migration policy. Different organisations have lobbied the council to change the existing migration policy, which led to the drafting of a report about the situation of migrants in Morocco. The report emphasised the abuses committed by the Moroccan security forces against migrants and recommended several changes that became the basis of the new migration policy.

3.2.3. Components of the national strategy for immigration, main achievements and limits

The new national strategy for immigration aimed to ensure equal opportunities for the migrants, improving their access to economic, cultural and political rights, and changing the perception of migration in society. It also aimed to establish a nationwide system for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Morocco signed the most important international agreement on refugees' issues, but it has no asylum system and no protection mechanisms for irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, the UNHCR is charged with protecting and assisting refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco.

One of the first initiatives of the migration strategy was an exceptional one-year regularisation campaign in 2014 for illegal migrants, irrespective of nationality. Successful applicants, who fulfilled the criteria, received a renewable one-year residence. The government deemed the campaign successful because 60% of applicants (16,180 out of 27,130 applicants) benefitted from it (L'Economiste, 2013). However, the regularisation campaign presented many shortcomings. According to the organisations' members interviewed, one limitation of the campaign was the lack of staff training, which resulted in differences in the interpretations of the regularisation criteria. The required documents differed from one province to the next. Moreover, the criteria adopted limited the beneficiaries. The five years of uninterrupted residence in Morocco for undocumented migrants was unreasonable, as most migrants could not show proof of residence. Similarly, a work contract was difficult to provide. Most migrants work in the informal sector, change their location frequently and/or live with other migrants.

'They asked me for a lease contract in my name ... when we rent a place, we do not sign a contract ... so I didn't get it' (Sophie, Meknes).

Some migrants did not receive adequate information regarding the applications and therefore received no follow-up. Patrick, whom I interviewed in Nador, explained as follows:

'I applied in Nador, but when they called me, I was in Rabat looking for work, so I did not collect it.'

In cases where organisations provided legal aid and document translation, migrants had less difficulty meeting the criteria. For example, in Oujda and Rabat, associations facilitated the regularisation of some migrants by explaining the documents required, providing translation for Anglophones and accompanying them through the regularisation process.

The government encouraged different institutions – both private and public – to pursue programmes facilitating this integration (Debbarih, 2014b). The new policy led to an increase in the number of NGOs working on migrants' issues, which created issues of competition and legitimacy. The call for projects, mostly for language and socio-professional support, was promptly answered by organisations, even if they lacked expertise in these areas. As the president of ABCDS in Oujda stated:

'Many organisations, some lacking basic knowledge of [the] rights of migrants, answered government calls for projects ... it could be a good thing but some organisations lack information about the migrants' needs, circumstances, at one meeting, we were surprised to see an organisation specialised in goat-breeding applying for integration projects!'

Despite these limitations, the migration policy recognised the role of civil society in

integrating migrants into the society. Thus, organisations whose members are chiefly migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, such as *Afrique Culture Maroc (ACM)*, can practice their activities legally, without facing harassment, and can advocate for migrants' rights. After the announcement of the migration policy, online newspapers such as *Yabiladi* and *Telquel* criticised and reported on racism and the mistreatment of migrants on the borders (Chaudier, 2013; Koslovski, Cretois, & Mrabet, 2014). The presence of the new migration policy in the national media has been framed as a humanitarian focus, and its novelty has been emphasised with little information about its components or effects on migrants' lives.

The migration policy represents a stark change in migration management in Morocco. However, legal boundaries and restricted civil society space limit the scope of reforms. The next section analyses the effects of this policy and the socio-political conditions in the country on migrants' integration and/or exclusion.

4. MIGRANTS LIVING CIRCUMSTANCES IN MOROCCO

Based on the life stories of documented and undocumented migrants in Morocco, the following sections explore the different dimensions of the integration of Sub-Saharan migrants into Moroccan society. I consider integration as a multi-dimensional process that includes access to employment, housing, health services, and social interaction with the host society.

Despite the improvements affected by the new immigration policies and the exceptional regularisation campaign, continue to live in an exceptional state of illegality and exclusion. This state is defined through economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, as well as how migrants experience these dimensions. Consequently, migrants must rely on social networks and the social capital available to them in the form of other migrants, NGOs and religious institutions to survive and navigate the public space. Through the use of various tactics, migrants create spaces of belonging. However, such tactics only allow them to achieve partial integration, which remains segmented and dependent upon residential, occupational, and social incorporation.

