Interpreting literacies: Moroccan women's stories from the classroom

by

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Abstract

This research paper explain the ways in which local development associations provide literacy training to rural and peri-urban women in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz, by describing the motivations of women to participate in literacy training, the classroom learning, and the outcomes of the training, in order to illustrate the influence the classes have on the learners, and to a lesser extent, the local development associations and literacy instructors that collaborate to provide the training. I argue that the literacy classes take on the form of "micro-public spheres" of exchange, information and assistance, and serve the multidimensional purpose for women to learn to read and write in Standard Arabic, debate the "politics in everyday life", and promote social and economic self-interests that enhance the collective interests of the household and community. In short, the literacy classes allow women to discuss and confront issues of subordination and exclusion, while at the same time allowing them to propose scenarios of inclusion, self-development and social justice, and help women in attendance acquire greater access to social power.

Cette dissertation a pour sujet l'alphabetisation des femmes de la région de Marakesh Tensift-Haouz. Seront aussi discutées diverses associations de développement local de la région – partie d’un mouvement social et civil grandissant au Maroc – qui ont atteints une certaine prééminence nationale par leurs efforts à offrir des cours en alphabétisme aux communautés marginalisées et/ou isolées. Le but est de présenter les méthodes utilisées par ces associations de développement pour promouvoir l’alphabétisation parmi les femmes en régions rurales et péri-urbaines, en décrivant les techniques de motivation, de formation en classe, et les effets de cette éducation, pour illustrer l’influence de cet enseignement sur les étudiantes ainsi que, à un effet moindre, sur les associations de développement local et les instructeurs qui offrent cette formation. Je maintiendrais que cette formation offre plus que la chance d’apprendre l’Arabe standard pour les femmes qui assistent à la formation, car les cours prennent aussi la forme de « sphères micro-publiques », où les sujets du domestique et de la communauté sont discutés. En présentant des idées pour trouver des solutions pratiques aux questions sociales et économiques, ces sessions d’alphabétisation aident les participantes à gagner un plus grand sens de pouvoir social.
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1 Introduction: A study of understanding women’s literacy in the context of development efforts in Morocco

This is a research paper on women's literacy classes in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz. Moreover, it is about local development associations – part of a burgeoning civil society movement in Morocco – that have gained national prominence in providing literacy classes to marginalized and isolated communities. The thesis is to explain the ways in which local development associations provide literacy training to rural and peri-urban women, by describing the motivations, classroom learning, and the outcomes of the training, in order to illustrate the influence that the classes have on the learners, and to a lesser extent, the local development associations and instructors that collaborate to provide the training. I argue that the classes offer more than the opportunity to learn Standard Arabic for women in attendance, as the classes take on the form of “micro-public spheres” of exchange, information and assistance, where discussions on both household and community concerns unfold (Keane 1998, p. 170). By proposing ideas to find solutions to both social and economic matters, and by acting upon them, these literacy classes help women in attendance acquire greater access to social power.

The reader will become familiar with the stories and events that surround the literacy classes provided by three local development associations. Since 1998, local development associations, along with other civil society organizations, have been sanctioned by the state to help provide the national adult literacy program. Two of the associations that I researched are providing the state program. One of the classes is being instructed by a young Moroccan woman who is employed by an international agency; Amouna facilitates “legal literacy” classes to unmarried women in her community to discuss their rights, and provides literacy classes voluntarily to another group of women who have started a cooperative. All of the learners who attend the associations’ classes come for a variety of reasons, challenging the classroom instructors – known as animatrices – to juggle the demands of the learners, the local development associations that employ them, and the associations’ state or international

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1 I am referring to John Keane’s (1998, p. 6) definition of civil society as, “an ideal-typical category... that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally-protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that ‘frame’, constrict and enable their activities.”
partners. In addition, given the multilingualism of Morocco, where four main languages vie for competing degrees of prestige and power, the classroom discussions frequently involve the nature of such latent language discord. For many of the learners, the juxtaposition of Standard Arabic and French – the so-called coveted languages of the ruling elite and modern economy – with the Berber or Moroccan Arabic dialects that make up their own vernacular, puts forth questions on the very nature of power differences in social relations, social class formations, and gender.

The research paper is both ethnographic and historical in that I contrast the findings of the field research that I undertook from January to June 2003, with historical accounts of language use, literacy practice, and the actions of both state and civil society to provide education to the Moroccan populace. In chapter two, I situate the reader within the spheres of language use, literacy practice and formal education in Morocco and provide a brief history of Moroccan languages; describe language use in both the public and private domains; and, briefly recount the history of formal education since the introduction of Islam in the 9th century, to highlight the regional and gender differences in literacy rates and access to education. In chapter three, I describe the history of adult literacy programs since Morocco gained its independence from the French in 1956, and illustrate the present policy of adult literacy education of the “Secretariat for Literacy and Non-Formal Education”. I then describe the Secretariat’s société civile literacy program and depict the role of local development associations that provide literacy classes. I conclude by describing the International Human Rights Law Group, and the legal literacy program that it has implemented in Morocco for non- and semi-literate women, to highlight the growing importance of international non-governmental organizations and literacy provision in the country.

In chapter four, I describe my own understanding of literacy, by highlighting various points of view from both the literature and the official Moroccan discourse on literacy, concerning the life-consequences of higher literacy rates. I question the notion that literacy in and of itself will lead to both social and economic development and suggest that there are other factors to support the argument that higher literacy rates will have a positive effect on socio-economic developments. By describing the learners’ views on their impressions of the lessons within the literacy workbooks provided by the Secretariat, I highlight the reservations that they themselves had with the program. I follow up by describing the multiple spheres of literacy of the classroom and the wider
community. I then look at the role of local development associations as mediators of local literacies and catalysts of social power, and draw attention to the relationship between the animatrice and women in attendance. I conclude this chapter by describing how the classroom learning brings forth new understandings of the world that are applied in the continual process of action and change (Friedmann 1987, p. 81).

The socio-economic composition of the research area, and the local development associations that conduct the literacy training there, are described in chapter five, where I provide a short history of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali (SYBA), and describe the reasons why I chose to conduct the greater part of my research in this peri-urban prefecture located next to Marrakech. I follow by describing a family from SYBA and their experiences with literacy and formal education, in order to articulate the changing demographics of the literate and non-literate populace over the course of a generation. I then briefly describe the villages of Aït Ourir, Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite, located forty kilometres from Marrakech, where I conducted my research on rural women's literacy classes. I conclude this chapter by describing the motivations of the local development associations and their animatrices – Association Ennour et Irfane and the International Human Rights Law Group liaison for Marrakech Tensift-Haouz, both located in SYBA, and the rural Association Tasghimoute pour le développement et la sauvegarde de l'environnement Aït Ourir – all of whom provided the classes for women to learn to read and write in Standard Arabic, but where they also discussed many other issues and personal concerns. In chapter six, I illustrate the dreams and fears of the learners, and their enthusiasm to attend the literacy classes. I go on to describe the classroom dynamic and the teaching styles of several of the animatrices, namely Amouna, Zakia, Najat, and Zahara. In chapter seven, I conclude by describing “outcomes in progress”, which include the trials and tribulations of a wedding cooperative and a young women’s association, that seek to become established in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, and of the women of the literacy classes in the rural villages of Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite, who at the time of my departure, were waiting to hear if the association Tasghimoute would continue to remain a presence in their villages.

Written as part of the requirements for a Masters degree in community and regional planning, the paper contributes to the knowledge of the growing importance of civil society organizations, and their role in community development. In this case, “development”, or “to leave from one place to enter a better place”, as one of the

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2 See appendix 1 for methodology. Methodology is also described in Chapter 5.
learners described the notion to me, begins with the literacy classroom. My intentions are for the reader to understand the multiplicity of actors that are involved in providing literacy classes for women at the local level in a so-called developing country that suffers high rates of illiteracy. Furthermore, I hope that the reader will appreciate the actions of many of the people portrayed in these pages, women and men, who under less than idyllic circumstances, are contributing their time, skills and efforts in the struggle to create a more just and democratic society.

1.1 The multiple roles of the researcher

A point of interest is the role that I held as a researcher, actively taking part in the classrooms and answering questions pertaining to who I was, what I did, where I came from, and the opportunities that were available to me living in Canada. For example, many of the questions that I was asked concerned the economic and political situation in my country, and Canadians' treatment of Muslims. This was especially true of the class of young women at the maison de jeunes, where my research assistant was responsible for facilitating three classes surrounding “legal literacy”. Amouna and I discussed at length how I should respond to these questions. How do I answer their questions without causing harm, by further enhancing their view that “my country” has so much more to offer than theirs? Amouna was actively involved in what I would describe as participating in the development of her community. With so many young people wanting not only to leave Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, but also Morocco, was I actively contributing to the counter-development of their community? By hearing stories of my country, and the opportunities that are open to young women such as themselves, would I be causing them harm?

Both the young and older women whom I would visit in the peri-urban quarter of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, partaking in their literacy and legal literacy courses, all had vivid images of the world outside of the Maghreb that they would often refer to as Europe, which for some of the women, would also include Canada and the Unites States. To them it was a world where men and women were equal in society, and where women – and men – were able to find paid jobs. They would ask very poignant and thought-provoking questions regarding how Muslims were treated in my country: were Muslim mothers allowed to send their children to Muslim schools for example; did they face discrimination; was there marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims?
I would define my role as being one of many roles: I was a researcher, working on my thesis; I was a bénéficiare, the term applied to the learners who benefit from partaking in the literacy program, as I benefited from the courses in my own right, by slightly improving my Arabic as well as the benefits to my ethnographic research; I was an advisor, advising both the animatrices and the bénéficiaries on such issues as emigration and where to find funding for a particular development project; and I was a persuasive storyteller with tales of my experiences as a Canadian and a visitor to Morocco. My stories were of how both our countries had so much to offer, and how their citizens all undertook roles and had responsibilities to ensure that the development of their own communities was to continue, regardless of the obstacles that they would face. This was in line with what Amouna was exercising with les filles – building community through civic participation.
2 Languages, literacies, & stories

This chapter provides background information to situate the reader within the spheres of language use, literacy practice and formal education in Morocco. A Berber, Arab, Muslim, Mediterranean, and African country located at the north-west tip of the continent, Morocco is steeped in a rich cultural heritage, which has served for millennia as a gateway between Europe and Africa. A multilingual country, Morocco is host to four main languages – Berber, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, Standard Arabic, and French – which co-exist to form a mélange of expressions, meanings, and interpretations negotiated through social practice. The chapter is broken down into three sections: section I begins with a brief history of the four dominant languages of Morocco; section II discusses language use in the domains of the oral and written, private and public; and, section III outlines the history of Moroccan formal education distinguished by three epochs – from the advance of Arabic in the 9th century, to the creation of the French Protectorate, to Moroccan Independence – highlighting the regional and gender differences in literacy rates and access to education, and providing a comparison of Morocco's literacy rates with Algeria and Tunisia.

2.1 A brief history of Moroccan languages

The Berber language, largely unwritten, is the oldest of the languages heard in Morocco. A member of the Hamitic family of languages, it is comprised of three dialects: Rifi, which is spoken in the North; Tamazight, spoken in the middle of the country; and, Tashelhit, spoken in the south. The Semitic language of Arabic (fu-sha) bears no resemblance – semantic or syntactic – to Berber, and was introduced to the region in the 9th century with the Islamic conquest that swept across the Maghreb (Wagner 1993).

The Arab conquerors took control of territories that they referred to as the bled-Makhzen,3 situated mainly along the coast and the connecting river valleys, with the Berber retreating to the higher areas of the Atlas Mountains, retaining their oral language and culture. As the Arab rulers increasingly sought cultural domination as well as political hegemony within their governed territories, the spread of Arabic was promoted by the opening of religious schools throughout the region. Islam became the religion of the bled-Makhzen, as well as spreading to the ungoverned territories known as bled-

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3 Bled translates to “country” or “countryside”; Makhzen refers to the traditional elite. Both terms are still in use today.
The Quran, written in Arabic, and therefore testament to the importance of the language, led to the gradual dominance of Arabic over Berber.

Morocco became a Protectorate of France in 1912, and French became the lingua franca of government, the education system, and the modernizing economy. The decision by the French to introduce Berber and Arabic to the education system was one of divide-and-rule, in order to create friction between the Berber and Arab populations (Sadiqi 2003). When France relinquished control and Morocco regained its independence in 1956, the government enacted a policy of “Arabization”, as nationalist sentiments came down strongly on what it saw as a divisive colonial language policy (Wagner 1993). The motivations to standardize Arabic also arose because of the difficulties with communication across other Arabic-speaking countries, along with the prestige and cultural value associated with the language of the Quran. Standard Arabic has been the official language since Independence, with Moroccan Arabic and Berber the two oral languages overwhelmingly spoken among the population.

There is still considerable friction over the status and recognition of the Berber dialects as well as Berber culture, and some have argued that there are government policies of “cultural discrimination” (Moatassime 1974, Montagne 1931/1973, in Wagner 1993, p. 18). Until recently, the Berber language was suppressed, and deprived of recognition from all government discourse on language policy.4 However, under King Mohammed VI who came to the throne in 1999, the government has undertaken conciliatory measures, authorizing the creation of a Berber alphabet, which has been derived from the symbols of the ancient Berber alphabet Tifinagh. The King also inaugurated The Royal Berber Institute in 2001, dedicated to the preservation of the Berber language and culture.5

4 In 1994, King Hassan II had advocated for the recognition of the contributions of Berber culture to the nation, although it never became official policy (Sadiqi 2003).

5 Moreover, King Mohammed VI authorized a pilot project for 300 students to learn one of the Berber dialects in school, which began in September 2003.
2.2 Understanding language use in Morocco

Of the four main languages that are found in Morocco, the overwhelming majority of Moroccans speak either Berber or Moroccan Arabic, both of which are considered oral languages (see Fig. 2.0). Berber, which is spoken by approximately half the population, is found predominantly in rural areas and exclusively in remote mountain villages (Sadiqi 2003). Although considered a hinterland language, some urban areas, such as Agadir, Azrou, Ouarzazate, Khenifra, and Nador, are regarded as linguistically Berber. However, due to centuries of co-existence with Arab language and culture, it would be incorrect to distinguish Moroccan cities or villages as purely Berberphone or purely Arabaphone. The Berber language has largely been preserved as it symbolizes local identity, and is increasingly appreciated due to the widespread internal migration among Berber speakers that has resulted from greater contact between the several regional dialects.

The Moroccan Arabic dialect, which is referred to as Darija or “common” language, is the lingua franca of Moroccan daily life. Over the centuries, it has developed in isolation from the Arabic that is found in other parts of North Africa and the Middle East, to the extent that many Arabic speakers from other parts of the Arab world are unable to comprehend the Moroccan dialect. It is widely heard in urban areas, within family circles, among friends, in commerce, on television, in the theatre, and in cinemas. In government institutions where Standard Arabic is more prevalent in both the written and spoken form, Moroccan Arabic will largely make up the spoken language even though official ceremonies and public announcements will be carried out in Standard Arabic.

Standard Arabic is the official language of Morocco – the language of the ruling elite – and it is found in government institutions, the education system and the media. It is as much a symbol as it is a medium of communication, and acts as a “potent ideological force” to govern over a population for whom many consider a foreign language (Geertz 1983, p. 112). All government documents are written in Standard Arabic, although French is permitted to denote technical terms. The judicial codes, laws and decrees that make up the Moroccan legal system are communicated in Standard Arabic, although court hearings are permitted in any of the four main languages, depending on the spoken language of the defendant. All of Morocco’s newspapers, journals, and magazines are written in either Standard Arabic or French.
French is Morocco’s colonial language and remains its window on the West, due to the strong economic and political ties with France. Like Standard Arabic, French is a requirement for both government and private sector employment, and its mastery is held with a high level of prestige. The university departments of pure and natural sciences, medicine, pharmacy, and all professional and technical programs are conducted exclusively in French, although some of the same disciplines are taught in Standard Arabic in secondary school. Families that have the financial means will send their children to private schools with an emphasis on learning the French language. French is used heavily in the administrative sector, business, commerce, the government, the military, the police force, and the media.

Figure 2.0 - Summary of language use in Morocco

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Oral</th>
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<tr>
<td>Judicial</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>SA; MDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>SA; F; (MDA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>MDA; F; (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>F; (SA)</td>
<td>F; MDA; (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>SA; MDA; B; F; S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>SA; F; (MDA); (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology &amp; Science</td>
<td>F; SA</td>
<td>MDA; F; (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics &amp; Religion</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA; MDA; (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private life</td>
<td>SA; F</td>
<td>MDA; B; (F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Adapted from Messaoudi 2002, p. 154
Many Moroccan speakers exhibit a high degree of multilingualism, which is directly affected by factors such as urbanization, geographic and ethnic origin, and level of education (Wagner 1993, Sadiqi 2003). Code switching between languages is heard throughout Morocco, and is most common between French and Moroccan Arabic in urban areas, and between Moroccan Arabic and Berber in the rural milieu. Standard Arabic and French are regarded as coveted languages, as Standard Arabic is associated with the Quran and the ruling elite, and French has retained its colonial caché in both the business world and the public sector. Although French is associated with wealth, English is gradually ascending the hierarchy of languages, as many see it as the next “window on the world”.

