

## CHAPTER 16.

# "MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT": A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION INVOLVED IN CO-DEVELOPMENT

by

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### Introduction

Historically, domestic migration preceded migration abroad. Internal migration flows are linked closely to development programmes in urban areas, to the detriment of rural areas. Industrialisation policies have resulted in the migration of workers from rural areas to the main urban centres of Casablanca, Rabat and Agadir. In the early 20th century, the attraction of a better world through immigration was promoted during both World Wars, at a time when France was looking for volunteers in Morocco to reinforce the French army. Enlistment, by villagers, and especially by notable and literate members of the community (such as teachers), radically altered the perception of social success. Migration was already being perceived as the sole path to success. Until the mid-1960s, many workers emigrated to France, due primarily to the pull effect exerted by the demand of French industry.<sup>1</sup> It was this wave of immigration that brought Jamal Lahoussein to France. The co-development activities of *Migrations et Développement* cannot be discussed without a brief detour to tell the story of this man, to gain a better understanding of the genesis of private initiatives to promote village development back home. Having lost his job in a steel factory in 1986, Jamal triggered a dynamic process by investing his severance package in an electrification project in his native village. For this, he convinced other colleagues to pool their own payouts in order to undertake a joint project. This is how the non-governmental organisation (NGO) *Migrations et Développement* (M&D) began. At first, *Migrations et Développement* was called *Retour et Développement*, but the name was changed in 1989 because its suggestion of irreversible return made migrants wary.

*Migrations et Développement* was created to promote the integration of migrants into society and to undertake development actions in the regions where immigration originates. The mobilisation of migrants is the source, *raison d'être* and driving force

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1. A distinction is made between a pull effect (wherein the host country's attraction to migrants is the major factor) and the push effect (wherein migrants' desire to leave their home country is paramount). When both effects are at work, migration is maximised.

behind M&D’s initiatives: by instigating development projects, they and their families regain status in their villages, further their integration in their host country and work to bring the people of both shores of the Mediterranean closer together. Since its inception, M&D has enlisted migrants of diverse origins and others in Europe wishing to make personal contributions to solidarity initiatives. Since 1996, M&D has been recognised as an international NGO by the Moroccan government.

## Getting local development under way by enlisting migrants

*Migrations et Développement* works essentially in the Anti-Atlas region of Morocco, a land hard hit by drought since the mid-1970s. The organisation has worked there ceaselessly to promote medium and long-term initiatives to develop this isolated region with a rudimentary, if any, infrastructure. But *Migrations et Développement*’s aim is not merely to carry out projects, but to catalyse development by enlisting the participation of various players, and migrants in particular. From the outset, M&D has been supporting a number of groups of migrants, to help them contribute to their native country’s development.

### *The foundations of local development: basic infrastructure*<sup>2</sup>

The main achievements to date have involved:

- A vast decentralised electrification project covering 116 villages in four provinces of southern Morocco, extending the Moroccan government’s overall rural electrification programme to over 520 villages in Taroudannt province and 1 500 villages in Morocco as a whole in 2004.
- Work to improve village drinking water supplies and foster crop irrigation: over 100 wells were dug, and 14 headwater dams and 25 pumps have been installed since 1970; a 350-hectare irrigation programme was undertaken in market town areas to restore the cultivation of saffron.
- The launch, together with elected officials and local authorities, in the early 1990s, of roadway infrastructure in Taroudannt province (roads and trails). It is important to note that in 1999 300 000 people lived in hard-to-reach locations, and that of the 89 communities comprising the province, 39 were not yet linked to the road system. In all, the efforts undertaken under the evaluation and capitalisation of local initiatives programme made it possible to lay 603 km of roads to access the 39 rural communities that had not yet been linked to the national roadway network.
- Concurrently with the first electrification projects, M&D developed non-formal schools for youth aged between 6 and 18 in a single class, with schedules and pedagogical methods tailored to village needs, and medical dispensaries funded by charities were built. Since 1996, M&D has built and run 26 schools whose staff are destined to be agents of development for their villages. At the end of 2002, the Moroccan government expressed a determination to provide schooling in small remote villages, creating a Secretariat of State for Literacy and Non-

2. For further details, see the recent book by Zakia Daoud, *Marocains de l’autre rive*, published jointly in February 2005 by Paris-Méditerranée-France and Tarif Éditions Maroc, which presents a panorama of M&D’s initiatives since it was founded.

Formal Education within the Ministry for National Education and Youth. Even so, many problems remain: in Taroudannt province alone, 165 douars (villages) still have no schools. Regarding construction of charity-funded medical dispensaries, the major difficulty stems from a shortage of medical staff (nurses).

To ensure sustainable development for a region also entails heightening the awareness of people on both shores – migrants and indigenous populations alike, French and Moroccans of the second or third generations – of the ties that bind France and Morocco. M&D's bilateral exchange programmes seek to increase knowledge of the region amongst young French people, whether from immigrant families or not, but also to host Moroccans in France so as to promote contacts that can lead to twinnings initiatives between regions. Since 1989, more than 100 youth exchange programmes have taken place, with over 1 000 participants. These programmes have given each group opportunities to become involved, alongside host community villagers, in initiatives for improvements (constructing irrigation canals and small buildings), discovering a different culture (in many cases that of their parents), while at the same time fostering awareness among firms about development issues.