4.1. Access to the Job Market

4.1.1. Formal sector

Access to regular jobs is cumbersome for newly documented and undocumented migrants. Employers often refuse to hire newly documented Sub-Saharan migrants by citing the unavailability of work and the high unemployment rate (22.3%) among Moroccans university graduates (Haut commissariat au plan, 2009a). Moreover, migrants' qualifications, especially those coming from anglophone countries, are not recognised as genuine in the job market.

Racism also explains the locals' reluctance to hire foreign nationals. As explained by the president of the ABCDS association in Oujda, for years, Sub-Saharan migrants were associated with foreigners in transit, and framed as poor and lacking qualification. Most employers are not aware of their qualifications and are not encouraged to hire them. Others prefer to hire locals or even other nationalities (e.g. Syrians) as there is a sense of belonging to the same culture.

Cumbersome administrative procedures, such as obtaining one-year work authorisation or a work visa, limit access to the job market. State companies are based on the national preference principle, whereby employers must prove that no Moroccan national can do the work for which any foreigner is hired. The national preference principle contradicts Article 9 of the Labour Code, which prohibits any discrimination. However, despite the call by some organisa-

tions to loosen the criteria for national preference, this contradiction remains unchallenged (Euromedright, 2015, p.3; Lemaizi, 2014). The Labour Code (Articles 415 and 416) prohibits foreigners from taking on union responsibilities. Therefore, migrants cannot belong to local or national unions or stand for elections as staff representatives in the private sector (Code de travail, 2005, pp.84–85). The exception is the ODT, the only union of migrants, tolerated by the government but most active in Casablanca and Rabat. (Lotfi, 2012; Gherrabi, 2016; Euromedright, 2015, p.4–5).

Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support migrants’ access to the job market by offering workshops and training. Amiyeto Marcel, from Afrique Culture Maroc (ACM), explained that their first objective is to offer humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable. They also offer workshops on legal rights in order to fight discrimination and exploitation and training for essential skills such as computer training that could increase their chances of accessing jobs.

Despite plans to include registered migrants in the ANAPEC (Agence Nationale de Promotion de l’Emploi et des Compétences) databases, little change has been evident in practice (Debbarih, 2014b). Results remained limited to Casablanca, while in other cities, demands either have not been answered or have received no follow-up. Consequently, sub-Saharan migrants are compelled to find jobs as informal workers.

4.1.2. Informal sector

Migrants in Oujda and Nador work in low-skilled temporary jobs and on farms, for which they are paid between 40 and 60 dirhams per day (between 3 and 5 euros). In Rabat, most jobs are available in the construction sector. Migrants’ occupations are also gender-biased; most women work as hairdressers, in bakeries, or as cleaners.

Senegalese female migrants often find work as cleaning ladies for wealthy families through specialised networks in Senegal or from individuals in the communities (Lanza, 2011, pp.129-137). This trend reveals the weight of historical representation linked to the memory of slavery, since, before the protectorate, many slaves were brought from Senegal to become concubines or to work for the bourgeoisie (Lanza, 2011, pp.125-127). Believed to have a natural inclination to serve well, the practice of hiring such women for these jobs has become popular in recent decades (Lanza, 2011, pp.123). However, Senegalese women are frequently exploited by their employers through overwork and low payment.

“I worked for a family in Oujda for 1500 dirhams a month [121 euros]. I worked all day long, and each time I finished cleaning one thing, she [the lady] brought me something new to do. I could not sleep at night. My whole body hurt, so I quit right after and came here to Nador” (Fatou, Nador).

As stated by the participants in the study, exploitation and low wages in the informal sector are common. Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco are part of what Standing (2014) refers to as a “precariat” class. This class, defined by the work performed—mainly temporary jobs in the informal economy—has no secure occupational identity or narrative, is underpaid, overworked and subject to exploitation (pp.10–11). By adopting labour laws that regulate the market, while tolerating the informal economy that hires migrants, the government, sustains and reproduces the capitalist system of the neoliberal economy (Lee, 2010, pp.61-62). They exist in an extreme in-between status; insider/outsider tolerated and incorporated as a compliant, disposable labour force (Mcnevin, 2006, p.141). They are limited by their status as undocumented and unrecognised by the society, denizens outside the political system and are denied their rights by the state (Standing, 2011, p. 94; Suter, 2012, p.168).