2.3 Three epochs of formal education, language and literacy

An extensive system of formal education has existed since the establishment of the Makhzen system of governance, taking hold and expanding in the region with the introduction of Islam during the 9th century. As primarily religious institutions, mosques, Quranic schools and medersas (religious colleges) imparted the knowledge of the Quran to boys in all regions of the Kingdom, although they were more heavily concentrated in urban areas. A young boy, often from a privileged family, would begin his education at a private or community school that was customarily located in the neighbourhood mosque. The boy and his classmates would learn by rote the passages of the Quran, written in Classical Arabic. Between the ages of ten and twelve, a student who was adept at reciting and writing the Quran, would be permitted to go on and study at a Quranic school in an urban centre. The classes would consist of deeper interpretations of the holy scriptures and a greater understanding of Arabic. Graduates of the Quranic schools who were intellectually gifted would be sent to a larger city such as Rabat or Marrakech, to continue their studies at a medersa. The role of the medersas would expand significantly in the 13th century as the Makhzen expanded in territory and influence, and the students would emerge from their schooling to take up government or religious positions. A select group of students would go on to attend Morocco’s only institution of higher learning of the time, the University of Quaraouyine in Fes. Established in 859 AD

Berber men from the countryside are more likely to be fluent in Moroccan Arabic than their wives, due to trading with Moroccan Arabic speakers in market places.

Unless otherwise cited, most of the information from this section comes from Sociologie de l’Education: Les systèmes éducatifs en France et au Maroc, by Ali Boulahcen (2002).
and considered one of the finest universities of the Mediterranean, young male adults would study law, religion and linguistics. After graduation, students from the most privileged families would themselves become professors at the university or a prominent medersa, while their colleagues would find employment in a legal, religious or administrative profession.

The Moroccan system of education, which was largely the domain of an elite male population and was based on learning by memorization in Arabic, would continue until the French established the Protectorate in 1912. Eager to educate a select Moroccan populace in both the French language and method of governance, the resident-General Lyautey established the École Supérieure de Langue Arabe et de Dialectes Berbères in Rabat. This institution would also serve the purpose of educating children of newly-arriving European families, with the number of schools under the French system expanding throughout the region to accommodate the influx of settlers and government personnel. In 1920, the French established the Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines for young adults from European and wealthy Moroccan families, although many Europeans and some Moroccan families sent their children to attend university in France. No longer an education system based on the rote method of learning, the French institutions of formal education closely resembled the pedagogy and curriculum of the système métropolitaine français. However, the Protectorate continued to instruct students in Arabic and the Quran, and opened a college in the town of Azrou to teach the Berber language, all of which were undertaken to instil a level of confidence – and create divisions between Berber and Arabic speakers – among the colonized population. Catering primarily to male students from privileged families, the French system largely excluded girls, the poor and the rural population, although highly-coveted trade schools were set up to accommodate a minority of underprivileged boys.

In 1953, a mere 8% of the Moroccan population had attended some form of schooling under the French colonial system (Dalle 2001). Gaining independence in 1956, the newly-formed government recognized the urgency of addressing the education deficit of its ten million citizens. The end of the Second World War and the decline of colonialism would call for an educated workforce to compete in rapidly changing economies of a new world order. With the signing of the Chartre de l’Organisation de l’Unité Africaine in Addis Abeba in 1963, thirty African nations made a pledge to provide basic education for the children of a continent emerging from colonialism. In this year, Morocco, a signatory of the Charter, began to implement a policy of universal education
for its rapidly growing population, who for the most part, had been excluded from the French system. Furthermore, in aligning itself with other Arab countries such as Tunisia and Algeria, the government established a constitution under the principles of “one nation, one religion, and one language”, in order to assert a strong national identity that had been suppressed under the French regime (Sadiqi 2003). Hence, the French education system would undergo a process of “Arabization” of both curriculum and personnel, as Standard Arabic would largely succeed French language instruction, and Moroccan teaching personnel would slowly replace the French and Algerian nationals who had constituted the majority of teachers under the Protectorate.

Between 1963 and 1983, Morocco had made substantial gains in its campaign to provide education to the masses, and by the end of this period, 76% of the school-aged population – 7 to 16 years of age – were enrolled in the education system. Moreover, the number of females enrolled in primary and secondary education had reached 30% and 40% respectively. For the first time in Moroccan history, the education system was becoming more accessible to the population as a whole, irrespective of class, gender and place of residence. However, the system was hindered by a number of setbacks that seriously affected the quality of the education, and inhibited its access to a large, mostly rural population. Primarily, the Arabization policies, which had rapidly accelerated during the 1970s, had been implemented with little forethought to their consequences, particularly on how the education would apply to the “real world”. Considered by many government officials as ill-conceived and based on a nationalist ideology rather than on improving the overall quality of the system, the curriculum failed to adequately prepare students for the labour market; many graduates were unable to integrate within a work-force that continued to rely heavily on the French system. Furthermore, the replacement of experienced teaching personnel with less qualified Moroccan nationals was a further detriment to the students’ education, subjugating them to a level of classroom instruction considered inferior to that under the French regime. Moreover, the adoption of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies, and a sharp increase in military expenditures to support Morocco’s claim to the Western Sahara, significantly curtailed the education budget. In addition, a growing population that had doubled within a generation,\(^8\) meant that with diminutive funds allocated to the construction of schools and the training of teachers, the Ministry of Education was

\(^8\) The population had doubled between 1960 and 1985, from 11.6 million to 21.6 million people (Dalle 2001).
largely unable to accommodate children from rural and peri-urban areas, along with children from marginalized urban communities.

During the 1990s, the government made significant efforts to increase school enrolment rates and launched successive literacy campaigns to decrease the high rates of illiteracy both among women and in rural areas, which have traditionally made up the non-literate population. Furthermore, the government began to increase the number of female teachers as an incentive to encourage rural families to send their daughters to school. Public spending on education increased slightly over this decade, and the private sector was consulted to help contribute financially to the construction of new schools and provide school materials. At the same time, due to a growing lack of confidence in public education and a dramatic increase in unemployment among young adults, private schools in urban areas began to flourish amidst a surge in demand for a superior education, increasing significantly until the present day. Catering to working- and middle-class families who are able to pay the costly tuitions, private schools provide a balanced education in both Arabic and French, which is deemed essential for employment in the modern economy. Although not as prestigious as the private schools attended by the country's elite, for many families, private education is viewed as an advantage over the majority of students enrolled in what is largely considered a moribund public education system.

At the end of the 1990s, King Hassan II, who had taken reign over the country shortly after Independence, considered the sharpening disparities in educational attainment between Morocco and other Arab countries as an international embarrassment. Measures to promote education and improve literacy rates undertaken after the fall of the French regimes in neighbouring Algeria and Tunisia, had far exceeded those which had been implemented by Morocco (see Appendix 2, fig. 1). Moreover, among men and women between the ages of 15 and 24, Algeria's literacy rate was three times and Tunisia's, almost five times lower than Morocco's literacy rate

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9 For example, the Banque marocaine pour le commerce extérieur agreed to fund the construction of one hundred schools per year in rural areas (Dalle 2001).

10 35% of 15 to 24 year old men and women were unable to find employment (Bulletin Economique et Social du Maroc 2002).

11 When compared to nine other Arab countries – Mauritania, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain – Morocco ranks second from the bottom, ahead of Mauritania (UNESCO 2002).
This inferior standing in literacy attainment of Morocco's young adult population would suggest that there had been minimal progress in improving education during the thirty-eight year rule of Hassan II. Furthermore, the disparity in access to education between genders and the urban and rural milieus continued to remain wide (Appendix 2, fig. 3). Fearing that his legacy as "Commander of the Faithful" would later be recorded as a reign of failure, King Hassan II – three months prior to his death – introduced the *Charte Nationale de l'Education et de la Formation* in July 1999.

The objective of the Charter was to elaborate a new social and cultural vision that would define a competitive, broad-minded education system. Comprised of 171 recommendations, Parliament spent the year 2000 in deliberation, with the expectation that a definitive plan would come into effect in 2002. Of the many recommendations that were debated, the most contentious issues surrounded language instruction. Laden with religious, cultural and nationalist sentiment, the questions pertaining to language instruction were vociferously argued over, and thoroughly re-examined. After much consideration, the revised Charter was put forward to the Ministry of National Education that outlined Parliament's specific approbations, which would involve a significant shift in the way the Ministry delivered education. The Charter proposed three major changes regarding language instruction: (1) the introduction of Berber lessons within the next few years in areas where Berber was predominant; (2) higher standards for teachers who instructed in French; and, (3) the adoption of a form of written Arabic that would more closely mirror the Moroccan Arabic dialect. However, due to the Ministry's apparent unwillingness to change and a lack of sufficient funds, the Charter has yet to become official policy. For the moment, a more global and comprehensive education system remains in a state of quiescence.

Morocco's various systems of formal education demonstrate the recent efforts on the part of a post-Protectorate government, to expand the education system to the general public. While education has been considered for centuries a privilege reserved for the male elite, many Moroccans – both male and female – now consider it a basic right to receive an education. Due to government policies aimed at increasing both school enrolment and literacy rates, through the expansion of the school system and the

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12 The queries on language were articulated in the following manner: is the use of Standard Arabic among young children a detriment to their learning; would teaching the youngest of the school-age population in a form of Arabic that they more clearly understood – ie. The Moroccan...
implementation of adult literacy programs to rural populations and peri-urban communities (Appendix 2, fig. 4), Moroccans – regardless of social class, economic standing, gender or place of residence – have greater access to education than Moroccan society has previously known (Appendix 2, fig. 5). Seen by many as a means to a better livelihood, a formal education is deemed synonymous with affluence and upward mobility, a correlation supported by national statistics on literacy and economic standing (Appendix 2, fig. 6). However, with Morocco’s troubled economy and inadequate education system, the privileges that are associated with completing an education – whether primary, secondary, tertiary or adult – are often overshadowed by the necessity to address the immediate needs of the household.
3 Literacy campaigns and local development associations

3.1 Moroccan Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education campaigns – past and present

Morocco has a history of adult literacy programs dating back to Independence, with the enthusiasm of a new nation eager to educate a society that had been under the direct subordination of France since 1912. Although a priority for Morocco’s nationalists in the late 1950s, literacy classes at the grassroots level came under attack in the sixties and seventies, as left-wing groups opposed to the Monarchy began to mobilise in the country’s bidonvilles and quartiers populaires, preaching their views of a Morocco without the Monarchy. As challenges to the reign of King Hassan II escalated throughout this period, tight restrictions on public gatherings came into effect, thereby putting an end to local literacy training initiatives. As survival for the ruling Monarchy became a daily ordeal, the development of a comprehensive, national adult literacy program would flounder for the next quarter of a century.

Very little information is available on government-sponsored adult literacy programs between 1958 and 1981 regarding their methodology, implementation and outcome. The first five-year literacy education plan that began in 1981 was also the first to collaborate with an external partner, the United Nations Population Development Bureau, which introduced the concept of “population education” to the curriculum (Mjahed 2002, p. 29). A Ministry of Education document entitled, “Population Education: Concepts, Contents, and Methodology”, outlined the main objectives:

(a) To raise general awareness of the different causes and effects influencing population development at the individual and community levels, (b) prepare the individual to take personal decisions with regard to his/her future plans concerning family and how many members this family will have, (c) define possible and efficient means by which society as a whole and individuals as persons can listen and influence plans and programs aiming at bettering present and future life conditions (1986, in Mjahed 2002, p. 29)

In the late 1980s, the government concluded that the educational and literacy attainments of the country in general were not adequate to enable Morocco to compete effectively in the global market. Apart from introducing education and training reforms, the government launched an adult literacy campaign that targeted 600,000 people between 1990 and 1991, coinciding with the International Literacy Year (Lavy and Spratt 1997). In 1992, the government initiated additional literacy campaigns that targeted 200,000 people, a number that far exceeded the target populations prior to 1990. A key
priority was providing literacy education for rural areas with a focus on women beneficiaries. In 1997, overall improvements were made to the program, which included: (1) decreasing the length of the program from two years to 200 hours of lessons over a period of ten months, to better accommodate the program to the learners’ life styles; (2) overall improvements to the two literacy workbooks, and the introduction of a third workbook specific to a target population, focusing on the learners’ particular needs and interests; and, (3) the introduction of a training manual for instructors who train the animatrices. In 1998, la sociétè civile, comprised of local development associations, women’s groups, and other community organizations, was officially sanctioned to help with the provision of literacy training in villages and neighbourhoods across the country.

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In 2002, a Secretariat under the Ministry of National Education was created to coordinate the provision of literacy and non-formal education under one governing body. The Secretariat officially launched the national adult literacy program under the banner entitled “March towards Enlightenment”, with the goal of targeting one million citizens between the ages of 15 and 45 per year. Important steps to decentralise program planning and implementation have begun to occur, placing more responsibility with the regional education academies and the delegations of the Ministry of National Education and Youth, that are more capable of focusing on regional needs and priorities. Madame Najima Thay Thay Ghozali, the appointed “Secretary of State for Struggle against Illiteracy and Nonformal Education”, has described the task of delivering the program to Morocco’s 10 million non-literate Moroccans as “un combat” (Maroc Hebdo International 2003). The Secretariat projects that under the new program, illiteracy rates will drop to 20% by the year 2010, with full eradication scheduled by 2015. On the other hand, UNESCO projections suggest that the Moroccan literate population is unlikely to exceed 70% by the year 2015 (UNESCO 2002).

The Secretariat is responsible for administering four literacy programs under the main program. They are: (1) a general literacy program under the direction of the

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13 The full title of the Secretariat is the Secrétariat d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'éducation et de la jeunesse chargé de l'alphabétisation et de l'éducation non formelle: direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme. Prior to the Secretariat, various Ministries and departments had been responsible for coordinating the administration of the various literacy campaigns. In 1998, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs was responsible for overseeing the program that was provided by civil society organizations.

14 Morocco is ranked 123rd under the UNDP human development index for 2002. Madame Thay Thay views the poor state of literacy attainment as a major obstacle to human development in the country.
Ministry of National Education and Youth, open to the general public between the ages of 15 and 45; (2) a “public operators” program available to individuals affiliated with the various government departments; (3) the société civile program; and, (4) a program that is administered by the business sector, providing professional literacy training to its employees. Under the mandate outlined by the Secretariat, the four programs are required to increase the number of women who participate in the training, and their overall participation has increased from an average of 55% from 1995 to 2001, to 80% in 2002; in the rural milieu, women make up 88% of the learners (Royaume du Maroc 2003).

The Secretariat’s guiding principles for a comprehensive, national literacy program are two-fold: (1) on a social level, the benefits of a literate population will aid in decreasing both birth and mortality rates through better household health practices and a general awareness of family planning issues; and, (2) from an economic standpoint, a literate society will be better prepared to compete in rapidly changing economies within a highly competitive and globalized world. These views are echoed by international development institutions, and the World Bank and USAID have supported program development and implementation through funding and technical expertise. Moreover, the Moroccan government, the World Bank, USAID, and UNESCO have been developing innovative pilot projects to increase the delivery and efficacy of the program in both urban and rural milieux. Since 1998, improvements to the curriculum and the training of the animatrices, along with the sanctioning of le domaine associatif to increase the program’s accessibility to marginalized and isolated communities, have had dramatic results. Prior to 1998, 70% of the program’s learners were failing to complete the program, and only 2% were considered to have achieved a level of literacy that

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15 In 2002, the four programs provided literacy training to the following number of learners: 570 000 individuals under the general literacy campaign; 146 000 under the public operators campaign; 269 000 under the civil society campaign; and 15 000 under the program administered by various enterprises (MAP 2003).

16 At the opening press conference of the “March Toward Enlightenment” literacy and adult education campaign in May 2003, the following objectives of the campaign were announced: “This program is concerned essentially with the struggle against ignorance and ‘illiterism’, the promotion of professional and social capabilities, the valorization of the potential of human resources, the reinforcement of the capacities of production, competition and employment of the national economy, the promotion of sustainable development and the inscription without risk of Morocco entering in globalization and la mondialisation” (MAP 2003)
satisfied program requirements. In 2002, 60% of the learners successfully graduated from the program, and the dropout rate had decreased to 20% (Ibid.).

3.2 The role of local development associations in service provision and local development

Local development associations, known collectively as *le domaine associatif* or *société civile*, play an integral role in service provision and local development in Morocco. Their prominent position is due in part, to a political will to liberalize state and society, as the Monarchy has become less able to provide for a burgeoning, more vocal population, which has experienced a sharp rise in both poverty and unemployment since the early 1990s. As a result, local development associations are increasingly sanctioned by the government – and many are taking their own initiative – to provide services in rural, urban and peri-urban communities. These services include: (1) operating and maintaining infrastructure, such as water supply, sewage and electricity; (2) providing social service programs, such as family planning, literacy, credit-lending, and health care; (3) advocating the rights of women, children, the underprivileged and the disabled; and (4) promoting cultural, leisure and sporting events. Following the death of Hassan II in 1999, King Mohamed VI quickly announced a new era of tolerance and social justice, which has led to a further increase in the number of active local development associations. In Marrakech alone, there are over 1600 associations registered with the Ministry of the Interior, and a further 600 that operate in the surrounding rural milieu (Chbani 2003).

Local development associations are often founded by women and men who are university or college professors, lawyers, doctors, or other professionals, and who have time to devote to this domain. Many founders are also members of political parties, or former political prisoners. Some of them see their involvement in *le domaine associatif* as a stepping stone to something more prestigious or financially viable, such as a local political position, or securing a job within one of the Ministries.

The staff that run local development associations are almost exclusively volunteers, with only a minority of associations that are able to offer modest salaries with

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17 The term “local development association”, “development association”, “local association” or “association” is what I use to describe community-based organizations that provide a variety of services to community members. They are also referred to as civil society organizations in Morocco.
funds from outside donors. Known as des bénévoles temps pleins, young men and women, many of whom have recently graduated from university and have little opportunity to find paid employment, are involved in full-time, unpaid work as receptionists, animatrices, project coordinators, and so on. In many cases, they receive modest financial contributions from family members or work part-time in low-paying jobs. In general, they view their work as contributing to the building of a solid foundation for a future democracy, as well as affording them the possibility, however slight, of a career with a national or international non-governmental organization. Although most of the staff are unpaid, they are able to participate in professional development workshops that are organised by local, national and international non-governmental organizations, where they receive training in areas such as project management, human rights education, facilitation skills, participatory approaches to learning, and so on.

