

Youth Entrepreneurship by Facilitating People's Development in Morocco

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Moroccan youth today—whether urban- or rural-based—face enormous obstacles toward achieving their own self-development, and creating change that they seek for their families, communities, country, and even world. They are confronted with the statistical reality that the more education they complete, the more likely they will be unemployed. So often they are directed toward mainstay disciplines, not out of the pull they feel toward them, but out of the fact that there are too few alternatives, especially in public sector university settings. On the one hand, they have the important freedom to create the associations, be part of the cooperatives, and form the businesses that they aspire to build. On the other hand, however, their faith in their own social system, society's sense of fair play, and real freedom to complete what they set out to, is more often than not heavily diminished.

Youth unemployment is more severe in rural places than in the cities. The cash economies that are now the established condition forces them to perform as day-laborers, and that is provided they are fortunate enough to have those chances. Urban migration is the only alternative for so many, even when their real dream is to remain in their communities and build there, where their heart is. The inadequate and unacceptable levels of rural education compel young families to move to cities. Considering the strong will among youth to alter their reality, there are successes, but, way too few, and those that are fortunate enough to secure funding for new projects appear to be the exception.

With all this said, there is brightness, and the light of change is also rooted in the Moroccan condition. People's participation in their own development is the law of the land and pervades the social structure by way of policies, programs, and legal obligation. Part of these national frameworks for human development further identifies youth as primary and potentially a most effective vehicle toward catalyzing and facilitating the local participatory development movements sought by the nation. This is to say that youth's direct engagement in bringing communities together to plan and manage the projects to enhance and fulfill their lives is a key causeway to Morocco's best future. Said simply: Moroccan sustainable development and how and whether it becomes real for all people will be determined by the role played by the youth of the nation.

But how do we move forward and how does this embody true entrepreneurship? Whenever we are acquiring and forging new skills, we learn best simply by doing it. We coordinate inclusive, local, dialogue by assisting that dialogue. We help others define the projects of their heart and future by doing just that: asking the questions, asking others to respond, aggregating with that more responses, helping others talk it through, until a sense of consensus and direction become defined.

We write and submit successful project proposals by writing, submitting, and following-up. We learn how to create budgets by creating them. We build capacities around evaluating past actions in order to build future courses, by engaging in it. We learn from experience, and so must our youth. Thankfully, there are no preconditions to begin. There is no degree that we must have. There is no status or background that first must be ours. We begin by beginning. And time and life are short, so we must begin now.

We are often taught to think that entrepreneurship comes from our own innovation. We are often encouraged to believe that to be most creative, strategic, and successful, is doing what develops from our own ingenuity, that our own entrepreneurial selves is about ourselves, and rests in our own mind's ability to invent and decide.

I write this to say that this outlook is categorically false, misleading, and even antithetical to sustainable development and progression toward a satisfied society. Entrepreneurship rests on what we give toward drawing out and realizing the ideas of the people. Innovation is the embodiment of a thousand voices intersecting and made into one agreed upon surge for community development. Our creativity is a reflection of how we assist others in understanding and pursuing their own hopes for the future. Youth entrepreneurship is not an endeavor of individual youths, but is a matter of all youth, building themselves by building their communities' development course, driven by the public.

I hear and imagine the heavy burden that Moroccan youth experience and the trepidation about the future that they must feel in their hearts. To fulfill the promise of the people's participation in development, is a truly painstaking and difficult road, without certainty, and with non-linear progress. However, there is reason for gratefulness when the nation sees youth's role in creating sustainable change, and sees people's participation as vital to that change. The question before us is: will we give ourselves over to the cause of others and, therefore, the vast multiplicity of what becomes entrepreneurship, and all the resources that are entailed, in order that we can effectively walk this course?

Even though time brings us understanding, today, it is not our friend. There is urgency to this call, to completing the Moroccan model, and to bring, finally, the satisfaction in our and others' lives that we very seriously need.

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Featured image: Planning local projects in the Rhamna province of Morocco, with youths' facilitation. (Source: High Atlas Foundation)

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