4.1.3. Established businesses and self-employment

Some documented Sub-Saharan migrants are established outside the walls of the medina (traditional market) as street vendors where they sell their products in non-permanent shops. In recent years, some have moved to permanent shops in a traditional commercial centre in the city centre. In Rabat, they sell ethnic products, traditional clothes, jewellery, and electronic devices (i.e. phones and tablets). In Oujda, they rent small spaces in the medina, next to Moroccan street vendors, that cost up to 50 dirhams (around 4 euros); a figure that is close to what a self-employed migrant can hope to earn daily. In other cases, for regular street vendors and those who have established good relationships with the local population, Moroccan shopkeepers let them stand in front of their shops.

In the morning, the owner does not mind us sitting here in front of this boutique, he only arrives at around 12 [...] In the afternoon, we must look for a new place in the souk [market]. Sometimes, we pay the shop-owners 20 to 50 dirhams per day [...] [At] other times, we set our table with no problem" (Ibrahima, Oujda).

Most of the study participants in the market were Senegalese. Due to excellent political and economic relations and cultural factors, transnational commerce has thrived. (Centre d'Etude Internationales, 2016). Senegalese migrants who aim to go to Europe work temporarily in trade in Casablanca to gather enough financial resources to continue their journeys (Pian, 2005). In recent years, migrants have moved to other cities in Morocco and rely on "suitcase commerce" to move the products they sell. Migrants engage in partially invisible interaction within circulatory territory between their home countries and Morocco. They contribute in the development of a globalisation from below that is discrete and subtle (Schmoll and Semi, 2013). They act as traders and intermediaries and follow distinct routes and flows. Similar to other trade activities that rely heavily on ethnic networks, the making and maintenance of these circuits is an ongoing process of interactions, conflicts and trust that are constantly negotiated (Schmoll and Semi, 2013).

"For this [showing me the product, bazin], I know someone who goes back home and buys it from there... It is cheaper than using transport companies." (Merieme, Rabat)

4.1.4. Other activities: Begging (Assalam Alaikom)

Migrants who could neither find work in the informal sector nor establish their businesses ended up begging on the street. Begging, in this case, is shadow work: "illegitimate or quasi-legitimate subsistence activities engaged in by street people such as beggars and the homeless" (Wardhaugh and Jones, 1999, p.102).

Some of the migrants interviewed in Meknes, Nador, and in Oujda, begged daily at stop signs and traffic lights. The activity became known as Assalamo Alaikom ("peace be upon you"; a traditional Muslim greeting), referring to the first phrase the beggars use once a car stops. Polite, even servile, they are present near supermarkets in the city centre and often converse with the car drivers stopping at traffic lights for few seconds. Some establish permanent locations, while others move between cities to increase their chances of receiving charity. Whether begging alone or as a family or group, migrants feel a mutual belonging to the same situation, although competition and conflict may arise among migrants from different ethnic groups. Most of the participants interviewed stressed that begging is not a life choice and is usu-

ally the last resort for migrants due to the unavailability of other work choices. Begging starts early, and depending on the return, could last from a few hours to an entire day. In the summer, due to high temperatures, undocumented migrants must wait until the afternoon or evening to start their activities.

“Everyday life here is in begging... I pass my day saying Assalam Alaikum... also, no man who can beg all day can be happy... The document [residence permit] is a waste. We can work...but there are no jobs...It is an insult to humanity, but we must do it”. (Fred, Oujda)

Others mostly in Rabat stressed that they only ask for charity in religious holidays or on Fridays during the time of prayer while they work in other occupations during the week. Begging is also subject to seasonal variation (Wardhaugh and Jones, 1999, p.110). During Ramadan, significant numbers of Syrians and Moroccans join Sub-Saharan migrants in begging. The holy month in Morocco is accompanied by an increase in charity to those in need and a readiness to help the poor, by giving (alms¹), as a way of clearing the conscience and observing one of the commandments of Islam (Kochuyt, 2009, p.3). To increase their chances of receiving charity, it is common for migrants to use a fake or real Muslim religious identity, to be recognised as belonging to shared values. Thus, migrants use religious expressions, Arabic words, that they learnt from other established migrants, to show a visible sign of belonging to the same religious identity and values of the local population.