3.3 The role of local development associations in providing literacy classes

Adult literacy education has been considered a priority for the government since 1997, when the Ministry of National Education began to improve the overall quality and accessibility of the program. In 1998, local development associations and other civil society organizations, which had been providing literacy training to a lesser degree without government support were authorized to assist in administering the national adult literacy program. Local development associations selected by the Ministry of National Education were funded to pay animatrices, and were given the three national adult literacy workbooks for distribution to the learners. Although associations that continued with literacy training without Secretarial support were not funded, they did receive basic literacy workbooks for their students. In general, since they began providing literacy training in 1998, local development associations have proven to be successful providers of the literacy program, achieving completion rates that exceed the rates that are attained by the three other programs, and have therefore gained a prominent position in the Ministry’s literacy campaign.\textsuperscript{18}

Above and beyond the provision of literacy training, local development associations afford the opportunity for their learners to engage in social interaction and

\textsuperscript{18} In 2002, the completion rates for the four literacy programs were: 89% for the general literacy program; 74% for the public operators program; 110% for the civil society program (the target was 198 000 participants, although 217 000 actually took part in the classes); and 60% for the program run by the business sector.
networking. Ideas that develop through discussions within the classroom environment have the potential to lead to concrete actions. For example, a discussion on agricultural cooperatives may result in a group of learners taking the initiative to organize their own cooperative. Furthermore, an association will continue to act as a “centre of knowledge” long after the learners have completed the literacy program, as many graduates continue to consult with their former animatrices and other staff members on a variety of issues. For this reason, the proliferation of local development associations nationwide—and growing collaboration among them—provides many communities with the opportunity to access a web of information on a diversity of topics, pertaining to government, the environment, the economy, the community, and the household.

In the following sections, I describe local development associations that are affiliated with the Secretariat’s literacy program, explaining the role of the animatrice, the curriculum and workbooks, the required progress reports and the final program evaluation. I conclude with a description of associations that provide literacy classes independently of the Secretariat, highlighting the example of the legal literacy program of the International Human Rights Law Group, as a growing sign of local development associations and their collaboration with international agencies.

3.4 Local development associations that are affiliated with the national adult literacy program

A year-long commitment with the Secretariat to provide the national literacy program is conditional on a proposal that the association must submit to the national office in Rabat, or to the closest regional academy. The proposal must consist of: (1) an official request to participate in literacy training provision under the national adult literacy program; (2) a statute that it is signed by the Ministry of the Interior, which recognizes the legal status of the association; and, (3) a project summary outlining the methodology.  

19 Until recently, cooperation among associations was uncommon. Local development associations perceived that they would lose their influence in a particular community, by sharing both their networks and resources with another association. However, after local development associations became part of the national literacy program in 1998, and a significant increase in proposals affected the operating abilities of the Secretariat, associations were required to provide literacy training to no less than a thousand learners. Unable to accommodate such a figure, many associations were denied the opportunity to submit their applications. Therefore, prominent associations began to coordinate the national literacy program with other associations, and took on the role of liaison with the Secretariat.

20 See Appendix 3 for a list of local development associations in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz that have collaborated with the Secretariat.
location, and number of classes that the association will provide. The summary will include whether the association will provide training for women or men – there are no mixed classes – although most associations provide women’s literacy classes only.\textsuperscript{21} The proposal is then evaluated using a set of criteria, and the successful applicant is awarded a one-year contract to plan, provide for and conclude the ten-month program. A local development association wishing to provide literacy classes for a second year must re-apply, and in cases where the association is providing classes in a small village, the association is required to locate villages that have not previously hosted the program.

3.4.1 \textit{les animatrices}

The first two months of the contract are devoted to planning the ten months of literacy classes. The \textit{animatrices}, who are required to have completed a university degree in any field, will submit their résumés directly to a local development association, and will undergo an interview to assess their qualifications and level of enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{22} Selected candidates will then participate in a one-week training session, which is facilitated by an adult education specialist from the Secretariat, or by an experienced \textit{animatrice} from a prominent association located in the area. They will have a brief introduction to the pedagogy of adult education, where they are instructed on the “participatory approach” to teaching literacy. The \textit{animatrices} are then required to find women or men, as the case may be, who are interested in the ten-month program, and the classes are conducted at either the association, or in a local school’s classroom. In general, the learners will come from the same neighbourhood or village as the \textit{animatrice}, although the association may be located in a different location, as it is likely that it will oversee classes in a number of villages or neighbourhoods. The most challenging part of the planning process is to convince potential learners to commit to the lessons. For the women’s literacy classes, an \textit{animatrice} will have to convince the potential learner’s husband, brother, father or son, that the lessons will not bring

\textsuperscript{21} As previously stated, over 80% of the participants are women; in the rural milieu, the percentage is 88%.

\textsuperscript{22} The overwhelming majority of the \textit{animatrices} have not had any formal training with instructing literacy classes, and their university degrees vary (Biology, Geography, Law, etc.). Due to the economic situation of the country, associations have no difficulty in finding \textit{animatrices}. The \textit{animatrices} have different personal convictions in working for the associations, and many prefer the work in the \textit{domaine associatif} than doing menial work in the private sector.
dishonour to the family, or unduly disrupt family life. However, a man's decision to attend a men's literacy course will have only his level of motivation as a deciding factor. An influential member of the community who has decided to enrol in a literacy course will influence others to attend, facilitating the work of the *animatrice* to locate other community members interested in the classes.

Each class is comprised of approximately twenty-five students, and they will meet three times a week for a total of six hours, or for 200 hours over the ten-month period. An *animatrice* is permitted to instruct a total of three classes, although most *animatrices* will lead no more than two, as they will have to account for travel time between classrooms – and quite possibly between villages – and will have to allocate an appropriate amount of time to prepare for each lesson. The average salary of an *animatrice* is 20 DH per hour – equivalent to $3.00CAN – and they will receive between 960 and 1440 DH per month, depending on the number of classes that they teach.\(^\text{23}\)

Although considered part-time employment, the class preparation, travel time and the necessary progress reports to be completed each week, ensure that the *animatrice* has little time to devote to anything other than the classes. Moreover, seen as a source of knowledge on issues that include finances, physiology, Islam and psychology, an *animatrice* will feel compelled to spend extra time with his or her students, answering the numerous questions that arise before and after each lesson.

**3.4.2 The three literacy workbooks\(^\text{24}\)**

The Secretariat provides each learner with three workbooks that are covered in sequence, and are referred to as *les trois tomes*. The workbooks are written in Standard Arabic, and include exercises to be completed individually, lessons that are designated for group discussion, and stories that are meant to be read aloud by the learners and their *animatrice*. The lesson topics include: (1) exercises that focus on reading, writing, numeracy, the alphabet, lexicon, grammar, telling the time, etc.; (2) general information on Morocco such as its geography, the role of government and service provision, citizenship and rights, voting, and other information, considered as "civic education"; (3) health issues, family planning, and proper diet; (4) norms and customs concerning Islam that include prayer, religious holidays, fasting, etc.; (5) economic development issues, such as agricultural production, information on cooperatives, financial institutions,

\(^{23}\) An average salary in the city will range from 2000 to 3000 DH per month.
obtaining credit, etc.; and, (6) the preservation of the environment, such as safeguarding water sources. Overall, the lessons are geared towards the development of a certain code of conduct, referred to by the Secretariat as “civilizing principles”. Taken together, the workbooks constitute a moral code for the learner to practice what could be described as “good citizenship”: economic success, a productive life, a respected family, an educated household, civic duty, piety, and so on.

3.4.3 Life and business skills development

Many associations provide life and business skills development classes that are run in conjunction with the literacy program, and funded by a particular Ministry. A common program associated with women’s literacy classes, instructs the learners to develop skills such as embroidery, needlework and loom operation to produce carpets. Funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the association receives a small amount of money to purchase equipment and pay for an instructor. The program compliments the 200 hours of literacy lessons with 100 hours of practical training, acting as a financial incentive to motivate women to participate in the literacy program. Although these classes are not geared to instruct women in marketing their products, many associations assist women in finding buyers, as well as in helping them start small business enterprises.

Associations are also encouraged to provide learners a maximum of sixty hours of training in a subject related to their lives. For example, a local development association that provides literacy training to women in urban and peri-urban areas, may seek assistance from an international agency such as the International Human Rights Law Group, which will provide a facilitator to conduct workshops on issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and household relations. An animatrice, whose academic background is in Islamic Studies, may instruct lessons on Islam to a number of the association’s classes, demonstrating the proper way to recite important passages from the Quran, and answering the learners’ questions on Islam.

\[24\] The workbooks are explained in greater detail in chapter 4.
3.4.4 Progress reports and final evaluation

The *animatrice* is responsible for keeping a record of the attendance and the progress of the weekly lessons. The association will compile the progress reports of all its classes, and will send a detailed report to the Secretariat for each trimester of the program. Following a review of the report, the Secretariat will forward the association the *animatrices'* salaries. A final evaluation of the program will entail a visit from a program inspector, who will meet with the association, and attend each of the association’s classes. The program inspector has two responsibilities: (1) to ensure that the program has conformed to the agreement signed between the association and the Secretariat; and, (2) to ascertain and record the enrolment, success and failure rates of the learners, which are used for statistical purposes for both the Secretariat and the national statistics bureau. To determine whether a learner has successfully completed the program, the inspector will ask the learner to read a passage from one of the three workbooks, and the learner is given a pass or failing grade. Successful graduates receive a certificate from the Secretariat.

3.5 Local development associations with no affiliation to the national adult literacy program

Local development associations that provide literacy training independently of the Secretariat, generally fit into one of three categories: (1) they may have previously been part of the government’s literacy program, and have since been able to acquire alternative, and often more stable funding; (2) they may have had their proposal turned down by the Secretariat, and have decided nonetheless, to provide literacy training on a voluntary basis; or, (3) they view the provision of literacy classes in their community as a form of emancipation or religious duty. Although they do not receive funding to pay for their *animatrices*, associations are often able to acquire from the Secretariat a basic literacy manual entitled *La lecture pour tous*. An association that is not affiliated with the national literacy program will have greater freedom to tailor their own program, and will

\[25\] Each trimester coincides with the completion of each literacy workbook.

\[26\] The *animatrices* will have often graduated from university, like their counterparts who instruct literacy training under the national literacy program. They have decided to provide literacy training for two reasons. First, they are unlikely to find stable employment, and providing literacy training is a way to build up their skills and abilities, and they may even have the opportunity to go on to teach at a private college. Second, they feel that they are contributing to the development of their community and nation.
not be constrained by completing the required paperwork. However, the association will be required to notify the Ministry of the Interior of their intentions for providing literacy classes. Presently, there are more local development associations that provide literacy training independently of the Secretariat than those that work within the national adult literacy program.

3.5.1 The International Human Rights Law Group

The International Human Rights Law Group is a non-governmental organization based in the United States. Since 2001, it has been providing a legal literacy program in Morocco since 2001, entitled, “Making Human Rights Real: A Legal Literacy Program for Women in Morocco”. The program was designed and has been implemented with the help from members of fourteen women’s organizations and local development associations, to provide non- and low-literate women with a comprehensive and participatory learning program for the participants to understand the concept of human rights, and to gain the appropriate skills to defend them under Moroccan law. The program consists of thirty-five, two-hour sessions that provide the participants with information on a diversity of topics that deal with human rights. The sessions include women’s rights in relation to the family, property, freedom from violence, reproductive health, education, work, politics, and the media. Six of the initial fourteen program designers have gone on to train women who work in various women’s organizations and local development associations across the country, so they themselves can facilitate the program. The legal literacy program has proven successful throughout Morocco, with classes conducted by local development associations in the regions of Tangier, the Middle Atlas, Marrakech, and Agadir. Although the legal literacy program is unique—most of the literacy classes provided by associations that are not affiliated with the Secretariat, do not rely on external support—the example of the Law Group’s legal

Because an association is not bound to the criteria imposed by the Secretariat, it has more freedom to pursue its own objectives, and may provide a more efficacious training than an association that provides the national literacy program. Moreover, the learners are not faced with the same time constraints as an association that must conform to the ten-month time period of the national program.
literacy program demonstrates the growing partnerships between local development associations and international organizations.

In summary, this chapter has described the history of adult literacy programs since Morocco gained Independence, and has illustrated the present policy of adult literacy education. I have highlighted that until recently, large segments of the population had no access to a national adult literacy program, although since 1997, the Secretariat has made significant improvements to the quality and accessibility of the program. I have argued that civil society has played a prominent role in improving the program's deliverability, and have highlighted the increasing partnerships between local development associations and international organizations, such as the relationship that the International Human Rights Law Group has established with Moroccan women's organizations and local development associations.
4 Myths, theories & social power

A study of literacy in Morocco is a study of the complexities of a multilingual society where Berber, Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic and French, are assigned different roles and hold different levels of prestige (Sadiqi 2003). Because social class plays an important role in Morocco, the proficiency in one or more languages will have influence on an individual's social and economic standing. People, and not only in Morocco, have different theories about language and what it indicates about a person's prestige, power, etc. To speak of language and its mastery is to speak also of the differences in power in social relations, social class formations, and gender. The apparent innocence and neutrality of the "rules" of reading, writing and speaking, serve to disguise the ways in which such power is expressed through language (Street 1996). A person's ability to "swim within" the inherent inequalities involved in literacy practice, is highly valued both in Morocco and elsewhere. This suggests that the researcher must pay close attention to people's thoughts about the language game.

Morocco presents an interesting case study in that the two overwhelmingly used languages, Berber and Moroccan Arabic, are considered oral. As widely-spoken languages, they are seen as less prestigious than the official language of Standard Arabic and French. Thus, while Berber and Moroccan Arabic are heard in less formal domains such as the street, work and the family, the use of Standard Arabic is reserved for the ruling Monarchy, government, religious leaders and the media. The inherent class connotations of these distinctions imply that the more economically privileged and educated a person is, the more likely it is that he or she will be fluent in the languages of influence. The contesting ideologies of multilingual Morocco are played out through a myriad of discourses – sites of struggle, dynamic linguistics and semantic spaces – in which social meanings are produced or challenged (Seidel 1985, in Grillo 1989). Therefore, being literate in more than one discourse (Gee 1990), by understanding the rules of communication, and knowing what kind of literacy is needed to negotiate the

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28 I am referring to Bourdieu’s deeper sense of interpersonal relations, in that they are “never, except in appearance, individual-to-individual relationships and that the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction… In fact it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions which are so many marks of social position and hence of the distance between objective positions (1979, 81-2).

power structures in place (Street 1984), emerges as a powerful force that is carried out through daily social practice.

This chapter brings together a plurality of discourses on literacy, including views and theories from scholars, the Moroccan official discourse on language and literacy policy, women with whom I spoke attending literacy classes, and my own interpretations of literacy from the field. The chapter is an “academic” segue, guiding the reader through to the following chapters that deal with the “flesh and blood” stories of the research communities, the local development associations and their literacy classes.

The first section looks at what I call the “myths and misconceptions” of literacy, or the common understanding that higher literacy rates will lead to positive social and economic developments. I highlight that there is little substantive evidence from a macro perspective, to suggest that an increase in the rate of literacy has played a significant role in the socio-economic development of post-Protectorate Morocco. The second section describes women’s impressions of the national adult literacy program, and the sense of alienation that many women experienced from the workbook lessons. Furthermore, I describe the feelings of women who took part in Amouna’s legal literacy classes, many of whom had attended school and were literate in Standard Arabic, and were fully aware of the class barriers that stifled their opportunity to acquire a higher-status vernacular in Arabic and French. In the third section, I describe multiple spheres of literacy, and suggest that to accurately portray the multidimensional phenomenon of literacy in Morocco – and perhaps everywhere – the term “literacy” must refer to both communicative (oral) and literate (written) practices. In the final section, I look at the role of local development associations as mediators of local literacies and catalysts of social power. In this section, I draw attention to the relationship between the animatrice and women in attendance, and describe how the classroom learning brings forth new understandings of the world that are applied in a continual process of action and change (Friedmann 1987, p. 81).

4.1 Myths and misconceptions: unfounded consequences of literacy and the official Moroccan discourse

Literacy is often used figuratively to claim widespread benefits for the individual, society, human rights, the economy, democracy, health, and so on. A sort of panacea, the myth of literacy as the cause and consequence of individual and societal progress, leads many people to believe that the only issue is how to make as many people literate
in the shortest possible time. Many of these claims are based on the assumption that literacy is an uncontested "good", or that there is a natural, linear correlation between the development of a literate population, and the overall development of society (Walter 1999). For instance, it has been argued that literacy advances cognitive thinking\(^{30}\) (Vygotsky 1962, Havelock 1963, Goody 1977), and that literacy alone, will reduce infant mortality rates and improve the overall health of the household (Schultz 1993). Inversely, illiteracy has been identified as both a symptom and a cause of underdevelopment. The notions of the consequences of literacy that I have outlined above have been collectively referred to as an "autonomous" model of literacy (Street 1984), and have been variously described as "doubtful promises" (Hinzen 1983) and "claims in search of reality" (Wagner 1992).