### ***Possible transition: expansion of income-producing activities and solidarity-based tourism***

Since 1999, development has focused on economic investment to exploit local products and rural tourism. Ensuring sustainable development in a region also entails training the parties involved, thus providing them with the particular infrastructure they need to take control of their own development. It means lending support to civil society, and structuring it, to foster local democracy. To meet these demands, M&D has formulated rules inspired by participatory methods, the prerequisite for sustainable development projects. This is why M&D advocates creating and federating village associations to administer joint projects. Such organisations enable villagers and migrants to take over and run electrification, irrigation and road-building projects. In addition, they enable active partnerships between migrants and their home villages, while shortening project completion times and cutting costs. Lastly, they create employment at the local level.

To meet these challenges and promote the concept of integrated sustainable development, M&D has joined forces with numerous partners to institute a joint action plan for Taroudannt province. Launched in 2002, this ambitious programme offers new growth prospects and opens new vistas. It promotes a comprehensive approach to development that considers both infrastructure and socio-economic, environmental and cultural aspects. Preferences are to develop solidarity tourism, which *inter alia* seeks to involve local crafts; develop the olive oil industry; exploit saffron and dairy production, and support products derived from the local argan tree (such as oils and soap). All these projects seek to reap maximum benefit from natural riches and local know-how, while preserving the ecological and cultural balance of this magnificent region.

### ***Development education: prerequisite for launching local development***

*Migrations et Développement* has been able to arrange group transfers of money and channel them to infrastructure projects. The transfers have been made on a one-off basis, in line with the motivations of the people involved. Migrants have helped strengthen civil society and North-South contacts – economic, social and cultural – by transferring funds, skills and other know-how acquired in the North. They have become special partners and

true agents of local development, involved in the creation and continued existence of over 450 village associations in Morocco and in the organisation of more than 30 European associations in M&D’s areas of action. By carrying out projects, the local people have learned about local development. Migrants initially supported by M&D have been able to forge direct ties with village associations and undertake new development projects. The projects M&D has initiated for electrification, for example, have not only provided access to energy for all the villagers, but they have also constituted development funds for other projects. Today, for example, most village associations that have invested in an electrification project have roughly EUR 15 000 on hand, based on a savings system that forms a genuine development fund. Villages that were once dependent on the outside world have become self-sufficient and can keep their projects in operation. In this way they have become less vulnerable. The example of the village of Imgoun illustrates the dynamics of development, launched by M&D, with the participation of migrants.

**Box 16.1. An example of how development gets started: the village of Imgoun**

In 1989, after two years of deliberation, the Imgoun village association undertook to electrify the village and to install 134 electricity meters, backed by immigrants who contributed 30% of total project financing. By levying a monthly tax of EUR 2 on each meter, in addition to collecting electricity bills, a development fund could be built up which would make it possible to carry out many other projects.

1990: The Imgoun school was rehabilitated in partnership with M&D.

1992: The Imgoun dispensary was built.

1996: Three headwater dams were built.

2003: 2.5 km of roads were paved.

2004: 150 hectares of town areas were rehabilitated as an irrigation district and 1.5 km of irrigation canals were dug.

2005: An agricultural co-operative was created in the rural municipality of Tassousfi, not far from Imgoun, with a majority of Imgoun farmers as members.

In addition, each village association holds general assemblies, to collect dues from every member in order to carry out community projects. The initial investments of immigrants are thus exceeded by the dynamics set in motion. Because each person in a village can potentially take part in a project, new relationships are introduced, as village notables are no longer the only people involved.

### Assessing the experience of “Migrations et Développement”

An external evaluation of *Migrations et Développement* was carried out between the summer of 2003 and early 2004 by Jean-Louis Pallanca. This assessment shows that the effects of projects carried out by M&D “have only positive impacts for recipients”:

- Improved relations between populations and political/administrative authorities.
- Improved relations between migrants and villagers, between generations within villages, and between migrants themselves.

- A shift in the balance of intra-village relations, restoring greater influence to active villagers as compared with elders (although women still need to acquire greater influence).
- Improved access to, and rational management of, water, impacting positively on health.
- Transfer of technical, organisational and managerial skills.
- Greater autonomy for villagers who, in the light of successfully completed projects, have become aware of the role they can play in the development of the region.

Other elements are also important to emphasise and are fundamental parts of M&D's action.

- The infrastructure built by M&D with migrants and villagers continues to function after the association leaves: technical autonomy with respect to electricity is "virtually total", and facilities that have been built have suffered "no malfunctions".
- The institutions created when M&D intervenes – the village associations – live on after the initial projects ("nowhere did we find that an association ceased to exist because a project had come to an end").
- M&D's actions have prompted the creation or expansion of a number of craft enterprises, shifting from the informal to the formal economy (e.g. electricity, wells, civil engineering), along with co-operatives for producers (men and women alike).