4.2. Access to Housing

Finding accommodation is one of the most significant concerns for undocumented migrants, who are excluded from legal forms of rental, due to their illegal status and the limited resources at their disposal. Most of the participants I interviewed had spent extended amounts of time looking for a place to live. This often led them to settle for short-term rental spaces that were more expensive and subject to renegotiation at the discretion of the landlord.

The destruction of the camps, in Oujda, after the adoption of the new migration policy changed the dynamics of migrants' accommodation. Migrants became less visible, and the majority moved to rooms in poor neighbourhoods. In the interviews, migrants stressed the lack of choices and the precarious living conditions, as about 15 people sleep in 20 m² rooms with irregular and limited access to water and electricity.

The access to housing is limited due to the attitudes of the local population towards migrants which oscillate between acceptance and complete rejection. Refusals to offer rental accommodations are often rooted in racism within the host society. Clashes between residents and migrants are frequent and have led to tragic migrants' deaths (JeuneAfric magazine, 2013). In 2013, Moroccan residents of the neighbourhood Boukhalef in Tangier, protested against having black migrants in the neighbourhood. Similarly, In Casablanca residents of a building in Casablanca put a clear sign at the entrance that read “Renting to African in forbidden” (France24, 2013). ABCDS president in Oujda narrated a local case of native residents' refusal to live in the same neighbourhoods as migrants:

“Some migrants tried to rent an apartment in one of the rich neighbourhoods in Oujda [Alqods] The local population complained [...], and the reason was surprising [...] They said their kids were scared

[1] Giving alms in Islam is a responsibility and a way to be thankful for God's endowment of prosperity. There two kinds of alms, Zakat, a specific amount given to Muslims during special events (e.g. at the end of fasting [Eid] and on the new year in Islam [Ashura]) and Sadaqua, which is charity that should be given to all kinds of poor, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, including travelers who do not have enough resources to continue their journey (aber sabil).

of them... then, the authorities asked the migrants to move.”

To find accommodation, migrants rely on their ethnic networks. Housing transfers, based on bounded solidarity among individuals of the same ethnicity, help to keep rents slightly lower. The absence of these networks can lead to the exploitation of migrants, especially newcomers. Mohammed from Senegal described his arrival to Oujda, recounting that he had to pay 400 Euros to stay with another group of migrants. When he failed to do so, he was taken hostage by them. Thus, as Khosravi (2010) explains, migrants are not only marginalised by the local population, but also exploited by other migrant communities. They are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and are subjected to conjugated oppression on the basis of nationality, citizenship, and legal status (p.104).

Migrants must be careful about the possibility of police investigations and are, therefore, at the mercy of landlord restrictions and the prospect of higher rents. Maria, interviewed in Meknes, elaborated:

“Here, they do not accept more than four people in the apartment [...] telling us we are loud and dirty [...] we have to accept to not have any problems with the police” (Maria, Meknes).

Leasing contracts are not required for renting, a common practice in Morocco. Apartments are available only to documented or undocumented migrants who have national identity papers, mostly passports or IDs. Many migrants lose their documents on their way to Morocco or are reluctant to give them to the landlord for fear of being arrested by the police. Thus, a number of migrants are excluded from renting apartments.

In Rabat, Sub-Saharan migrants mostly live in neighbourhoods on the outskirts (e.g. Taquadom) and informal settlements (e.g. Douar Hajja). These neighbourhoods incorporate activities such as cobbling, barbering, and the selling of African products (Edogue-Ntang and Peraldi, 2011, pp:155-156; Pickerilli, 2011, p.40). Due to the widespread insecurity in these neighbourhoods, some migrants, especially those with families, pay higher prices compared to Moroccans for safer neighbourhoods.

Some Migrants stay in forest camps closer to the enclave of Melilla, near Nador. Some do it by choice to seize any available opportunities to go to Europe. Others cannot afford to stay in Rabat or other cities and are obliged to rely on community support for survival. Similar to camps in other countries, such as Niger or Mali, each community is divided along ethnic and linguistic lines based on a hierarchical structure, represented, protected and managed by a chairman (Brachet, 2013, pp.79-80; Lecadet, 2014; Schapendonk, 2011, pp.145).