Many governments and policymakers, especially in the so-called developing world, uphold notions of the aforementioned consequences of literacy, which are mirrored in the policies of their adult literacy programs.\(^{31}\) To the extent that a literacy program will result in positive life-consequences for individuals and their social environments, the program often fails to consider how the literacy practices that are being introduced will relate to those of the local community; in many cases, the community in question is simply seen as "illiterate" (Street 2001). Moreover, the political dogma that often accompanies an adult literacy program can actually alienate the community members who may feel that they are being denied due affirmation of their lives and livelihoods, which are frequently portrayed as backward, and in need of "advancement". This is also the reason why many adult literacy programs fail to "take hold". The rhetoric of many literacy programs in the developing world, often billed as "campaigns" for the "eradication" of illiteracy, or for the economic good of the country,

\(^{30}\) The strongest challenge against the "mental consequences" of literacy has been put forward by Scribner and Cole (1981), who carried out extensive research on the multilingual Vai of Liberia who make use of three literacies: English literacy learned in Western-style schooling, Vai literacy that is used in record-keeping, and Arabic that is used for religious purposes. They found that cognitive skills such as abstract reasoning, which have largely been attributed to becoming literate, were in fact a result of the socialization of students by attending formal schooling. Similar to the case in Liberia is the multilingualism of a large percentage of Morocco's population, where many people have some understanding of Moroccan Arabic, French, and one or more of the Berber dialects, and where language is associated with different roles, both formal - such as the use of Standard Arabic in government institutions and the education system – and informal. (Wagner 1993).

are frequently motivated more by political self-interest, rather than for the long-term benefit of the campaign's learners.\textsuperscript{32}

Morocco is no exception, and quite explicitly exhibits grandiose intentions for the full eradication of illiteracy within a very limited time frame, through the implementation of aggressive adult education campaigns that target rural and urban women, and rural men, who make up the largest segment of the non-literate population in the country. Epitomizing the notions of the life consequences of literacy that are made explicit by the autonomous model, the official discourse of the Secretariat of the Direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme is centred on one principle: that attaining universal literacy in the official language of Standard Arabic, by alleviating the non-literate population of their "apparent paralysis" (Hassan II 1997, p. 3), will provide the "fundamental catalyst" for social and economic development (Lavy and Spratt 1997, p. 121). The antithesis to what a progressive, forward-thinking, competitive society should look like, the Berber dialects and the Moroccan dialect of Arabic are viewed as lesser, unwritten languages, caught between the official language of Standard Arabic of the ruling elite, and the former colonial language of French, both of which are necessary for employment in the public sector and the "modern" economy.

Viewed from a macro perspective, the Ministry of National Education and the Secretariat appear to be making strong gains in their "struggle against illiteracy". Over the last fifty years, the rates of literacy in Standard Arabic have been increasing significantly (refer to Appendix 2, fig. 5). Moreover, the government's policy of universal education has allowed many more rural and urban children to learn how to read and write in Standard Arabic, as well as in French (refer to Appendix 2, fig. 4). The national adult literacy program, which has focused on reducing illiteracy among the largest segments of the population, has had some measure of success. Presently, rural women account for over 88% of the learners enrolled in the program (Royaume du Maroc 2003). Inversely, Morocco has been beleaguered by a series of economic crises, and the country continues to suffer high levels of unemployment, which in part have been the result of IMF structural adjustment policies adopted in the 1980s. In the late 1990s, the

\textsuperscript{32} Heyneman (1992, p. 28) writes, "Literacy campaigns are highly political, highly visible, short-term action programs designed to jump-start an end to illiteracy. The shortcomings in these programs are widely known and are, quite understandably, widely ignored when policymakers are contemplating new campaigns. With respect to literacy campaigns, one must recognize that the process is as much an attempt to solidify political legitimacy as an attempt to teach literacy efficiently."
number of households living in poverty was reported to have reached alarming proportions. The increase in both the levels of literacy and poverty has coincided with the Monarchy's move to proclaim a new era of governance and to allow for participation in discourse from a growing, more tolerated civil society. As a result, discussions on human rights, the status of women, the economy and government – barring criticism of the Monarchy – have become commonplace in Moroccan society.

33 According to the World Bank's 1998-99 Living Standards Measurement Survey conducted in Morocco, poverty showed a disturbing increase during the 1990s, regardless of how poverty is measured. The World Bank (2001) states:

The recent LSMS survey, undertaken by the Statistical Office, shows that the total number of poor increased from 13.1% of the population in 1990/91 to 19% in 1998/99 (or, from 3.4 to 5.3 million). The number of "economically vulnerable", i.e. those who are at or below 50% above the poverty line, increased from 35 to 44% (or, from 9 to 12 million).

Poverty remains largely a rural phenomenon: almost one Moroccan out of four is poor in rural areas compared to one out of ten in urban areas. Although the rural population represents 46% of the total population, 66% of the poor live in rural areas. But poverty in urban areas is rising also. The share of urban poor increased from 27 to 34% of total poor during this period, almost four times faster than rural/urban population shift.

The increase in poverty did not coincide with a deterioration of the main social indicators. For example, adult illiteracy was reduced (from 55 to 48%), and the net primary enrollment rate has substantially improved from 58% in 1990 to 70% in 1998, particularly among rural girls (from 28 to 47%). Child labor was also reduced from 18 to 14%. The crude death rate also decreased (from 7.7 per 1000 population to 6.3) and life expectancy increased from 67 to 69 years. Access to basic infrastructure services improved both in urban and rural areas.

Despite these improvements, however, Morocco's social indicators continue to lag behind comparable regional/income level countries and significant disparities remain between urban and rural areas. The primary enrollment rate remains 20% below the average enrollment rate in low middle-income countries (LMI); infant mortality and maternal mortality are high; and access to potable water and electricity in rural areas remains one of the lowest in the region. This calls for steady and increasing efforts by the Government over the coming years, as the legacy of the past remains huge.

Poverty increased mainly because of slow growth which led to a decline in per capita consumption of the households. The decline in the GDP growth rate during the 1990s was driven mainly by the drop of the agriculture growth which was not offset by the small growth of non-agriculture GDP. Overall, the economy has grown annually by only 1.9% during 1991-98, compared to 4.1% during 1986-91, and non-agriculture GDP growth dropped from 4.2 to 2.8% p.a., particularly due to the slow growth in manufacturing. Given a population growth rate of 1.9% p.a., virtually the per capita income stagnated and real private consumption per capita, based on the national accounts, decreased by 1.4% p.a., compared to an increase of 1.9% over 1986-91. The LSMS data also shows similar decline in per capita consumption during the 1990s (1.6% p.a.). Repeated droughts in the 1990s account partly for this poor performance, and have increased vulnerability among the poor.
The paradoxical chain of events that I have outlined in the paragraph above would appear to dispel the myth of the autonomous of literacy model in Morocco, namely that literacy in and of itself will produce particular universally positive social and economic results. What is more, the very nature of the Moroccan literacy program, with its focus on promoting reading and writing in Standard Arabic through “civilizing principles” that promote “rationality and formal organisation” (Ministère Royaume du Maroc 2000, vol. 1, p. 5), creates its own paradoxes among the program’s learners. The impressions of the national literacy program from the women with whom I spoke, and from conversations that I had with various members of local development associations, revealed a general feeling of both aspiration and alienation. On the one hand, the learners expressed a profound desire to learn to read and write, and to articulate their thoughts and opinions about “their” Morocco. The majority of women, who spoke Berber, Moroccan Arabic, or both, were not opposed to learning Standard Arabic, although many considered it a “foreign” language. However, the projections of the program as depicted in the three official literacy workbooks, and how that message was sometimes conveyed by the animatrices, were often received with mixed emotion. Unfamiliar, occasionally exotic, and greeted with varying degrees of scepticism and forlorn, the “civilizing” connotations of the texts left much to be desired.

4.2 Confronting misconceptions: women’s views of the Secretariat’s workbooks

The Ministry of the Kingdom of Morocco’s three literacy workbooks, which were introduced to the program at the beginning of the 2000 academic year, constitute the “interface” between the literacy program and the program’s learners (Villareal 1992). Written in Standard Arabic, each workbook consists of 200 pages of text, drawings, lessons and discussion topics. All three workbooks are to be covered within the 200 hours of classes, spanning a period of ten months. The first workbook is focused on basic reading, writing and numeracy. Simple verses from the Quran are meant to teach the learners the basic principles of Islam, and many verses can be applied for prayer. Discussion topics are presented on religion, society, health and the family. The second and third workbooks are more detailed and cover a wider range of information. The second workbook covers the following subjects: civil education (knowledge of government institutions); men’s and women’s rights and obligations; understanding basic democratic principles in Morocco; and learning appropriate civic behaviour (Ministère Royaume du Maroc 2000, vol. 2, p. 9). The workbook focuses on further developing the
learners' competences in reading, writing and simple arithmetic, with the objective that
the s/he will be able to: conjugate verbs in the past and present tense; write more than
two legible lines in their workbooks; use pronouns in their singular and plural form; read
and recite basic sentences; and complete simple calculations in multiplication, division,
addition and subtraction (Ibid.). The third workbook is directed at a “target” population
and, in this case, focuses on women’s “needs, training, social life and democracy” (Ibid.,
vol. 3, p. 3). The four subject areas are: health, food and nutrition; children’s education,
societal problems, and solidarity with the disabled and poor; civic participation to
promote democracy, social services, work ethic, and safeguarding the environment; and
finally, women’s overall participation in development (Ibid.). Again, the objective is to
further improve the learners’ skills in reading, writing, and numeracy, however, the third
workbook is designed to develop their “oral expression” by discussing different life
problems, morals, and behaviour.

Although the literacy training provided by the Secretariat could be described as
“holistic”, the reactions that I heard from the learners were that they themselves were
“invisible”. Due to a lack of attention to both the textual and contextual, the workbooks
were regarded with apprehension. On a purely textual level, the small print of the
second and third workbooks inhibited many women with troubled vision to benefit from
the contents (see Appendix 4, figs. 1-2). On a contextual level, the rural women with
whom I spoke, interpreted the various drawings of “rural women and their families” in a
way that was unfavourable in comparison to their “cheerful and modern, urban
counterparts” (Appendix 4, figs. 3-8). The women in the peri-urban préfecture of Sidi
Youseff Ben Ali felt a similar alienation towards the depictions. Although some had
experienced the rural exodus, considering that SYBA had been a point of arrival for
rural-to-urban migrants, when compared to the various drawings of migrants living in
shanty bidonvilles and run-down quartiers populaires, they felt neither “affluently urban”
nor “adversely rural”: in their eyes, they were invisible to the Secretariat.

Concerning both text and context, their actual lives seemed “far removed” from
the workbook lessons, which were highlighted by a series of contradictions. The
contradictions were most evident, for both the rural and peri-urban women, when it came
to discussing topics such as “democracy”, “local authority”, and “civic participation”. For
instance, how could their local authority represent the “means to realize democracy and
development” (Ibid., vol. 2, p. 13), when from the learners’ perspective, they were
regarded as inept and irrevocably corrupt? When they read that they should not “remain
passive but to act positively to change the bad in society” (Ibid., vol 1, p. 151), many thought that to confront what they felt were unfortunate circumstances, such as power inequalities in the family and the community, was unthinkable. For many women, obtaining permission from a husband, father or even a son to attend the lessons was in itself a tenuous affair. Moreover, the apparent failure in representing them as a particular “target” population was most evident in that none of the texts mentioned the historical and cultural significance of the three Berber dialects or the Moroccan Arabic dialect. Finally, the suggestions put forth on the role of women in the development of the nation, left many of the learners to ask, “Have we not always been a part of such development?” (Appendix 4, fig. 9)

What was clearly lacking from the workbooks was how little the content reflected women’s social and economic roles, both in the rural villages and in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. In the rural villages, women’s lives had changed drastically over the last two decades, with many women becoming the head of their families. As a large number of the villages’ men were forced to seek employment in the city (Marrakech, Agadir, Casablanca, and other urban centres), women had taken on more decision-making responsibilities in both the household and community, which contradicted the fixed gender divisions represented in the workbooks. In Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, many women who attended the lessons were single, divorced or widowed, and like many women from the villages, felt they had been unfairly represented in the text.34 In their eyes, the Secretariat did not consider them to belong to the category of the “ideal-typical” Moroccan family, and therefore, they had not been given due acknowledgement for their social and economic contributions to the household and community.

In summary, the class and gender connotations that were espoused by the Secretariat had the effect of marginalizing the very population it was determined to “educate”. However, women were not passive victims to the workbooks’ imagery, but were active in critiquing the stylized portrayals of “traditional” and “modern” families, and the rigid gender divisions that they were accorded.35 In doing so, women were

34 A number of divorced women felt that they were made to feel responsible for the failure of the marriage, as the third workbook states, “After divorce, women do not have the right to the family possessions; the woman always suffers most from divorce; and, she should search for other options rather than divorce” (Ministère Royaume du Maroc 2000, vol. 3, 85).

35 Sadiqi (2003, p. 182) writes that, “Whereas rural areas symbolize tradition in Morocco, urban areas symbolize modernity, social opportunity and social mobility. Modernity has been concomitant with urban migration in Morocco.
confronting the cultural biases that were widely considered part of the "natural order": the unquestioned and fixed definitions of women and men in Moroccan society. Moreover, by challenging the lack of accountability of the local government and its flagrant abuse of power, women were confronting the very essence of gender and class discrimination. In fact, they were creating new understandings of the power structures within society, which they interpreted as having played a role in confining themselves to a world of poverty, inequality, corruption and illiteracy. They were involved in, as James Scott has so eloquently written, “a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history” (1985, p. xvii).

4.2.1 SYBA and Gueliz: worlds apart

In Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, a group of young women between the ages of 18 and 25 were attending legal literacy classes to learn about women’s rights and entitlements in Morocco. Although most of the young women had completed primary school, none of them had graduated from the local lycée. Many had left on their own volition, or had been forced to leave by parents who saw little value in their daughters completing an education while unemployment, especially among young women, remained staggeringly high. The young women knew that in comparison to the education offered at schools located in wealthy areas, the education they received was of relatively poor quality, and expressed frustration that they had not been properly instructed in French and Standard Arabic. Fluent only in Moroccan Arabic, they were conscious of the double standards that perpetuated the divisions between Morocco’s affluent and “multilingual” social classes – residents of Gueliz and other privileged neighbourhoods – and their own class background. They believed that their predicament inhibited their employment in the “modern economy”, which would forever confine them to their quartier populaire of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.

As the legal literacy classes progressed, and as they spoke of how to include other young women in the classes, Shaima suggested that they should practice French in order to appear "educated" when confronting the young women in Gueliz and other affluent neighbourhoods. Reprimanding Shaima for suggesting they were not equally intelligent, Amina nonetheless underlined the importance of learning both French and Tashelhit, the Berber dialect that was often heard in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. For her,
reaching out to young women in less idyllic circumstances, such as Berber women who had arrived in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali from the countryside, took priority over approaching the young women of Gueliz. Then, after fulfilling their obligations to women in their own community, they could continue their endeavours in an affluent neighbourhood, although Amina doubted whether young women in Gueliz would want to speak with them. Many of her classmates acknowledged that much work needed to be done in their community. Moreover, they all agreed that their life predicaments were somewhat aligned with their inabilitys to communicate in French and Standard Arabic. For many of the young women, the distance between Gueliz and Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, although it was less than a mile that separated both communities, seemed worlds apart.

4.3 Multiple spheres of literacy

Whether a woman at the age of sixty decides to participate in a literacy program to learn how to recite the Quran, or a young low-literate woman who is part of a small cooperative, wants to become more proficient in managing the cooperative’s daily business affairs, their motivations will define the type of literacy they need. A multiplicity of literacies (Street 1984) – Quranic, functional, legal, household, etc. – would assume that the question of literacy for either the Quranic learner or young entrepreneur, is not the amount of literacy they need, but the kind of literacy that will allow them to accomplish their intentions. The older woman, whom I shall call Imane and wanted to know how to read the Quran, a resident of the village of Agjgal located in proximity to Marrakech, spoke the Berber dialect of Tashelhit. Her desire to learn passages from the holy book was simple and sincere: a widow whose surviving children had moved to Marrakech, reciting the Quran would bring her peace-of-mind while living home alone.

Because Tashelhit is an oral dialect, Imane would be considered “illiterate” by the Secretariat. However, expanding the definition of literacy to more accurately portray Imane’s knowledge and control of her natal language, she was literate in the discourse that prevailed in Agjgal, and in the neighbouring villages of Aït Toumi and Tourtite (Gee 1990). Travelling to nearby Aït Ourir accompanied with a nephew, a Berber town 16 kilometres from Agjgal, Imane was also able to communicate with the townsfolk while in

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36 James Gee defines literacy as, “mastery of, or fluent control over, a secondary Discourse” (1990, 153). For Gee, a Discourse is, “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’, or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’” (Ibid., 143).
the market. If she were to travel the forty kilometres to Marrakech, Imane would find it more difficult to interact with the Marrakchi, the majority of whom speak the Moroccan dialect of Arabic. She may even have difficulty communicating with other Tashelhit speakers, as their dialect may differ from the one that is spoken in her own milieu.

In Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, a wedding cooperative had been started by eight women who were attending literacy classes with the association Ennour et Irfane. Khaoula had progressed quickly and was considered “top of the class”. During the initial meeting that the cooperative held, Khaoula was recommended as the person responsible for keeping track of the accounts and filing the paperwork. She was chosen for two reasons: her proficiency in basic reading and writing was above and beyond the other members of the cooperative; and second, her sister who had attended school and was proficient in Standard Arabic and French, would be able to mediate any of the tasks that Khaoula was unable to perform. Fearful that her sister would be unavailable for most of the time, as she had recently married and was frequently with her new family, Khaoula asked the cooperative if Amouna, who conducted “legal literacy” classes with single women, could provide them with what UNESCO would describe as “functional literacy”.  

If Khaoula and the other members could be described as involved in functional literacy classes to carry out the daily tasks associated with their cooperative, Amouna’s legal literacy classes with her unmarried students could be described as providing literacy that involved critical reflection. This form of literacy has been described as “a process of interpreting the world and developing a consciousness of commonly held values, behaviours and beliefs as socially and culturally constructed” (Lytle and Wolfe 1989, in Walter 1999, p. 35). As liaison for the International Human Rights Law Group in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz, Amouna facilitated workshops on women’s legal rights and entitlements. The workshops consisted of a critical reading of the moudawana, or Family Law, one of the few codes of law in Morocco derived from both Sharia and the French Napoleonic Law, and perceived by many as discriminatory to women. During her lessons, Amouna covered marriage, divorce, property rights, violence, education, reproductive health, political life, and so on. In this sense, the women who attended her classes were learning to “read the world” (Freire 1970) by

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37 UNESCO’s (1991) current definition of functional literacy is: “a functional illiterate is a person who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his [or her] group and community, and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his [or her] own and the community’s development.
"perceiving the relationship" between the law "texts", and the greater "context" of the misrepresentation of women's rights in Moroccan society (Freire and Macedo 1987, p. 29). Amouna, in following Freire's tradition of literacy as a metaphor for liberation, without actually having read any of his work, was teaching her students the way in which to "think correctly" (Ibid., p. 76) by developing a "critical spirit" (Ibid., p. 91).