For M&D, all of these elements are a validation of the participatory method it has adopted: M&D's initiatives are truly appropriated by villagers. The process is self-sustaining, and the transfers of technical skills and organisational methods are long-lasting. M&D had to struggle to change people's way of thinking, enlist the participation in projects of the Moroccan and French governments, as well as the European Union, and attune local leaders to development programmes. The energy of the workers (volunteers and paid staff alike) has prevailed over these difficulties. Today, M&D initiatives span larger territories and involve many local and outside partners, making M&D's participatory approach more complex, both financially and from an organisational viewpoint.

In Morocco, the situation is evolving: decentralisation is taking hold and M&D initiatives are increasingly attracting the interest of local governments and elected officials. M&D frequently co-ordinates its action with various central government agencies (in areas including agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and education). The development association movement is expanding, and village associations are combining to carry out joint initiatives. M&D has succeeded in harnessing Moroccan financing for a variety of projects, encompassing tourism, village micro-projects, irrigation, workshops for improving agricultural produce, and so on. The increasing support for M&D's activities from the Moroccan authorities at national level is not always in tune with that of the administration and state services at the local level. This shows both the political gap between the national and local levels, and M&D's difficult task of supporting changes locally while avoiding conflicts which may hinder progress. In addition, the association has been asked by the Moroccan authorities to share its experience in formulating public

policies to fight rural poverty. Local authorities in Morocco have also sought M&D’s advice. However, these requests, which mobilise M&D officials, are time-consuming.

Nevertheless, the situation is still tenuous. M&D has to cope with far-reaching changes in Moroccan migration:

- Ageing of the first generation of migrants.
- Emergence of a diaspora (managers, students, merchants and tradespeople).
- Expanding new roles for women.

It is in view of these far-reaching changes that Migrations et Développement has been prompted to set new orientations:

- Expand the areas of intervention, which now encompass all dimensions of development, from basic infrastructure to economic activities, and include education, healthcare and the fight against child labour, with one common theme: learning about democracy through action.
- Strengthen partnerships with local authorities (rural municipalities, provinces), in regard to Moroccan decentralisation policy.
- Respond to the growing importance of adult training in local governance (officials from village associations, rural municipalities and decentralised administrations).
- Support village economic activities to help them in negotiating contracts (support for co-operatives, training for their members).
- Set up networks between actors in the field (federations of village associations and co-operatives) and migrants in the host country.

## Conclusion

In 1986, the year it was founded, M&D was above all indistinguishable from the story of one man – Jamal – and a group of migrants from the Maghreb who, confronted with the shutdown of their factory in the Hautes Alpes, sought to create viable conditions for a return to their home country. Faced very soon with the under-development of their native village, and with help from other associations and numerous mutual assistance networks, they wrote the history of M&D. Eighteen years to transform the lives of isolated villages, to restore ties between migrants and to find another place in France, their adopted land. Eighteen years in which M&D’s example was taken up by others, with over 450 village associations in Morocco taking charge of their development and managing their first infrastructure, and the creation, through example and support, of numerous associations of immigrants in France (OSIM) destined to promote other development projects in Morocco and to improve the integration of migrants in their host country. Eighteen years of effort, networked with other associations, experts from many countries, researchers working on the “M&D method”, local officials and Moroccan authorities at the highest level.

Today, the face of M&D has changed, but not its spirit. Initially a service provider, throughout its history M&D has become a “facilitator” and a mediator for the many parties striving for development in the Anti-Atlas region. M&D’s action has given a decisive thrust in an area where the Moroccan government had little presence (especially with regard to electrification and education in villages). But success also has its

downside. It is no longer possible to communicate or to operate as in the beginning. Today M&D is confronted with growing organisational complexity and an ever-increasing number of actors, donors and providers concerned by the development initiatives. There are differences between what villagers want and the orientations of donor programmes, and with recurring cash flow problems stemming from the individual schedules of the financial partners. In addition, networks and outposts are spread over a vaster expanse of territory, making it difficult to sustain contacts between villagers and migrants. Today M&D has to come to terms with its growth, which is not a simple matter. But does this mean that the association should abandon its ambitions and deviate from its initial mission? Far from it! M&D is fully prepared to take on these difficulties and knows that its ability to adapt, the flexibility and the generosity of all those who have worked with M&D until now, have constituted the association's strength and ensured its success. Today the ambitions and goals are the same: to carry out development initiatives in migrants' native areas, stem the tide of emigration and use the dynamics of immigration as a force for development.

The challenges to be met are many, and there is no shortage of problems to be solved. Migrants do not transfer financial flows alone, but also contribute to their native country's development through "invisible" transfers of know-how, social and cultural exchanges. The heart of co-development initiatives is based precisely on these mechanisms, combining both financial transfers and invisible transfers of learning.

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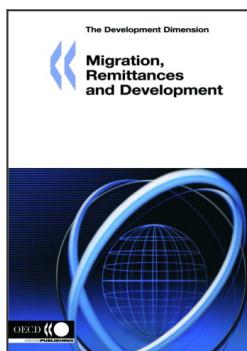
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