Camps present in other cities, such as Meknes and Fes, are located behind train stations (Cessou, 2016). Relatively abandoned and quiet, the fields behind the train stations are for the newly arrived, after being forcefully displaced by the police to the south. Confined in socially peripheral spaces, migrants stay in these camps only temporarily. Interviewees expressed the difficulties of being alone and of not belonging to a community in the city when living in these quarters. These migrants rarely have contact with the local population or with organisations (such as churches); their living conditions are the most precarious.

4.3. Access to Health Services

Migrants’ access to health services is minimal. In Morocco, health insurance called The Assurance Medical Obligatoire (AMO) is reserved for individuals who have regular formal jobs. Regime d’Assistance Medicale (RAMED), financed by the state, is reserved for the most vulnerable (Mathiau, 2016). Local partnerships and conventions were signed between differ-

ent ministries in 2015 and 2017 and aimed to include regularised migrants and refugees in the RAMEd. However, in practice, none of these partnerships was adopted. No cards were distributed to regularised migrants and refugees. The commission that was supposed to operationalise and follow the distribution of medical cards to the regularised migrants and refugees has not presented any results.

Since 2003, public hospitals assist undocumented migrants who, due to their deteriorating living conditions, especially in the camps, were exposed to illnesses. Pregnant migrants' women are a particularly vulnerable segment of the population. Studies by Kastner (2010), Stock (2011) and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, 2010) observed that migrant women frequently become pregnant during their travels or their stay in Morocco. Most pregnant migrants, both documented or undocumented, whom I met (four women) in the non-camp cases, could go to a hospital for a primary check-up, received free ultrasounds, and gave birth. However, they were sometimes reluctant to go hospitals to avoid answering questions about the circumstances of their pregnancy.

"I went here to the hospital. I had the ultrasound; it was fine... The nurse I met spoke French, and she asked me about my husband and family." (Sophie, Meknes)

In the Nador camp, women did not go to the hospitals until they had to give birth for fear of being arrested. Local hospital capacities are limited. Migrants only go to public hospitals in case of emergencies, and often ignore other ailments, due to limited resources.

"I had back pain. I went to the hospital... The doctor just gave me some medicine and asked me to do more tests, and I could not pay, so I did not go back" (Laura, Meknes).

In Oujda, migrants often mentioned Medecins du Monde (MDM) as the provider of treatment for minor injuries or illnesses (e.g. colds or headaches). Access to public hospitals is also sometimes acquired through NGOs since most Anglophone migrants do not speak Arabic or French. Moreover, many migrants stressed that, without an NGO representative, they would not get any medical care. In Nador camps, migrants are transported to the hospital where they are treated after police crackdowns. Sometimes, serious injuries lead to complications or death (AMDH, 2015 p.17).

Despite their living, work and health conditions, migrants cannot access any psychological support. MSF used to offer psychological help to migrants, and the ABCDS staff attempts to ease the hardships of the Sub-Saharan migrants by listening to them and offering support. During the interviews, undocumented migrants reported acute states of stress, anxiety and depression caused by their status in Morocco, the hardships they had endured during their journeys, and economic insecurity from their lack of employment and having to beg on the streets. Some expressed that they had faced pressures related to the expectations of their families.

"This is no life. I have no work...sometimes, I cannot get up in the morning to do it again and again...I left to support my family, and now I sometimes ask them for money just to survive or to eat... It is humiliating..." (Martin, Nador).

4.4- Access to education

Access to education for migrants is limited to services offered by local and international organisations. While Francophone migrants can use French to communicate with the

population, migrants from Anglophone countries are dependent on organisations or their network to access essential services. Most informants had never received any language training to facilitate their integration into society. The few who can communicate in Arabic either learned it on the street to survive or acquired some basic knowledge in their home country (e.g. through religious education in Senegal). Language learning is a luxury that many might consider once their basic needs are fulfilled. Organisations such as Asticude (an organisation based in Nador) and Afrique Culture Maroc offer dialectal language lessons to some migrants. However, representatives from both noted that, due to the migrants' living conditions, they prefer humanitarian aid over language lessons.

For migrants' children, Moroccan law does not prohibit foreigners from attending schools; however, the administrative procedures discourage many of them, especially those non-regularised, to register and enrol in public schools. On the 9th of November 2013, the Ministry of Education in Morocco granted public school attendance to all Sub-Saharan migrants' children. Nevertheless, since migrants typically do not plan on staying in Morocco, documents like previous school certificates and paternal or guardian identity cards are difficult to produce (Barre et al., 2014, p.9).