Imane, who was learning to read the Quran to recite prayers, Khaoala and the wedding cooperative's members who were involved in functional literacy training, Khouala's sister who played the role of literacy mediator, and Amouna who provided both functional and legal literacy lessons, were all involved in literacy practices. Starting from the premise that to engage in literacy is always a social act (Street 2001), literacy as a social practice allows for a deeper understanding of how people define, value, and use reading, writing, and numeracy in the course of their daily lives (Walter 1999). To take into consideration the context of the lives of the literacy "practitioners" – cultural, historical, economic, spiritual, political, personal and social – reveals the multiplicity of perspectives, and the complexity of the life consequences embodied in the term literacy. As a phenomenon that is steeped in ideology (Street 1984, Gee 1990), made evident by the Monarchy's insistence that Standard Arabic is the sole official language – despite the fact that the majority of Moroccans have difficulty understanding it – literacy is contested and in perpetual conflict with the inherent power structures in society. Amouna's decision to provide legal literacy to young women who were oblivious to the potentially harmful consequences of signing a marriage contract they failed to fully understand, was in reaction to the power and gender imbalances that were apparent in Moroccan law. Moreover, many of the women with whom I spoke, either Moroccan Arabic speakers in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, or the women who spoke Tashelhit

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39 Geertz (1983, 112) writes that, "the most important public speeches – those from the throne, for example – are cast in an Arabic so classicized that most who hear them but vaguely understand them. Arabic newspapers, magazines and books are written in a similar manner, with the result that the number of people who can read them is small. The cry of Arabization – the popular demand, swept forward by religious passions, for conducting education in classical Arabic and using it in government and administration – is a potent ideological force, leading to a great deal of linguistic hypocrisy on the part of the political elite and to a certain amount of public disturbance when the hypocrisy grows too apparent".
from the rural hinterland, wanted to learn Standard Arabic – and also French – because of its association with prestige and power.

To perpetuate the definition of literacy as simply the ability to read and write in any given language, is to marginalize 50% of the Moroccan population, relegating them to the menial status of “illiterate”. To acknowledge both communicative (oral) and literate (written) practices in a definition of literacy – Berber, Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic, French, etc. – seems the only way that I am able to accurately portray the multidimensional phenomenon of literacy in Morocco. What I do not intend to argue is that collecting data to determine a person’s reading and writing abilities – when accurate methods of measurement are employed – is not without its own merit for the compilation of statistics, long-range planning, national projections, educational strategizing, and so forth. However, the interpretation of literacy that I am articulating here is that the learners in the classroom are confronted by multiple spheres of literacy – their own vernacular, the elite Arabic, their animatrices’ French-influenced knowledge acquired at university that includes a general understanding of the codes of law – along with the theories that underlie the practical applications of these literacies, whether functional, Freirian or the social practice of literacy, which jostle with each other in the real world.

4.4 Local development associations mediating local forms of literacy

Fatima Sadiqi has stated that Moroccan men are generally reticent to encourage women’s participation in literacy training, as literacy is synonymous with “emancipation” and is believed to make women more independent and less compliant (2003, p. 90). Furthermore, it is widely regarded that a man’s education is privileged over a woman’s, and girls are often held back from attending school, especially among lower-income families that cannot afford to send all of their children through the education system. There are a number of other factors – historical, political, economic and socio-cultural – that have contributed to a high rate of illiteracy among women, which include family honour and tradition, Family Law (moudawana), the male-biased cultural construction of Islam, and a language policy which has denied recognition of the Berber and Moroccan Arab dialects. However, as the state has taken important steps to decrease illiteracy


41 In Morocco, family honour is related to the notion of the collective-self: the honour of the family takes precedence over one’s personal reputation. This has serious implications for women, as
among women, and with the sanctioning of le domaine associatif to provide literacy training in marginalized and isolated communities across the country, women’s literacy classes are becoming much more of an accepted and legitimate part of the urban and rural landscape.

The final section of this chapter is more to “sum up” the previous sections, as all of the issues that I have described above – from the official discourse on literacy, to the multiplicity of oral and written literacy practices, and of women’s agency in confronting the barriers to becoming literate in a particular discourse – permeate the classroom learning environment. Through the determination and ingenuity of local development associations to find an operational space within often-delicate national and social circumstances, and the classroom dynamic of the animatrice and women in attendance that allows for the articulation of local realities, women’s literacy classes personify more than “learning to read and write in Standard Arabic”. By bringing together relatives, neighbors and colleagues, the classes serve as “micro-public spheres” of exchange, information and assistance, where women “question the pseudo-imperatives of reality and counter them with alternative experiences of time, space and interpersonal relations” (Keane 1998, p. 172). Thus, the literacy classroom serves the

their sexual purity is key to maintaining the honour of the family, although a male’s sexual purity is only related to his own personal standing. Thus, the family – especially in rural areas – may forbid an unmarried daughter to enter the public domain to attend school. In addition, women in many rural areas are still affected by the traditions of early marriages, multiple pregnancies (especially in the absence of a boy), polygamy, and accountability to the larger family and community units, which will deny them the opportunity to acquire a formal education (Sadiqi 2003).

The moudawana is one of the few codes of law derived from both Sharia and the French Napoleonic Code. Instituted in 1957, it defined women as minor by limiting their rights and by institutionalizing polygamy. For example, women could not contract their own marriage without a male tutor, divorce and repudiation were in the hands of the husband, a minimum marriage was not fixed, etc. (Sadiqi 2003). On January 25, 2004, the government of Morocco adopted a new landmark Family Law supporting women’s equality, and granting them new rights in marriage and divorce, among the granting of other rights (See Appendix 5).

Berber and Moroccan Arabic dialects are considered oral and are closely related to women and illiteracy, as the vast majority of women are “illiterate” and do not have access to print and electronic texts. Language disempowers Berber women in that the oral language of the home and family is not taught at school; for Berber and Moroccan Arabic women attending adult literacy classes, they are denied the opportunity to learn economically-important French, as the program focuses soley on Standard Arabic (Sadiqi 2003).
multidimensional purpose for women to learn to read and write in Standard Arabic,\footnote{For the young women who are attending Amouna's legal literacy classes, they have the opportunity of learning French, as most of them have a general understanding of Standard Arabic.} debate the “politics in everyday life” \footnote{Kerkvliet (2002, p. 11) states that, “Politics consists of the debates, conflicts, decisions, and cooperation among individuals, groups, and organizations regarding the control, allocation, and use of resources and the values and ideas underlying those activities.”} (Kerkvliet 2002, p. 10), and promote social and economic self-interests that enhance the collective interests of the household and community. In short, the literacy classes have allowed women to discuss and confront issues of subordination and exclusion, while at the same time allowing them to propose scenarios of inclusion, self-development and social justice (Friedmann 1998, p. 34), thereby helping women in attendance acquire greater access to social power.

As Arjun Appadurai has written, “The imagination has now acquired a singular new power in social life...More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before (1996, p. 53). In the following chapters, through a narrative of stories of women’s motivations, expectations, and experiences – as learners, animatrices, and heads of local development associations – I illustrate the displays and dynamics of social power within social life. The social power I am describing is “the fusion of self-interest and resistance” (Scott 1985, p. 296), as women exploit “the interstices of the cultures they inhabit to articulate new possibilities for sustainable personal and community development” (Perry and Schenck 2001, p. 7). Engaging in discourse on how women compare with men, tradition with modernity, liberalism with fundamentalism, the Quran as both lived reality and written text, and how the private domain of the household blends into the public realm of the community, I show how women involved in \textit{le domaine associatif} in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, Ait Ourir, Agjgal and Tourtite are in the process of generating “new kinds of collective expression” and “new kinds of politics” (Appadurai 1996, p. 54).
5 Researching places, people & relationships

5.1 Sidi Youseff Ben Ali

Sidi Youseff Ben Ali is described as a *quartier populaire*, or “marginalized quarter”, by both residents and non-residents alike, and is situated to the south-east of Marrakech. From its humble beginnings, the village of a few houses and farmland at the start of the twentieth century, now has a population in excess of 180 000 inhabitants, and a further 60 000 who live in the immediate surroundings. The name of this *quartier populaire* originates from a pious man who suffered with leprosy; in the 12th century, the area now referred to as Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, was home to the region’s leper population. Sidi Youseff Ben Ali spent his time immersed in prayer in a small underground cavern, and his reputation for piety filtered throughout the region. After his death in 1197, he became one of seven patron saints of Marrakech. To this day, pilgrims visit his tomb located outside the ramparts of Marrakech, facing what was known as the village of Kobba prior to the twentieth century, and what is now called Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.

Bordering the *medina* (old city) of Marrakech and the Issil river, the “urban” population of SYBA is confined to three square kilometres, which creates a dense fabric of narrow streets and alleyways, becoming more cramped and unkempt in closer proximity to the river. With a population density of 60 000 people per square kilometre, the district is unable to support any new households, and has ceased to serve as the city’s catchment basin for rural-to-urban migrants. The location of SYBA, cradled to the country’s most important tourist destination, has significant economic repercussions for the district’s residents.

At the beginning of the century, and before the French protectorate, SYBA was a village, or *douar*, that supported a small number of families. However, under French rule, the fertile hinterland of Marrakech was largely expropriated from the rural Moroccan populace and given to French landholders, causing an exodus of poor farmers and artisans from the Haouz region, who flooded the *medina* and the fringes of Marrakech. This rapid urbanisation increased sharply throughout the 1960s, due to both changing climatic and economic conditions. Since then, SYBA has experienced a seven-fold increase in population, compared to the tripling of the population of Marrakech over the

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44 I am grateful to Professor El Majdoubi from the Geography department at the Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, for providing me with most of the information found in this section: by lending me a copy of his thesis entitled, *Les mutations d’un espace urbain à Marrakech: Sidi Youseff ben Ali* (1998), and for providing me with up-to-date information on SYBA.
Considered a "clandestine district" until the government took control of the land in 1960, SYBA was sold to the district of Marrakech in 1963, which began to reclaim the land by demanding payment from the residents who had since constructed permanent dwellings.

During the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the district of Marrakech began to provide a much needed infrastructure for the burgeoning population, although many residents were unable to pay for such amenities. In 1963, it began to construct water mains and provide electricity to some areas, but, at least until 1976, many families continued to rely on household wells and *robinets publiques*, or public taps. By the mid-1980's, most dwellings had been connected to a new sewage system. Although an enormous improvement to the previous situation, when raw sewage was funnelled through an open canal that ran the length of SYBA, there are still a number of households that are situated in the impoverished area next to the river Issil, which lack full access to water supply and disposal. Slowly, from the 1980s onwards, SYBA has evolved to resemble the Marrakech *medina* and other urban neighbourhoods, and bears less resemblance to its previous status as a *douar*.

January 1st 1991 was a significant date for Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, as it became designated a *préfecture*. The *préfecture*, comprised of two districts – north and south – has two police stations, a financial office, and the administrations of education, youth and sports, water supply and sanitation, electricity, health, etc. Along with a post office, there are now more than thirty pharmacies and newsstands, and twenty-two educational establishments to provide schooling for a population half of who are children and adolescents. The creation of the *préfecture* provided much needed investment and political representation, and has led to a new influx of families. This new "internal" migration is comprised of state employees who have come from different areas of Marrakech, along with artisans who have left the *medina* due to rising property prices,

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45 The population for SYBA has risen from: 800 inhabitants in 1948; to 27 028 inhabitants in 1960; to 53 740 inhabitants in 1971; to 76 888 inhabitants in 1982 (El Majdoubi 1988). The census taken in 1994, after SYBA became a prefecture, listed 157 396 urban inhabitants, and 81 895 rural inhabitants. The projection for SYBAs 2002 population is 235 000 urban inhabitants and 74 000 rural inhabitants (www.statistic.gov.ma/popresi.htm). However, El Majdoubi has stated that this figure is too high (personal communication, 2003).

46 At the time of writing a comprehensive account of SYBA, El Madjoubi noted that previous to 1985, there was one pharmacy, five newsstands. Fifty percent of the population are under the age of 15 (El Majdoubi 1988).
and many of whom now live in a new area of SYBA, situated next to the royal Agdal gardens.

Sidi Youseff Ben Ali has transformed itself from an agricultural community, which at one time was a prominent producer of dairy products, to an economy shared between artisans and farmers, to a present-day multiplicity of occupations that include the public and private, the formal and informal. Because it is now a préfecture, there has been a boom in construction, which continues today and has outstripped other prominent sectors in providing jobs to SYBA residents such as carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, electricians, and others. However, many of these workers are now involved in the construction of residences in other parts of Marrakech. There is still a substantial artisanal community, which has been largely revived due to the influx of artisans from the medina, and there is a significant amount of business activity resulting from the tourist industry in neighbouring Marrakech. Artisans, both women and men, compete in an aggressive market to supply embroidered wear, leatherwork, carpentry, weaving, and so on, to a small number of wholesalers. Other local occupations include hairdressers, hammams (public baths), newsagents, butchers, bicycle and moped repair shops, mechanics, wedding planners, corner stores, pastry shops, cheap eateries, cafés, tailors, taxi drivers, embroiderers, mattress makers, movers, metal workers, and so on. In 1988, eighty-eight percent of the labour force was involved in the “informal” economy. There are two souks, or markets, that provide fruits, vegetables and pottery for the area’s residents.

Although Marrakech is known for its storytellers, circus performers, and musicians, who congregate nightly in the large square known as Jemaa el Fna, Sidi Youseff Ben Ali has very little to offer in terms of entertainment. There is one rundown cinema that shows outdated movies from India, Egypt, Syria and America, and a rather inactive youth centre that provides little stimulation for the local adolescents. The préfecture is still without a library, and although this is neither a cause nor a consequence of the high illiteracy rate, there is nowhere for a person to borrow reading material. The cafés provide a refuge for the préfecture’s men, but there are few places, other than the streets and gardens, where women, children, and young adults can spend their time. Like many other so-called quartiers populaires, SYBA has a proportionately higher number of mosques than more affluent areas – over 50 – and many men and women consider themselves deeply religious.
My association with Sidi Youseff Ben Ali began in 2000, as an intern for a Montreal-based NGO called Alternatives. I had been assigned to carry out work for a local development association in Marrakech, and was invited to spend a night with a colleague’s family in the préfecture. My supervisor jokingly said that I would be experiencing the real Morocco, spending time in the quartier populaire that had been home to the worst of the city’s criminals during the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, “SYBA” had been compared to the Arabic word ciba, which means “lawlessness” or “ungoverned”. During the 1984 riots in Marrakech and Tetuaoen, which occurred over food shortages due to a serious drought and lack of government conciliatory measures, a handful of residents from SYBA painted the face of King Hassan II on a donkey, which was then paraded through the streets. Hassan II later appeared on television, denouncing the blasphemous act, and described the people of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali as “savages”. The King was determined to show that the dissenters would not get away with such a terrible act, and SYBA became a “ghetto”, through both state repression and continued neglect.

Although they were used to seeing tourists in Marrakech, I was quite an anomaly to the people I met in SYBA, as there are few reasons to visit the area from a tourist’s perspective, and the local authority does not permit tourism in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. The invitation to spend a night with my colleague’s family turned into a two week affair, and after befriending many people, I promised a return visit. When I finally returned in January 2003, for the purpose of researching this thesis paper, I was able to integrate quickly, as friends and colleagues were eager to see me, and help with my research.

I found that Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, in many ways, made for an ideal research area. First, through the previous contacts that I had made, I was a trusted member within my social milieu, and people felt comfortable to speak freely in my presence. Many people I met were pleasantly surprised to hear that I was staying with a family in SYBA. Second, le domaine associatif is a relatively recent phenomenon in the region of Marrakech, and more so in SYBA, and civil society organisations, which were given state approval in 1998 to carry out literacy training, are learning by trial-and-error the ways to engage with local populations. Third, I was aware of the local development association Ennour et Irfane, which has been providing literacy training to women since 1999, and was collaborating with the UNDP office in Marrakech, by implementing poverty alleviation strategies with the residents of SYBA. Furthermore, Amouna, a colleague that I knew from my initial visit was facilitating legal literacy classes with SYBA.
women, and was also involved with many other development projects in the area. I felt that all of these factors would provide an enriching research experience.

My research domains in SYBA consisted of the maison des jeunes where Amouna conducted her legal literacy classes, the locale of the association Ennour et Irfane, and my host family’s home, where I took part in numerous discussions that concerned literacy, and the pace of development in the quartier and in Marrakech. All three domains were located within a 100 metre radius of each other. My wider research domain included the pastry shops, cafés, the taxi stand and the street, where I engaged in conversation with many people about similar issues. I would also regularly visit the association Ennakhil pour la femme et l’enfant, where I had worked as an intern three years previously. They were an established association, and had been the only association in Marrakech to participate in the government’s national adult literacy program in 1998. The wealth of knowledge and information that I acquired through speaking with the President and staff members, most of whom were former animatrices, was invaluable to my research. Finally, I spent many an afternoon and night at the famous Jemaa el Fna that is frequented by locals and tourists alike, with friends that I had met through my research, and I was able to complete a fairly detailed picture of the local development associations and the literacy classes that they offered, as my colleagues provided constructive criticism and suggested alternative perspectives.

