"Refugee/Migrant Children Education and Integration"
Morocco
International Students House London
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b. A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project

The project goal was to offer summer language classes (French and Arabic) to Sub-Saharan refugee children in Morocco and to sensitize parents with the knowledge necessary to sign their children up in Moroccan public education.

c. Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?

N/A

d. How did you come up with the idea for your project?

I have studied Sub-Saharan migration in Morocco for three years now. As a U.S. Department of State, Fulbright Research Fellow in Morocco (2017-18), I conducted research on Sub Saharan migration leadership and integration. I also worked with Collectif de Communautés Subsahariennes au Maroc (CCSM), raising awareness of migrant children's needs in the Moroccan education system to NGOs, migrant families, and political stakeholders. Through my volunteerism at CCSM, I learned that although in policy Sub-Saharan children in Morocco are granted access to public education, in practice there remain several cultural, language, and economic challenges for them to attend school.

e. Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?

Despite recent reforms in migration policy, the accessibility of public education has been defiant for Sub-Saharan children. In his address to the nation on August 20, 2013, His Majesty King Mohamed VI unveiled the catastrophic state of the education system that failed to adapt to the needs of migrants. Education is the key sector of any economic and social progress. It concerns all social strata, all components of the nation and all stakeholders (state, public and private sector, political parties, unions, associations, parents, teachers ...). It is in this spirit of openness and in respect of the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, which has been ratified by Morocco in 23 January 2012 that Moroccan government bodies have attempted to facilitate access to education for everyone.

In 2013-2014 the Moroccan government implemented the National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA), which allowed some foreigners in Morocco the rights to documented status, and access to social services. As a part of the SNIA, the Moroccan government published a circular note dedicated to the registration of foreign students from Sahel and sub-Saharan countries. However, despite all the efforts made, the education of migrant children remains a challenge.

f. Why did you choose your host site to work in?

This project helped advocate, monitor, and support the schooling of migrant and vulnerable children in the Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region (central Morocco). By implementing the summer language classes for Sub-Saharan children, we provided access for these children to have the language required to succeed in the upcoming year. Further, because of the transportation, educational materials, school fees, and meals

provided by the project, we also helped alleviate the expenses of families living in precarity for their children to succeed in school.

g. What was it like to work in your host site?

Morocco's geographic location made it a suitable site for this project's implementation. Morocco experienced the arrival of sub-Saharan migrants seeking to enter the EU in the 1990s due to political instability and economic recession within Africa (De Haas, 2006: 3). Additionally, after the Libyan authorities restricted their open-door policy, which attracted African labor migrants, many trans-Saharan migration routes shifted towards the Maghreb (Migration News, 2000; De Haas, 2006: 3; Matter 2013, p. 17) However, the commonly used term "transit migrant" to refer to Sub-Saharans in Morocco is often misleading. Many migrants and refugees consider Morocco their final destination, including those who fail to enter Europe and prefer to stay in Morocco than return to their substantially poorer home countries.

The Moroccan government supports projects that promote the integration of Sub-Saharan migrants in the Kingdom, and CCSM has good relations with the Moroccan government, the neighborhoods in which they work in, and other NGOs working on equality issues. I also had experience living in Morocco and volunteering at CCSM, which made the overall experience a lot more adaptable.

h. Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?

After settling in for a few days, I had a meeting with CCSM director and staff. We were all on the same page as to the project goals. However, when we had our first meeting with the parents, we encountered a bit of challenges. CCSM and I wanted to make sure that the parents felt that their voices in envisioning the project were heard. Thus, we had a participatory meeting where we asked the parents what their children's needs were. The biggest challenge we encountered was the divide between the needs of Anglophone migrants and Francophone migrants. Francophone migrants wanted Arabic courses and English (not a Moroccan official language), whereas Anglophone migrants wanted French and Arabic (both are official Moroccan languages).

i. What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?

At this stage, there was a bit of a debate as to whether we could afford to suit both communities' needs. Further, because English is not an official language in Morocco, it did not fall within the parameters of the project (integrating migrants in Morocco). After we explained why we could not offer English for the summer a few (francophone) parents decided they might not be interested in French courses, since they speak French at home with the children. The staff of CCSM then did a great job at explaining that we would improve the children's' grammar and reading skills, which are required for them to succeed in school.

j. How do you define peace?

Having access to equal education opportunities is key for child development, and can later impact life opportunities (i.e. better employment options etc.) Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a child states that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity." My definition of peace includes that children are able to have equal access to social mobility, which can be attained via a better education.

k. How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?

<u>Short term impacts</u>: Migrants and refugees who participate in the classes will be educated on the

languages they need (French and Arabic) to succeed in the Moroccan education system and to integrate into Moroccan society. Moroccan teachers in the program will be aware of the necessities of educating migrant children. Migrant parents of the children in the program will know fundamental rights regarding the procedures of access to education for their children.
<u>Long term impact:</u> Migrant/refugee children will have access to education without discrimination.

l. Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?

The project has provided me with practical skills in implementing grassroot projects from the ground-up. I learned that transparency, communication, and listening are key in working with marginalized communities.

The project was guided by my belief that education should be accessible to everyone, no matter where they come form or the resources their families have. It has motivated me in my long-term career goal of becoming a university professor and mentoring first generation college students.

m. Please provide a 1-2 personal statement sentence, suitable for use as a quotation, addressing how and why this project was valuable and what was the most important thing you learned as a result. Indicate the student's name (yours or your teammate's) for quote attribution.

"The project taught me that it does not matter how many resources donors have to fund grassroot organizations. If communities have been historically marginalized and unheard by those in power, they will have trouble trusting outsiders. If one comes in as an outsider, and tries to dictate the "needs" of the community without consulting them, then the projects will not be successful. The project ideals have to come from the communities at stake, and must be implemented by people that the communities trust."
Cynthia