Barriers to migrant children's learning stem from the remoteness of the camps and the inadequacy of the system. The uncertainty surrounding migrants in camps staying in Morocco discourages most from integrating their children in formal or informal schools.

"We live in the forest, and it is too far away, in schools they ask for papers, which I do not have [...] In Europe... she can have a good education" (Rose, Nador).

Some migrants, however, prefer school enrolment, despite its limitations. This attitude is most common among migrants whose children were born in Morocco.

The teaching of Arabic and Islamic culture in schools discourages migrants from enrolling their children. Having a different religion and culture, they prefer to wait to move to Europe for their children's education or rely on informal foreign curricula through churches and local organisations (Barre et al., 2014, p.28). Programmes offered by the informal education targets foreign children who have already attended schools in their original countries but have difficulties in integrating the Moroccan schools. However, the restriction of these classes to afternoons and the absence of Arabic as a second language limits the results for this kind of education. Moreover, according to the different organisations' members interviewed, many foreign children interrupt their education in such a system or are unable to integrate into the formal system after attending informal education classes.

4.5. Public Space and Relations with the Local Population

4.5.1. Human rights and police treatment

Law 02-03 led to frequent abuse and injuries, destruction of migrants' possessions and expelling of migrants by the police to the borders of Algeria and Mauritania (Anderson, 2014; MSF, 2013). With the new migration policy, Morocco has adopted a double contradictory approach that aims to appease both of its allies: offering residency card Sub-Saharan countries nationals while appeasing Europe by keeping its security approach to migration.

The undocumented migrants are mistreated by the police, although the severity of these encounters depends on the cities and their closeness to the borders. Due to Nador's proximity to the Spanish enclave of Melilla, crackdowns are common (Human Right Watch, 2014,

pp.18-24). They resumed right after the end of the regularisation campaign (Tyszler, Migreurop and GADEM, 2015, p.12).

The legal migrants I interviewed reported that, once they became regularised, the police did not harass, arrest, or deport them to the borders.

“Before 2014... it was for all migrants... We came through the road, so we had no documents. The police deported us to the desert. But now... normal, normal... I am documented. When they stop you [...], you just show the residency card, and you can go.” (Victor, Oujda).

In Tangiers, another city close to Spain, migrants described the police strategy of dispersion from the borders and forcible displacements to the south of Morocco:

“In Meknes, we are fine, but in Tangiers, it is hard... if you meet one of their raids, they take you to Tiznit, in the South [...] And it really hurts, because there are women and children, too... Once, my wife called me to tell me that she is in the South [...] They do not do that to the Syrians. It is like they target us because of the colour of our skin.” (Emmanuel, Meknes).

4.5.2. Relations with the population

One of the challenges facing Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco is the hostility and racism of the local population. The migrants interviewed in this research described the relations between themselves and Moroccans as ambivalent and dependent on location. For example, while locals tolerate migrants in Oujda, Meknes and Rabat, migrants face acute discrimination in the North (Nador and Tangier). One possible explanation for this difference is that Rabat, Meknes, and Oujda are more cosmopolitan compared to the North, mostly Nador and Rif regions, where autochthony is more prevalent. Tangiers has been home to foreigners for decades, primarily to Westerners, who are considered more desirable. Due to the visibility of migrants on the border and the negative media reports, Sub-Saharan migrant communities are perceived as invasive and undesirable (De Haas, 2014). One of the participants I met in Meknes stated:

“In Tangiers, it is terrible... People are very rude to us... They tell us to leave... Tangiers is for Tangerois (locals), and no one else should be there” (Emmanuel, Meknes).

Historical relations and slavery could also explain racism in Morocco against Sub-Saharan Africans. During the 19th century, the existence of a Sub-Saharan population was linked to slave workers in bourgeois families as well as the presence of black guards who were loyal to the Sultans (Hamel, 2013, pp.209–240). While discussing racism behaviour from which the migrants suffer in Morocco, Emmanuel, a migrant interviewed in Meknes, justified the discrimination as stemming from a lack of education. Indeed, the Moroccan curriculum does not cover any aspect of Sub-Saharan cultures, histories or actual economic, political, or social situations. Consequently, Sub-Saharan populations and the African continent are seen as inferior and destitute. This is apparent in the verbal attacks that the migrants suffer on the street even in cities such as Rabat where the Sub-Saharan migrant population is significant.