5.2 Literacy as told from Sidi Youseff Ben Ali

Over the course of a generation, literacy acquisition and practice has changed drastically in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. Here, I describe these changes, and although specific to one area, I highlight five commonalities – some of which I have described in previous chapters – prevalent throughout the country. They are: (1) a reliance on literacy mediation in low-literate households and neighbourhoods; (2) a policy of universal education that since the 1970s, has allowed more children and youth – male and female – to attend school in both the urban and rural milieu; (3) an urban population with greater access to formal education and print media, which promotes reading and writing over rural areas; (4) a stagnant economy with a high unemployment among the 15 to 24 age range, serving to dissuade many families from sending or keeping their children in school; and, (5) a government that has recently sanctioned civil society organisations to aid in providing a national adult literacy program, which has had a notable effect on women’s access to literacy classes.
The family that hosted my stay in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali was typical of most of their neighbours, as they were relative newcomers to the peri-urban préfecture located next to Marrakech. The father and mother were part of a massive rural-to-urban migration, which has accelerated rapidly over the last half-century, and has been largely caused by drought and a changing, urban-focused economy. In the 1970s, the father had left his village situated thirty miles from Marrakech, to seek employment in the city. He was one of a fortunate minority to find steady work in one of the large hotels, bringing home an above-average household income. His wife, who had come to Sidi Youseff Ben Ali from southern Morocco, would later begin a small business that supplemented her husband's income. In the eyes of other families of their quartier, they were considered wealthy neighbours.

Like many Moroccans who are in their early to late fifties, the husband and wife were unable to read and write, and made use of literacy mediators from their neighbourhood when the need arose to complete a task that involved the written word. Similar to many other neighbourhoods situated in and around cities, the peri-urban community of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali was undergoing rapid change throughout this period, with the local authority providing more infrastructure to the area. The provision of services such as electricity, water supply and sewage, and the accompanying paperwork required greater assistance from literacy mediators to cope with the requirements of bureaucracy. Literacy mediators – notaries, public writers, and fqihis – who have a long history of employment in Morocco, were available to offer their expertise of the written word for a small fee. However, the husband and wife relied mainly on literate neighbours to carry out the paperwork required by the local authorities. Considered favours, literacy mediation was part of a larger network of neighbourhood coping strategies.

Over the last twenty years, the number of primary and secondary schools in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali has increased to accommodate the rapidly growing population. These schools provide the children and adolescents of the préfecture an opportunity to receive a formal education. Many children are the first generation of their households who are

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47 Morocco has a long history of literacy mediation, including both the formal and informal provision of transmitting and receiving literate media. Today, three types of professionals – notaries, public writers, and fqihis (Quranic specialists) – continue to offer their prowess in the written word to those that are in need of assistance with matters involving literacy. (Wagner 1993). There are also a myriad of other literacy networks – family members, neighbours, colleagues, and friends – who are relied upon to carry out tasks that involve reading and writing. These tasks may include filling out official documents to register a child at the local government bureau, or to apply for official status for a textiles cooperative or local development association.
able to read and write, and this phenomenon has drastically changed the relations of power among family members; by default, they assume the role of intermediary between their parents and local authorities. Although my host parents never had the opportunity to acquire a formal education, they realized the potential of an educated household in a modernizing economy, and insisted that all four of their children attend the local schools. After acquiring a reasonable ability to read and write, my host family’s eldest child became the “official” literacy mediator for most of the household affairs. Presently, all four children – the youngest who is twenty – share their reading and writing skills with their parents and non-literate neighbours.

As with many families in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, the children have benefited from the government’s policy of providing universal education, which includes post-secondary education. The opening of Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech in the mid 1980s has provided many adolescents from families with limited incomes the opportunity to obtain a post secondary education. All of the siblings from my host family will have completed post-secondary diplomas in the near future. Moreover, they have all become fluent in French, which is seen as essential to obtain work in the modern economy. The policy of universal education has had a dramatic effect on both urban and rural lives, regardless of the enormous differences in the literacy rates between the two milieux. The opportunity for girls to attend school with their male classmates has broken down the traditional gender barriers of formal education. The fact that my two host sisters and many of their girlfriends have received a university education is something that would have been extremely rare until quite recently. However, the statistics reveal that the level of illiteracy among rural children – and especially among rural girls – remains staggeringly high (refer to Appendix 2, figs. 4 and 5). Schools that are situated in a quartier populaire like Sidi Youseff Ben Ali or in the rural milieu are poorly funded and under-equipped. A significant number of children and adolescents from Sidi Youseff

48. Sadiqi (2003) describes four reasons why parents deny the opportunity for their daughters to go to school. They are: girls contribute to the upkeep of the household, such as minding children, and collecting firewood; schools are often located far from homes, and there is a safety issue regarding young girls walking to school; teachers in rural areas are exclusively male; the fact that their daughters will be interacting with males is disconcerting for conservative rural families.

49. Under IMF structural adjustment policies implemented in the 1980s to stabilize Morocco’s economy, budget cuts have been made to both the health and education sectors. Education expenditures per capita decreased by 11% from 1983 to 1989, resulting in a decline of 8.7% in school enrolment rates between 1985 and 1990. There was also a decline in school enrolment of 13.6% among rural girls (Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité 1999, in Sadiqi 2003).
Ben Ali will drop out of school due to the unlikelihood of finding work after completing their education.\textsuperscript{50} For many, they have no other option but to leave school and earn a meagre income to contribute to the household economy.

For the women and men of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali who have never been able to develop their literacy skills to the extent that they would like, and who wish at the age of fifteen, twenty, or forty-five to enrol in literacy classes,\textsuperscript{51} the national literacy program is one of two options. During my research, there were two associations that were providing women's literacy classes under the national adult literacy program – Association Ennour et Irfane and INAACH pour la femme et développement – although there were no men's classes that were being offered at the time. Men, I was repeatedly told, were not interested in attending literacy classes. I was also informed of an increasing number of women who were participating in literacy classes provided voluntarily by local development associations, women's organisations and recently-graduated students. On one occasion, I was able to visit a class provided by a recent graduated of Cadi Ayyad University who was teaching basic literacy skills to six women. She knew of three other women in her immediate neighbourhood who were conducting similar classes with roughly the same amount of students. Amouna's "functional" literacy classes with the wedding cooperative is another example of voluntary literacy provision.

\textsuperscript{50} For the young adult in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, life is one of uncertainty, and there is little guarantee that a university graduate from any discipline will be able to find full-time, meaningful work. With a 35.5\% unemployment rate among Morocco's population between the ages of 15 and 24 (\textit{Rapport du social} 2002), university graduates from Sidi Youseff Ben Ali and other underprivileged communities find it both wearisome and frustrating to find employment. Moreover, young adults with university diplomas will more likely find themselves unemployed than those who have decided to pursue an apprenticeship, such as a mechanic or a hairdresser. Both the eldest sister and brother of my host family have yet to find employment, and Mohamed has been looking for work for nearly six years. If his parents were wealthy, as he has stated on numerous occasions, Mohamed would be able to attend a private institution, and would have little difficulty to secure a position in a state company or private business. Many recent graduates from the University of Marrakech – and students from the majority of Moroccan universities – can only hope for the opportunity to receive a scholarship for studies abroad, where the prestige of a foreign diploma will facilitate entry into the Moroccan workplace – or that when they return from their studies, it will be only to visit.

\textsuperscript{51} The Moroccan adult literacy program is open to Moroccan citizens who are between the ages of 15 to 45.
5.3 Aït Ourir, Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite

As I became more familiar with the scope of the research in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, I was interested to observe literacy classes that were being conducted in the rural milieu. Migration had greatly changed the lives and livelihoods of many people in SYBA, and I was curious to find out the extent of the divide between urban and rural milieux. This would help to understand the differences in the literacy statistics between urban and rural populations. Moreover, I was assuming that rural women, who spoke mainly Berber, would be starting the literacy lessons with little understanding of both Moroccan and Standard Arabic, and I was therefore curious to see how women would take hold of new literacies. My goal was to hear stories of why women were setting aside time to participate in literacy classes, and what they hoped to gain by becoming literate. I was also curious to observe how development associations were providing the literacy training, and how they were interacting with the learners, along with other issues that were involved in providing literacy classes to rural villages.

The association Tasghimoute had a solid reputation for providing literacy training to rural women in some of the douars located around the town of Aït Ourir. I travelled the forty kilometres to Aït Ourir on one of the new Alsa buses that transported men and women, to and from the outlying towns and villages that surrounded Marrakech. This transportation system, financed by a Spanish company, was set up to stem the flow of migrants to the city. On six occasions, I was able to visit the three villages of Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite, where literacy classes were being held. These villages were located at a distance of 16 kilometres from Aït Ourir, seven kilometres of which was travelled along a rough, dirt road. Many of the local men were working in Marrakech, and returned periodically to spend time with their families. The village was without running water and electricity, and most of the families would subsist from growing crops – wheat, olives, and a variety of legumes – and tending livestock, such as goats and chickens. In the three cramped literacy classes that I attended, two of which had only small stools to sit on, I heard many stories about the learner’s motivations and expectations for attending these literacy training classes, along with hearing about the numerous development projects that the association Tasghimoute was proposing, or that the villagers were demanding.52

52 On some occasions, I was overcome with an incredible sense of guilt, as I felt that my presence in the three communities was giving the villagers a false sense of hope, and they were being led to believe that positive economic and social change was years, if not months, away.
5.4 The local development associations

The research that I undertook in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz occurred at a particular time and in specific areas, and I spoke with many people and observed countless events. The discussions that I had with the members of the associations' Ennour et Irfane and Tasghimoute, along with the liaison for the International Human Rights Law Group, made up the greater part of data that I accumulated from my overall

On one occasion, I was taken aback by a remark that the headman had stated in the village of Tourtite. He said that his village had finally entered the twenty-first century, after the first visit by a foreigner. I later spoke with the members of Tazrighmoute, and we agreed that we had to come to a mutual understanding with the villagers that I could not carry out the work of Allah. I will never know if we were successful.
They are all involved in providing literacy training to women, and they are often in contact with each other: Amouna has conducted workshops on the International Human Rights Law Group's "legal literacy" program to train the *animatrices* of both *Ennour et Irfane* and *Tasghimoute*, to facilitate the program with women in their literacy classes; and, Amouna, *Ennour et Irfane*, and *Tasghimoute* have worked together to develop a legal literacy program for non-literate women in rural communities surrounding Marrakech, although they have been unable to obtain funding. I spent a significant amount of time in the literacy classes that they provided, and I heard many stories of the learners' interests in the lessons, along with their relationships with their *animatrice*.

5.4.1 *Association Ennour et Irfane Marrakech*

*Ennour et Irfane*, which is translated as "light and knowledge", began providing literacy training in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali in 2000, although the association has been providing literacy training to women in other communities since 1998. The president, Madame Naima Bihane, is in her early forties, and teaches at a college in Marrakech and is a member of a prominent political party. She has been involved in *le domaine associatif* since 1994. The year that they opened their locale coincided with one of the worst droughts in the region since 1984, and many women and men were seen begging in the streets of SYBA. The association was the first of its kind to provide women with literacy, life and business skills development training, along with providing the tools to enable women to develop economic coping strategies through small business initiatives. Since 2000, the association has provided literacy training for 3000 women in the area.

Madame Naima Bihane has an entourage of dedicated women and men who are committed to the cause of decreasing the level of illiteracy among urban women. After opening the locale in SYBA, they conducted a *diagnostic* to establish how to best suit the needs of the women in that particular area. Through enquiries with 200 women that they met in the streets, *hammams*, and women's houses, they were able to determine the number of women who were interested in attending literacy lessons, along with their desires and expected outcomes for attending these classes. The survey was carried out discretely, as the local authority was concerned with what it deemed as information that was contrary to data that it had compiled. The survey found that 65% of the respondents considered themselves non-literate, and that 35% of the women were non-literate.

53 The range in ages of the respondents was between 20 years of age and 45.
divorced, which meant that there were many women who were the sole parents of their households. The level of unemployment among the women was 65%, and they discovered that the ability to read and write was not a determining factor for the women who were employed, as roughly half of the working women considered themselves non-literate.

Naima describes illiteracy as *un blocage*, and aims to have the association's **animatrices** provide not only the ability to read and write, but a **sensibilisation** to issues that directly affect women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. These issues include matters relating to the family, with a specific focus on the relationship between the wife and husband, to an understanding of the voting procedures during local elections, where women talk about their experiences with corrupt candidates, bribery, and false promises. At times, the association has invited a lawyer to conduct a workshop on women's rights, where she will begin the workshop by defining a "right", and where women will once again have the opportunity to learn by discussing their own circumstances. Naima says that literacy is used as a medium to discuss issues that affect the learner's personal lives, and that by becoming literate, women are more capable to both avoid and overcome potential hardships. As she has stated, "for a woman to become even somewhat literate, she will have more authority in her household and in her social sphere, as others will see her as an educated individual who can fend for herself."

The **animatrices** that Naima hires are aware that their work entails more than what the Secretariat demands from them. For Naima, an **animatrice** associated with *Ennour et Irfane* is expected to continue to provide literacy training even when funding from the Secretariat stops. During the Ministerial changeover, when the national literacy program was held over for the 2002-2003 year, the **animatrices** were asked to continue their literacy training voluntarily. Many of the association's twenty-five **animatrices** agreed to do so, as they were aware that finding alternative work would be very difficult, and because they felt that it was part of their moral obligation. Although with somewhat fewer learners, the literacy classes continued on a daily basis. As Naima stated, "if we begin to teach the learners literacy, and then abruptly cancel the program, we have done more harm than good."

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54 Divorce rates tend to be high in Morocco. As Davis (1983, p. 38) writes, "If a marriage is bad it is likely to end in divorce, an ever present threat for Moroccan women. Although the probability decreases with an increasing number of children and length of marriage, it appears quite
Ennour et Irfane's animatrices encourage the women that they meet in public to pay a visit to the association, in order to introduce them to the literacy and life and business skills development classes. Zakia, an animatrice who is twenty-four years old and who graduated with a degree in Geography from Cadi Ayyad University, stated that, "Little by little I talk about the classes with women I meet in Sidi Yous’f, and then I say to them, 'Why not visit the association? It's just next door.'" To maintain interest in the classes, the animatrices add variety to the lessons, and keep in mind the needs and desires of the learners, most of whom are between the ages of 25 and 45. Although roughly half of the women will come to learn the Quran, the animatrices will also cover reading, writing, and simple arithmetic, and will engage in discussions concerning issues that women face in the community. The three literacy workbooks that the Secretariat provides are used according to the level of interest that the learners show for the lessons, and those that are considered unrelated to the learners' lives are ignored. After a period of six months, many of the learners are able to read and write short sentences, perform simple calculations, and carry out tasks such as using the telephone. A newfound pride over their achievements, along with the diversity of topics that are covered in class, and the safe environment that allows women to discuss issues that are considered taboo by the larger society, has enabled the association to maintain a high rate of attendance over the last three years, with over 90 percent of the learners completing the ten-month program. Moreover, about 40 percent of the same women return for a second year of classes, which the animatrices provide voluntarily.

Along with providing literacy training, the association conducts lessons for women to learn hairdressing, embroidery, sewing and stitching. Ennour et Irfane has also collaborated with the Ministere de l'emploi on a program to provide short term solutions for women who fall into dire poverty, and are forced into mendacity. As part of a short term alternative to begging, a program entitled Lutte contre la mendicité provides women with small amounts of money to bake goods and sell them in the streets during Ramadan and other festive events. The association is also involved in the planning and implementation of a long-term project, which hopes to generate a collective income for some of the women who have participated in the literacy program. An idea which evolved through classroom discussions on potential money-making initiatives in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, eight women proposed a cooperative to the President, who then

common in most age groups. In a group of twenty-one married village women..., fourteen (or two-thirds) had been married more than once". 
acquired funding from the UNDP to finance the necessary equipment. The cooperative, which has expanded from an existing business that one of the eight learners had previously started, is providing the food, music, costumes, locale, henna, and everything else involved in putting on a successful Moroccan wedding. The Mariés de Marrakech applied for the status of “cooperative” in March 2003, and has begun with some success, to create a name for itself in the wedding business.

Ennour et Irfane wish to develop more long-term projects for women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, and strive to build on their growing reputation. Presently, their main goal is to become more professional, and build stronger relations with national and international agencies. They have begun to collaborate with other local development associations, which in itself is a rarity, and have released a study entitled, “Women and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean”. The study, released as a resource booklet for le domaine associatif in Marrakech, is a compilation of findings carried out by ten local development associations, which looked at the barriers to women’s economic participation in their social surroundings. Ennour et Irfane will face their biggest challenge as they prepare to open a multifunctional centre in their SYBA locale, where a permanent staff member will provide support and guidance to local women, on issues that deal with the family, employment, health, and education.

5.4.2 Amouna, the International Human Rights Law Group liaison for Marrakech Tensift-Haouz

The International Human Rights Law Group is an American agency that promotes human rights on a global scale, and has a regional office in Morocco that is involved in legal advocacy for women. Amouna is one of six Law Group liaisons, and coordinates workshops on human rights with local development associations in her region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz. She has held this position since 2000, after leaving the association Ennahkil pour la femme et l’enfant, where she had worked as an écoutante in the association’s drop-in centre for women seeking legal and psychological assistance. Amouna has contributed to the Law Group’s manual entitled, “Making Human Rights Real: A Legal Literacy Program for Women in Morocco”, and provides both literacy and legal literacy lessons to women in her community of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. She has been part of le domaine associatif since 1998, after graduating from Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, with the equivalent of a Bachelors in Geography.
As liaison for the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz, Amouna works with eight local development associations, and a number of agencies, to provide legal literacy training to women who are considered low or non-literate. The legal literacy program is comprised of thirty-five modules, and each two-hour module deals with specific topics that are related to the moudawana – Morocco’s Personal Code of Status – and the penal code. The program begins with an introduction to the concept of human rights, and then looks at women’s rights in relation to the family, property, violence, reproductive health, education, work, political life, and the media. As liaison, Amouna’s main role has been to train the animatrices from the eight local development associations, so that they can carry out the program in their own classes.

As part of her job description with the Law Group, Amouna has organized “civic caravans” that visit villages in the surrounding areas of Marrakech, which engage in discussions with young and older women on topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution, women’s rights, family planning, and the benefits of literacy and a formal education. Local development associations in various villages are contacted in advance to participate in the caravan, and are responsible for publicizing the event and providing a comfortable locale. Amouna, along with a team that consists of a lawyer, a health specialist, an animatrice, a psychologist, and a photographer, will facilitate discussions on any one of the proposed topics over a period of a few hours, and the participants are able to talk freely about issues that affect them in their community. However, a significant drawback to the civic caravans is that there is no other contact made with the village after the initial visit, which has led to a strong criticism of the civic caravan by the participating associations. The village women will express their emotions and the difficulties that they face in the village, solutions are proposed, the photographs of the event are taken, and a report is sent to Rabat. Moreover, the discussions are carried out in Moroccan Arabic, although many rural women are only able to understand Tashelhit. Amouna finds that the pressures of working for an international agency, where the regional office is overly concerned with its “international” image, limits her abilities to take the time to evaluate after each performance, and to plan for a more effective caravan.

Along with her work as a liaison for the Law Group, Amouna provides literacy and legal literacy lessons to women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, voluntarily. A proud resident and champion of her neighbourhood, Amouna organises legal literacy classes with about 50 young women who are taking sewing and embroidery classes at the maison de
jeunes, as she is concerned about their future in SYBA. The young women at the maison de jeunes, who are between the ages of 19 and 25, have all failed to complete their schooling, and are taking a two year business development course that is financed by the Ministère de la jeunesse et des sports. Amouna is aware that they face difficult and uncertain prospects in SYBA as single young women. Many women who are their age, because of poverty and an unstable family life, escape through marriage, and usually end up in similar or worse situations. Prostitution also poses a danger, and has become a growing economy due to higher poverty levels, and because of an increased demand for young women in the sex trade of Marrakech. Amouna hopes that by conducting legal literacy classes with these women, and by discussing the outcomes that can occur through hasty and poor decision-making, they will be better prepared to cope with their challenging life circumstances. Amouna is confident that the young women are heading in the right direction, as they are in the planning stage of creating their own association, called el Amane – meaning both “security” and “peace” – which will inform other women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali about these issues.

Amouna also conducts lessons with the women that run the wedding cooperative, which developed from Ennour et Irfane’s literacy classes, and helps them improve their “functional” literacy skills in order to carry out the daily tasks in running a business. One of the requirements that the association has placed on the cooperative, in accordance with the funding they receive from the UNDP, is to keep a record of their financial accounts, as well as to organize and display a calendar of events. Therefore, the cooperative, after acquiring a small locale had asked Amouna to conduct literacy training. The cooperative, which operates from a cramped room that is comprised of three sewing machines, a half-dozen chairs, and a few wedding accessories, is where Amouna provides the lessons from Monday to Friday, for an hour a day. Amouna instructs some of the members in simple arithmetic, accounting, and useful planning skills, while others sit behind sewing machines, peering at the lessons while the machines frantically rattle away.

They have begun to discuss practical ways to manage their finances, along with looking at how to increase their profit margins. Amouna is teaching them about credit, interest, and how to approach a bank manager to secure a loan. Although Amouna

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55 For more information on prostitution concerning young women and children, see “Child prostitution and the spread of AIDS”, by Peter Kandela (2000). The author discusses the problem of prostitution in Morocco, where issues of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, drug abuse, and a declining economy as factors leading to prostitution.
encourages all of the women to participate in the lessons, she realizes that some of them will be less interested in literacy, and will be more involved with performing the other requirements for the cooperative, such as cooking, embroidery, sewing, publicity, applying henna, and so on. This does not pose a problem for Amouna, stating that by definition, a cooperative looks after itself by cooperating, and all of the members are contributing in some manner to the collective. However, Amouna is aware of the members’ curiosities, and intermittently discusses the Quran, popular culture, and issues that have direct consequences on their lives in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. By approaching literacy in this manner, Amouna is able to include most of the cooperative’s members in some form of literacy training, by either writing passages from the Quran, or having them spell their name and the names of their children. She will often engage them with the various issues that she discusses with her legal literacy students.

5.4.3 Association Tasghimoute pour le développement et la sauvegarde de l’environnement Aït Ourir

Association Tasghimoute is situated in Aït Ourir, a town of 3,300 people, which is augmented by a further 10,000 people that live in outlying villages. The association provides literacy, life and business skills development training to twenty-two douars, which are all situated within a thirty kilometre radius. The association, which is named after a mountain that overlooks Aït Ourir, was formed in 2000, and opened a locale after conducting meetings in the maison de jeunes during its first year. During the year 2000, the association provided literacy training on a voluntary basis, and signed agreements with the Ministry in 2001 and 2002. For this reason, many of the learners have been able to take advantage of literacy classes for a period of two years. To date, the association has provided literacy training to approximately 2000 women.

The association has a board of directors that is comprised of nine members, most of whom are professors at the University and the various colleges in Marrakech. The association also has four permanent staff members, who work voluntarily to provide support and coordination to the thirty-three animatrices that work in the outlying douars. All of the animatrices have completed university degrees at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech from various departments, and they are all in their mid to late twenties. Although Tasghimoute attempts to hire animatrices in the douars in which they reside, most villages do not have anyone who is both qualified and willing to provide these lessons. Therefore, most of Tasghimoute’s animatrices spend a great deal of time
travelling to the two or three douars where they provide literacy training. This is quite unsettling for many of the animatrices, as they rarely have anyone to accompany them, and they feel unsafe to walk long distances alone.

As the funding from the Secretariat to provide literacy, life and business skills development training is the only source of income for the association, Tasghimoute works within a very limited budget to provide their programs. In most cases, the animatrices who work for Tasghimoute have little opportunity to find work in the rural milieu, and provide literacy training in exchange for the small government salary that they receive, rather than leave their families to seek work in Marrakech. Like the association Ennour et Irfane, most of Tasghimoute’s animatrices feel that it is their duty to help women to learn to read and write. As one animatrice stated, “Women are finding life very hard in their douars, and for me, it is a way to give something to these women to improve their lives.” They see their position as a “noble” one; however, many of the animatrices feel that the work of an animatrice is rarely satisfying. Village women perceive the animatrices as wealthy, and will often demand money from them. Moreover, many villagers see their animatrice as a “psychologist”, and expect her to solve their personal problems.

The animatrices with whom I spoke said that their main work objectives with their work were to introduce le domaine associatif to the rural milieu, decrease the level of illiteracy among women, and teach a little bit of the Quran. They hoped that their efforts would bring about greater equality between men and women in the villages. Although they have their individual teaching styles, all of them said that they allow the learners to propose different topics of discussion. Many village women are interested in discussing issues that relate to the problems that they face in their douar, such as health issues, registering a newborn child with the local authority, or how to obtain an identity card for a family member. Many women are also deeply curious about issues that are uncommon in their village, or that are considered foreign, and want to discuss topics such as divorce, television, life in the city, the Monarchy, and so on.

All of the animatrices rely heavily on the three government workbooks, although these books reflect little about the lives of village women. As many of the learners have been taking literacy classes for two years, they have become quite adept at reading the text and performing the exercises. They have now begun to teach other village women along with their children to read and write. Although there are few opportunities for women to use their literacy skills, many women travel to Marrakech and Aït Ourir from
time to time and are impressed when they can recognize the numbers on a bus or can read the shop signs and other public displays of writing. For them, literacy has entered into their "conscience", and one animatrice stated that the women would rather die than not be able to learn to read and write. Many of the women feel that it has become their personal right to attend literacy classes.

Although the aim of the national literacy program is to teach people to become fluent in Standard Arabic, the women who attend the classes converse in the Berber dialect of Tashelhit. Moreover, although the men have a greater understanding of Moroccan Arabic through their dealings with people in Marrakech, many women have very limited understanding of the Moroccan dialect. However, over a period of two years, the learners have shown little difficulty in learning the Standard Arabic from the workbooks, and have also greatly improved their understanding of Moroccan Arabic, through conversations with the animatrice and the village men. What Tasghimoute considers highly questionable, is whether they will retain any of their Standard Arabic, as women will be severely limited in actually using this language. The learners, deeply proud of their accomplishments, have expressed an interest to learn French, and state that they will then be able to read the directions found on medicine bottles.

The life and business skills development training that Tasghimoute offers is identical to the training that Ennour et Irfane conducts in SYBA. Also, many of the village women are interested in starting an embroidery cooperative, although Tasghimoute has little time to develop contacts with wholesalers in a market that is saturated with merchandise. However, the association has made inroads to contact wealthy families from the douars, many of whom now live in Marrakech, and has encouraged them to invest financially in their natal villages. Various families have contributed a substantial amount of money to pay for sewing machines and other related equipment, along with providing classroom supplies, such as chairs, desks and blackboards. In one village, a wealthy family has paid for the construction materials to build a school for the literacy classes, and the construction of a daycare.

The overall contact that the association and the animatrices have with the twenty-two villages, where they provide literacy, life and business skills development training, has helped Tasghimoute develop a high level of trust with the village leaders.\footnote{This is different from the primary and secondary teachers who had conducted literacy classes in their villages previously. Many of these teachers were only interested in the extra source of income provided by the government, and many would not show up to class.}
In almost all of the villages, the headman has the decision-making authority on all matters, and has the power to end the association’s relationship with the village women. Furthermore, as many villages have longstanding feuds with their neighbouring douars, Tasghimoute has been hampered in implementing collaborative projects to expand the scope of their literacy, life and business skills development training. For instance, a proposal to conduct joint literacy classes to Agjgal and Aït Oumi was sharply turned down by the headman of each village. However, Tasghimoute has taken great care to show sensitivity to local customs, and the association’s mode of conduct reflects a desire to accommodate the values and the present realities of their “host clients”.

For Tasghimoute, literacy is seen as contributing to a small part of the overall development of Aït Ourir. The aim of their work is to “mettre en valeur le région”, although, as they lack funding, they are limited to expand beyond the Secretariat’s literacy, life and business skills development programs. Moreover, the requirement of the Secretariat to constantly seek out new villages after each academic year, seriously impedes the “sustainability” of their endeavours. All of the learners have expressed that a ten-month literacy program is insufficient for them to develop the level of literacy that they would like to have. Moreover, with a lack of opportunity to practice their newly-acquired literacies, it is highly likely that these skills and abilities will not be retained. Tasghimoute is nevertheless committed to finding alternative funding sources to continue their relationships that they have developed over the past two years. Unfortunately, the future of the association will largely be determined by the success that the members have in finding alternative, wage-earning employment.

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57 For example, the association Ennakhil pour la femme et l’enfant had a great deal of difficulty when they began to coordinate literacy training in the rural milieu in 2001, as they were seen as “outsiders”.
6 Motivations, and classroom learning

6.1 Dreams, fears, and present realities: the lives of the learners, and their motives to commit to literacy training

The women with whom I spoke in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, Aït Toumi, Agjgal, and Tourtite, and who were taking literacy classes with Association Ennour et Irfane, Amouna, and Association Tasghimoute, ranged in age from 15 to 65, although most of the women were between the ages of 20 and 40. I spent the greater part of my time with the women who attended the classes offered by Ennour et Irfane, and some of these women were also members of the wedding cooperative. I spent an equal amount of time with the younger women who were taking the legal literacy lessons at the maison de jeunes, who were all unmarried and were between the ages of 18 and 25. It was with these two groups of learners that I was able to discuss, in greater detail, their hopes for the future, and their expectations for participating in the lessons. I had less contact with the three classes in the villages of Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite, as their remote location hampered frequent visits. The range in their ages was more discernable, and the classes were comprised of girls in their mid teens, to women who were in their early 60s.

In general, the animatrices would tell me that the older women came solely to learn about Islam, prayer, and the way to live their lives in accordance with Islam’s Hadith. For the younger women, their interests were to know about “everything”, along with having the opportunity to express themselves in ways that they were unable to do in their household or in public. This was generally true; however, I came to realize that there was often a combination of reasons for the learners’ commitment to the literacy classes, and they varied from one learner to another. Some women deeply valued the idea of becoming literate, the knowledge that they acquired, and the prestige that was associated with the ability to read and write in their milieu. Other women wanted to learn to read and write to expand their career opportunities, while others were less interested in the literacy lessons, and were more engaged with the business development classes. Some of these women felt that a combination of the two programs would diversify their economic opportunities, as they would be able to promote a variety of services, such as henna, embroidery, sewing, and so forth, and they would be able to provide their phone numbers to potential clients, and navigate their way through the city. For many women, the opportunity to break the monotony of the day, and spend time with their peers and
their animatrice, who was often seen as a role model, was more than an appropriate reason to attend the classes.

6.1.1 The women from Zakia’s literacy class

Fusila, who is in her mid-forties, had heard about the literacy classes that Ennour et Irfane offered from a neighbour, and she was encouraged by her family to attend. While growing up, she had convinced her parents to stay home from school, and had never developed her reading and writing abilities. As her own children began to attend school, Fusila was captivated by seeing her children’s enthusiasm and persistence with their studies. She made a vow to her family that she would learn to do what the other members of her family were already capable of doing. Her husband agreed that he would help her with her studies. After attending a few lessons, Fusila invited her friend Habiba to join her. Habiba, who was slightly younger and unmarried, had not been allowed to attend school by her father, and, after his death, she was free to pursue something that had been her dream for the last twenty years. Both of them highly enjoyed the company of the other women in their class. Moreover, Habiba felt a growing sense of self-worth, as she was a skilled embroiderer, and would teach the other women her trade during the business development classes that she also attended.

Sherifa, a married mother of four children who are all attending either college or university, had been invited to partake in the literacy classes by the president of the association. She is known in the community as a strong leader, and would be able to promote both the literacy classes and the association throughout her neighbourhood. Her family would joke that her interest in the classes had more to do with money than with learning to read and write. They would say that Sherifa was only looking to increase her contacts to promote her small business of organizing weddings. However, after a few months of attending lessons, she was able to make phone calls and write her name, and was generally pleased with her progress. She bought a cellular phone, printed a number of business cards, and began to vigorously promote her trade, which led to the women in the class to call her la businesswoman.

After three months, the animatrice began to assign the exercises from the second literacy workbook. Smaller in print, some of the women found that they couldn’t read the text, and Fusila would occasionally bring her niece to class, in order for her to help with the lessons. The young girl, chalkboard in hand, would write the words from the book on the chalkboard, so that her “student” could read the enlarged text.
Returning home, her daughters would continue the role of the niece, and helped with their mother's homework. Fusila's resolution to become literate was exemplary. She would later disclose that her passion to read was the result of the letters that her son would send from France. Although her husband would make known the news from her only boy, she felt that she was missing the essence of his sentiments, by her inability to voice the words of his handwriting.

Sumia, a young unmarried woman of twenty-five, began to attend the lessons, although she was concerned with being the youngest learner in the classroom, and asked the **animatrice** if there was another class that she could attend. She was the oldest of three daughters, and had been the only one held back from attending school. Embittered by her inability to read and write, she would often lash out at her mother over the decision to keep her at home. Her mother would respond by saying that her two sisters, who had recently graduated from university, are still unable to find employment, and have therefore “wasted” the last fifteen years of their lives; rather than argue with her mother, Sumia should be thankful. Shortly after Sumia began attending the class, another young woman appeared, and Sumia became comfortable with her fellow classmates.

Zakia, the **animatrice** of Fusila, Habiba, Sherifa and Sumia, has been very accommodating to her learners' requests, and each week, she would devote a lesson to the Quran, a lesson for arithmetic, and will then spend the rest of the time completing the exercises from the government workbooks. Zakia is sensitive to the aspirations of her learners, and hopes that their lives will become more rewarding by attending the literacy classes. She has seen some positive signs that the learners are benefiting from the classes. Many women now feel more confident to discuss the Quran with their husbands, and can confront them on views that their husbands may hold, which they now believe are untrue. For instance, they are now aware of certain conditions associated with polygamy. She also hopes that the wedding cooperative will prove successful, as many women aspire to become more financially independent, and they will therefore have more influence over household spending. All of the women who have children, desire for them to have the chance of a better life, and would like to ensure that their children have all that they require while attending school, such as new books and proper clothing.

Sherifa's aspirations have been largely fulfilled by attending the literacy classes. She has improved her reading and writing abilities to the extent that she is capable of
independently dealing with clientele over the telephone, writing down information, and
recording dates in her personal agenda. The number of weddings that she organises
has slightly increased, although it is too early to tell whether it is the result of her new
planning skills, and the added support of the co-op members. However, she feels
confident that the cooperative will flourish, as the other members become more
confident in their respective roles, and as it develops stronger ties with the community.
The cooperative’s members are also very excited about the possibility that their business
initiative will prove successful. They are now taking additional lessons with Amouna,
who is instructing them on topics that are directly related to finances. Habiba feels that
she has been exploited for far too long by a local wholesaler, who pays her the
equivalent of 25 cents to add embroidery onto each pair of leather slippers, which he will
then sell to tourists in the medina. The work is time-consuming, and she looks forward,
inschallah, to the day where she will be able to make a fair wage.

6.1.2 The learners from Amouna’s legal literacy classes

The young women who attend Amouna’s legal literacy lessons have had some
experience with public schooling, although they were unable for a number of different
reasons to complete their studies. For many, dreams of entering their desired
professions have largely vanished, as Moroccan drop-outs, unlike in Canada, are rarely
given a second chance to return to school. The level of literacy in Standard Arabic
varies, and some of Amouna’s learners have great difficulty writing basic phrases, while
others are capable of reading complicated texts. There are a few learners who speak a
little French, and the low number is analogous to other young women in quartiers
populaires, where their opportunity to speak French is limited. The number of years that
Amouna’s students have stopped attending school fluctuates from between two and ten
years, and many view their sewing and embroidery lessons as a way to escape the
confines of their households. They fear that when their lessons come to an end, they
will have no other future than what they have experienced at home, which many
describe as a life of “servitude”.