Migrants suffer from discrimination in their interaction with the public space, e.g. transportation. At the camp, I met a woman who had just returned from a nearby village. Infuriated, she told me about her experience with a taxi driver in the city:

“He [the taxi driver] told me I smell bad... and refused to take me. I had to walk 12 km to arrive here... I am clean... I am a human being, not an animal” (Anne Marie, Nador).

The Moroccan Association for Studies and Research on Migration (AMERM) found

in a study that more than half of the Moroccans interviewed would accept individuals originating from Sub-Saharan countries as neighbours (62.9%), but only 30% would live in the same house as them. These respondents justified their verdicts by citing “lifestyle differences” (Alami M’chichi and Khachani, 2009, pp.70–80).

The everyday racism and discrimination are aggravated by the lack of support from the police and other institutions. One of the migrants interviewed in Meknes related the following experience in Tangiers:

“I had a friend of mine who was in Tangiers with a girl walking in the street... Kids threw rocks at him and [broke] his skull open... He got stitches at the hospital... They were insulting the girl and [asking] her, why are you with an azzī [a derogatory term for black-skinned individuals] ... we went to the police, [but] they did not do anything.” (Emmanuel, Meknes).

For years, the media supported the arrest of migrants by equating the arrival of Sub-Saharan migrants with invasion and therefore aggravating xenophobic and racist behaviour in the society (De Haas, 2014). While specific components of society (e.g. NGOs and independent media) have strongly condemned these publications, the daily negative referral of migrants in Morocco by newspapers (e.g. Africans, poor Africans, and beggars) and their attempts to reach Europe has further cemented this imaginary divide.

It is important to note that some migrants have had different experiences. Many families in Morocco have witnessed at least one family member attempt to reach Europe illegally. The Harraga (those who burn their papers) have tried, since the 1990s, and still try (to a lesser extent) to reach the shores of Europe by any means (Papadopoulou-Kouekoula, 2008, p.93). The locals’ familiarity with the attractions of the good life in Europe made a portion of the local population compassionate towards migrants. This situation has led to different reactions, ranging from locals giving migrants advice on their journeys to sharing their experiences of dangers in their own endeavours. One migrant related the following story:

“I once met a guy who comes to the shops nearby, so we started talking about Europe He advised me and explained that Moroccans tried before, but very few succeeded, and it is better to stay and work or go back home than [to] leave to Europe” (Ibrahima, Oujda).

Migration leads to changes in the ethnoscape of the host society through the introduction of different languages, cultures, religions, and ideas (Willen, 2007, p.60). Joint events involving both migrants and the local population are common and aim to bridge the gaps between different cultures while decreasing the isolation of migrants. Religion is also a significant source of support for migrants due to the importance of social networks available through churches and affiliated institutions. Feelings of belonging and identity and help with everyday hardships are some of the services provided by religious institutions. Mosques provide support to some Sub-Saharan migrants, although this is limited to moral support and humanitarian assistance in the form of charity or food. Churches, however, often replace NGOs’ work and are hubs for information sharing, housing, job opportunities, and services like education, food, and medical assistance.

5. CONCLUSION

Sub-Saharan migrants dream of having a better life in which they can live in peace and prosperity. Yet those who leave their homes to migrate to Europe and bordering countries encounter strategies of containment as well as other circumstances beyond their control.

Accordingly, many sub-Saharan migrants are stranded in Morocco, oscillating between illegality, invisibility and partial integration while sustaining their dreams of reaching European shores.

The first part of this contribution analysed the reasons behind the announcement of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum in Morocco which promised an unprecedented chance for settlement and integration to migrants in Morocco. The change in the geopolitical situation of Morocco, events in the region raised the need to look for Southern partnerships and pushed Morocco to adopt the migration policy. The regularisation campaigns and other integration measures are used as a soft power to improve Morocco's international image and relationships with African countries. Moreover, Media and NGOs activism reports about deteriorating conditions of migrants challenged the image of Morocco's exceptionalism as an emerging democratic state and contributed in pushing for a new migration policy.

The new migration policy provided a legal environment for NGOs to exercise their activities. After 2013, sub-Saharan migrants can create their own NGOs and operate legally. Moreover, the government encouraged local NGOs to implement projects to help migrant's integration such as trainings, workshops and language lessons. The regularisation campaign of 2014, though unprecedented in the region, suffered limitations stemming from the inadequacy of chosen criteria and vacillating interpretations of those criteria. On the legislative side, apart from criminalising human trafficking, discussions about immigration and asylum laws disappeared from parliamentary debates and Law 02-03 practices are still standing at the borders

The second part of the paper presented migrants' living circumstances in Morocco and their potential integration in the society after the adoption of the new migration policy. The circumstances encountered by migrants in Morocco, and migrants' interactions with the public space, are similar to those of undocumented migrants in Europe and other countries. Undocumented migrants in Europe have limited access to the job market, health care, housing and education due to their illegal status and fear of deportation. Instead, they must rely on their existing social networks, such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and ethnic communities. (Bloch, Sigona, & Zetter, 2014; Khosravi 2010; Willen, 2007). However, in Morocco, even documented migrants suffer from partial integration, being publicly welcomed to stay in Morocco but almost completely prevented from enjoying basic rights. Accordingly, integration of sub-Saharan migrants remains limited, as a result of nationwide restrictions on access to services, rampant discrimination against migrants and security practices in border cities pursuant to Law 02-03. Existing Moroccan laws do not account for the country's evolving ethnoscape. Documented and undocumented migrants are not guaranteed access to the job market or to services such as health or education. Migrants who work in the informal market, contribute to the economy, but have no rights. Rather, exploitation of such workers is common, and they depend on their social networks or NGOs to access any work opportunities. The new migration policy changed police treatment of migrants. Morocco emphasises security along the border while practicing a *laissez-faire* approach in other cities. Migrants thus live in an enclave society in which their safety, movements and lives are contingent on the actions of others.

Some migrants achieve partial integration thanks to their social network, their community or NGOs on which they remain highly dependent. But others who lack such access are marginalised and unable to integrate; they instead remain in a world of illegality, invisibility and neglect. Racism and discrimination increase migrants' vulnerability and invisibility. Indeed, discrimination against migrants in Morocco is particularly evident in their interactions with the public space, and racism is linked to the perceived image of migrants as undesirable foreigners.

Moroccan media discourses and stereotypes exacerbate existing xenophobia compounded by a lack of education about migrants' cultures and countries in the general Moroccan population. Migrants depend on social networks, NGOs, churches and their communities to help them interact with state institutions and access basic services e.g housing, education and health. Those who live in cities, chiefly Rabat, have improved access to organisations that can help them bridge social gaps to incorporate themselves into society. Others, however—predominantly those who live in the camps—remain marginalised and have little to no contact with the population or other groups; they are thus the most vulnerable.

Based on the findings of this research a number of changes could be adopted to improve migrants' situation in Morocco. Moroccan laws affect the status of migrants, and their interactions in the public space. Although, Morocco, a country in transition, has announced many reforms, some laws need urgent updating. Law 02-03, used as a basis for the arrest and abuse of many migrants, must be replaced and reinforced by the provision of protective mechanisms in waiting zones, fair legal representation and humanitarian shelters. The government need to loosen the criteria for national preference, authorise union work and ease the administrative procedures required to gain access to different services, such as health and education. These measures would allow migrants to enter formal job markets and avoid exploitation. Even more important, legislation criminalising racist behaviour should be adopted and strictly enforced to ensure the safety of migrants.

However, to improve migrants' situation, changes must occur across all spheres of Moroccan society. For example, the fight against racism should be reinforced through campaigns run by multiple local organisations in neighbourhoods and schools to bridge the gap between migrants and the local population. Access to services such as health and education should be guaranteed, unclouded by fear of prosecution. Provision of health insurance for migrants would enhance their access to health services, especially when in vulnerable situations or afflicted by serious illness. Formal education curricula should include the diversity of the African continent and should explore migrants' cultures while teaching religious tolerance (for example, by offering a world religions class in place of Islamic education). Furthermore, projects allowing academic access to remote camps in the Nador region, are necessary.

Training and workshops for migrants should emphasize career guidance, legal advice and insertion into the job market. While the number of projects targeting migrants' integration in society increased over the last few years, they remain concentrated in Casablanca and Rabat. Moreover, many organisations lack information about the circumstances of migrants in Morocco and end up offering inadequate programmes to them. Increasing local NGOs' awareness of migrants' needs would lead to better programmes and would result in improving migrants' social and economic situation.

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