Fatima, who is twenty-one, dropped out of school a year before completing her
studies, and is one of a number of Amouna’s learners who regrets that she didn’t
continue. Her family had high hopes that she would become the first of their children to
complete a higher education, and hoped that by studying law, she would be able to
support them in their old age. At first, Fatima was very unhappy to attend the sewing
and embroidery lessons at the *maison de jeunes*, however, it has given her the freedom to be with other women her own age. When Amouna first proposed the legal literacy classes, Fatima highly encouraged the other young women to attend the lessons. She has become increasingly interested in *les droits de l'homme – et de la femme* – and her dream is to educate other young adults in SYBA about their rights, and how to defend them. Fatima is highly involved in the planning of their association, *el Amane*, which they hope to open after they are granted permission from the Ministry of the Interior. For her, the association will provide a space for like minded individuals to gather and exchange ideas. Her fear is that something unexpected will occur in her life, which she will not have the power to defend.

Shaima’s lifelong dream was to become an engineer like her father, however, in a field that is overwhelmingly dominated by men, Shaima had a negligible chance at being accepted at the university. She is a very lively, dynamic nineteen year-old whose passion is to make her own decisions in life, and does not wish for a husband who will oblige her to do anything against her will. Over time, Shaima’s self-confidence has grown from participating in the legal literacy classes, and she feels that her knowledge on issues that involve human rights, surpasses the knowledge of other young adults in Marrakech, even though they may hold university degrees. She is proud that she is able to speak with university-educated individuals about the human rights treaties that Morocco has signed,\(^58\) and about how she feels that they are continually being violated. She also feels that by participating in the classes, she has developed the art of discussion, and can argue her point of view in a manner that is both logical and thoughtful. However, she considers her inability to speak French a handicap, which she describes as “appearing like a donkey” among others who are capable of speaking the language. She would like Amouna to begin instructing French, and also desires to learn English.

Hikmes is one of a growing number of Amouna’s learners who has begun wearing the veil, which has surprised Amouna, although she feels that it is a combination

\(^58\) Morocco has signed all six of the principal international human rights treaties. They are: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (signed on 3rd May, 1979); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (3rd May, 1979); The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (21st June 1993); The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (18th December 1970); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (21st June 1993); The Convention on the Rights of the Child (21st June 1993) (UNDP 2002).
of pressures from the home, peers, and the growing presence of an Islamist movement in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. Like most of the learners, she enrolled in the sewing and embroidery lessons to be able to interact with other young women. Hikmes now aspires to facilitate legal literacy lessons in the same style and manner as Amouna, so that she can educate other young women on sexual exploitation, prostitution, and the trafficking of young women in Morocco. She admires the fact that Amouna has the command to direct the group’s discussions to prove a point, and has begun taking a decisive role with their association, by facilitating the meetings, and having the group plan for the future. Hikmes hopes that she will be able to marry a devout Muslim; however, she is fearful of the present economic climate, which severely limits the potential for a young married couple to be financially secure. She also feels that the economic crisis fosters a societal anxiety and uncertainty, which she believes has resulted in an increase in household violence.

Amina, who is originally from Aït Ourir, began participating in the legal literacy lessons after she heard that Amouna would discuss Islam, and its relation to civil liberties and human rights. She feels that the economic instability of Morocco is the result of the changing role of women, who now make up a large percentage of the labour force. Amina believes that young women are in a state of paralysis, lost between “the two realities of work and the family”, and are unaware of how to best contribute to society. Amina feels that a woman should be well educated to carry on the role of the family’s educator, teaching her children the appropriate values as they are outlined in the Quran. She also feels that the discussions concerning human rights are valuable and necessary, and believes that everyone in Morocco should be entitled to the same basic human rights. Amina considers that the first step towards realizing the rights of all Moroccans, is by valuing Morocco’s diverse language composition. She has proposed to Amouna that they should be learning French, and has even suggested that they learn the Berber dialect of Tashelhit, so that their association can accommodate the needs of young Berber women. She has described her views as un développement démocratique.

Selwa shares the dream that many young Moroccans hold, which is to be able to emigrate to Europe and make a great deal of money. She then wishes to return to SYBA to show off her newly-acquired material possessions. For Selwa, acquiring money is the stepping stone to a new life, and moving into a higher social stratum. An affluent life earns respect from others, and she fears that if she does not attain her
dream, she will continue to lead a life that she sees as wholly unsatisfying. For Selwa, the discussions that the group has on human rights mean little for the residents of SYBA, where the authorities show a disregard for the rights of the "poor" inhabitants. She feels that she will be in a greater position to promote an equality among her people if she is able to fulfil her dream, where she will spread her wealth throughout the community. She knows that completing the two-year sewing and embroidery program will not enhance her livelihood, and she may end up in a worse situation than before. For her, an end to the lessons will mean an end to the interactions with the other young women. Her criticism of the legal literacy classes has been that although they have made the learners aware of their rights, the classes have given them a false sense of empowerment, which will dissipate with their return to the full-time caretaking of the household. She believes that the classes will mean nothing to the young women, or, that they won’t be allowed to mean anything, when they marry, and become “daughters” in their husbands’ families.

Many of the young women in Amouna’s legal literacy classes hold the same aspirations, in that they want husbands who will treat them with respect, and allow them the freedom that they experience with each other in the classroom. They are also aware of the blatant inequalities between the rich and poor, from those who are able to afford the lifestyles and the villas of the Palmeraie, to their own dispositions that come from residing in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. Moreover, they are branded by their inability to communicate in any language other than Moroccan Arabic. They know that the present political and economic situation will never afford the majority of them an opportunity to realize their dreams: Shaima will never be an engineer; Selwa will never have the opportunity to leave the country; Hikmes can only hope to marry an understanding husband, who will allow her to work in le domaine associatif; and so on. They have come to the legal literacy classes from a business development program that they see as solely providing an escape from the home, and they are fearful of when it will end. For many, creating an association to continue their social interactions, and to involve other young adults from Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, is their only source of hope for the near future.
6.1.3 Rural ambitions: stories from Ait Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite

The anecdote that the women wanted to tell me the first day I visited a class in Tourtite, was the experience that one of the learners had with an optometrist in the town of Ait Ourir. Her son was having difficulty with his eyes, and complained that he saw everything through a blur. After travelling sixteen kilometres to the clinic, the mother began explaining her son's predicament to the optometrist. There was confusion between the two parties, as the son and his mother could only speak Tashelhit, and the optometrist could not. Finally, with the help of a patient who spoke Arabic, the optometrist was able to understand the problem. She hastily examined the boy's eyes, and then told the "translator" to tell the mother, a pair of glasses would cost far more than she was able to afford, and moreover, her son would have no use for the glasses.

This story largely explains the first few minutes of my encounter with the class in Tourtite, and the quandary that many of the women from the other villages would later express to me. As I was unable to introduce myself to the learners, they understood that I spoke neither their first language, Tashelhit, nor Moroccan Arabic. I was then asked to explain why I did not want to learn "their" language. I responded by saying that I was keen on learning both Tashelhit and Moroccan Arabic, although I was having enough trouble with French, and that I would need a little extra time to learn two other languages. As Samira (my translator) made known my response, I felt a sense of relief envelop the classroom. The veritable ice had been broken, and I was made welcome in the class. Khadija, a learner whom I would get to know quite well, reminded the animatrice of the importance for them to learn languages other than the Standard Arabic that was being taught in the class: an opportunity to speak with someone such as myself, would never again be wasted.

From the demoralizing statement of the optometrist, to my own confessions of why I was unable to speak to them in their first language, it becomes undeniably clear to see why the women are motivated to participate in literacy training. Some of the learners in the classroom described "illiteracy" as a nightmare, and said that they would rather die than remain "illiterate". They were aware that the connotations of the term illiterate implied "ignorant", "incapable", and "backwards". For many, literacy encompassed a wider understanding of "development". My first visit to the village of Agjagal was considered a monumental event, in that "the douar was finally entering the
To demonstrate that they were capable of reading, writing, and speaking the language of the official Moroccan discourse, was to dispel the myth that they were neither backward, nor ignorant.

I was told another salient story in the classroom of Aït Toumi, in how the learners remarked at how the distances between Aït Ourir, Marrakech, and their village had receded. The time and effort to visit Marrakech now seemed trivial in comparison to previous visits that were seen as arduous and required careful planning. Many women said that due to the severity of the drought and an increase in the cost of living, their husbands were now living and working in Marrakech, and would return occasionally to visit them. All of the women were aware of the “comforts” of life in the city, which included running water, electricity, a range of products, and television. When the headman of Aggjal asked a learner why she was discussing the issue of water provision, which he considered a man’s domain, she responded by saying that they wanted to do laundry like “everybody else”. She went on to say that, in comparison to their urban neighbours, life in the douar had become very difficult, and they were keen to participate in the development that Marrakech had undergone.

A significant reason for the motivation shown towards the literacy training was the absence of formal schooling in the villages of Aït Toumi, Aggjal and Tourtite. Many of the women attended the literacy training in order to help their children with their studies. The nearest schools were located in Aït Ourir, and students from the villages were required to stay in the boarding rooms, as there was a lack of daily transportation to accommodate the number of students. Many of the villages' children found that it was difficult to integrate into student life in Aït Ourir, and the drop-out rates were very high. Children would attend school for a few years, and would then return to their villages. Concerned that their sons and daughters would never receive a formal education, and face the stigma that they felt would plague the next generation of the douars’ “illiterate” inhabitants, the written Arabic and arithmetic that the women learned from the animatrices, which was taken from the three literacy workbooks, was then passed on to their children.

The three workbooks also described the ability to read and write as “prestigious”, and that becoming literate meant the capacity to develop a person’s means of

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59 See footnote 52.
production. In Aggjgal, an idea had been proposed by the village leader prior to the literacy classes, to start a business that would sell sheep to neighbouring villages. While discussing rural income-generating schemes from the third workbook, a learner suggested that the class revive the idea of selling sheep locally, by starting a so-called cooperative, which had been described in the workbook. The cooperative would enhance the image of their village, and would provide the women with a much-needed income; their husbands could return from Marrakech, and they could demonstrate their literate abilities, with pride, to the surrounding communities. The animatrice was asked to approach Tasghimoute with their idea, in order for the association to transform the proposition into a successful business venture. It was felt that by exhibiting the progress that had resulted from participating in the national adult literacy program, the regional authority would be more inclined to provide electricity and water infrastructure to Agjgal, ahead of other villages that were waiting to receive the same amenities.

On the whole, the women were motivated to attend the twice-weekly literacy classes as they provided a forum where development issues were discussed in great detail, and various ideas about how to improve the women’s lives in their douars were debated to great length. The learners saw the literacy classes as a safe learning environment to express their concerns and their own difficulties in the douar, and to hear advice on how to overcome them. Questions pertaining to health, family, the regional authority, ecology, and religion, were all covered. The classes served as a medium to educate their own children, and although the rates of completion were low among the children that attended school in Ait Ourir, the learners were diligent in attending the lessons. Literacy for many, was an irrefutable keyword to wider discourses on development, and the classroom allowed the women to construct images of the future, from promises that were broadcast by the official development treatise. They had discussed development at length, and they were now awaiting “Figo, Ronaldo, et la parabole”.61

60 The third workbook, page 186.

61 Figo and Ronaldo are world-famous soccer players who play for the Italian club, AC Milan. “La Parabole” is the French term for satellite dish.
6.2 The classroom dynamic

Whether the term used is animatrice, teacher, facilitator, educator, instructor, or role model, the abilities of the literacy provider will determine the level of literacy practice in the class, and will influence the extent of the literacy that is employed outside, in the community. The job of the animatrice is to teach reading, writing, and numeracy, and she will impart knowledge that is used to both appreciate and manipulate (Friedmann 1987, p. 41), and will be valued for its material and symbolic life-consequences. The learners play as much of a role as the animatrice, as their motivations to participate in the discussions will shape the depth and direction of the subjects that are covered in class. They too, are valuable contributors to the knowledge and experience within the classroom.

The instruction that the animatrice will undergo in the one-week training period prior to the literacy classes, will play a significant role in determining the quality of the literacy training, and she will bring the training, her past experiences, aptitudes, and personal convictions to the classroom. A poorly trained animatrice may negatively affect the classroom dynamic, however, an animatrice who is unmotivated in her position, will unquestionably disparage the motivation of the learners. For the animatrice to ensure that the learners' expectations of the literacy classes are fulfilled, a fine balance must be maintained to accommodate the diversity of needs and desires within the classroom. Not only will she have to carry out the lessons from the three literacy workbooks, the animatrice must present them in an interesting manner to arouse the learners' curiosities, and engage in discussions that relate to their lives.

My frequent observations in the classroom revealed a diversity of topics, and the discussions varied from one class to another, as each animatrice had a unique relationship with her learners, and each class had its own dynamic. The subject matter would range from spelling to addition, marriage to divorce, inheritance rights to money-making ventures, housing to transportation, weddings to funerals, Tashelhit and Arabic to French, the Quran, poverty and the Monarchy, cooking, Ramadan, chickens, drought, goat husbandry, and so on. During one lesson with the young women from the maison de jeunes, they were both excited and curious to know la vérité about homosexuality.62 Above the diversity of issues, four themes – reading, writing, and simple arithmetic;

62 One of the young women in the class asked me, “what did it mean when Canada legalized marriages between two men?” She had seen the discussions concerning same-sex marriages in Ontario and Quebec on the news.
learning to discuss; Islam and the Quran; and human rights – were common to the literacy classes. Although they do not represent all of the topics that were covered, the themes portray: (1) the teaching styles of the animatrices; (2) the rapport that they had with the learners; and, (3) the classroom learning that actually occurred.

6.2.1 Reading, writing, and simple arithmetic

In Zakia’s class at the locale of Ennour et Irfane, reading and writing were performed by repetition. A learner would read a sentence or passage from one of the three workbooks, and after, another learner would repeat the same passage, or was assigned to read the following one. To practice writing, each learner would write the assigned paragraphs, sentences, or words into a small notebook, which had been copied from the blackboard. Zakia would spend sufficient time with each of the learners until she felt that they had succeeded with the task, and would then proceed to another example. Simple arithmetic was taught in the same manner, and the learners would practice basic calculations until all of them had accomplished the assignment. This method of teaching, learning by rote, is common in all of Morocco’s educational institutions, from Quranic schools, adult literacy classes, to universities.\(^\text{63}\)

During the arithmetic lessons in Amouna’s class with the women from the wedding cooperative, Amouna would have the learners pretend that they were in the souk, and would use commonly purchased items to demonstrate various calculations. For example, in my first visit to the classroom, many of the learners were having trouble with the concept of “zero”: on the blackboard was written the equation “401+9”, and in their notebooks, they had written down the answer “50”. Amouna then gave the example of buying oranges, asking the learners the number of oranges that they would have if they bought 10, and then gave 2 to their neighbour. She continued by drawing examples on the blackboard, making each example slightly more difficult than the previous one. She would tell me later that although they deny that they are unable to perform simple calculations, by bringing the souk to the classroom, the women “suddenly become” accomplished mathematicians.

Najat, a graduate in Biology from Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, who had taught classes for Tasghimoute in the village of Ait Toumi for two years, started using

the Secretariat's workbooks during the second year of classes, after *Tasghimoute* had signed the agreement with the Secretariat. The women in the class were much more advanced than both Amouna and Zakia's learners, and after spending a year learning to read and write from books written for children, many of them had little difficulty with the intermediate and advanced workbooks provided by the Secretariat. The rote method of teaching to read and write was employed, and the learners would work in pairs to complete the exercises from the workbooks. Some of the images that were depicted in the workbooks did not represent what they were intended to symbolize. For example, the learners were oblivious to an illustration of a vase, and as in similar cases, Najat used the word in *Tashelhit* to describe the image, while she drew the Berber archetype for “vase” on the blackboard.

6.2.2 Learning to “speak”

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who spent many years conducting field work in Morocco, remarked that Moroccan interpersonal relations were, “before anything else combative, a constant testing of wills as individuals struggle to seize what they covet, defend what they have, and recover what they have lost” (1983, p. 114). Geertz, who could “only claim, and hoped to be believed”, described “all but the most idle conversation the quality of catch-as-catch-can in words, a head-on collision of curses, promises, lies...proverbs, arguments, analogies, quotations...which not only puts an enormous premium on verbal fluency but gives to rhetoric a directly coercive force...” (op. cit.). An accurate, if not lively depiction of human interaction, the Moroccans that I know would agree unequivocally with his reasonably “thick description” of social affairs. This is not to make a value judgement on Moroccan society as a whole. However, in my experience, I would describe their discursive nature as colourful, vibrant, confrontational, and theatrical.

The description by Geertz would not apply to every classroom that I visited. In fact, the only classes that truly reflected his description were the legal literacy classes that Amouna provided at the *maison de jeunes*, which fit the description perfectly, and I assume, were often made worse by my presence. What the description does allow for, is to understand Amouna’s comments that her role was to “teach the young women how to speak”, or, as I understand it, to develop their skills at debating, and their agency. Zakia from *Ennour et Irfane*, and the *animatrices* from *Tasghimoute*, described their work in a similar fashion. In the classroom environment, this would include accepting
differences of opinion, listening and waiting for others to finish what they had begun to explain, and countering someone's argument with a rebuttal that was thoughtful and logical. The approach that I saw, over a period of time, was that the animatrices were encouraging actions, interactions, and relationships that were fostering a sense of a common good.

The animatrices were also developing the learner's agency for use in the wider community, and the discussions that were being held within the classroom, had broader implications. For Amouna, her discussions on the rights of women in Morocco were meant to evoke immediate and direct action: the learners had an obligation to discuss issues such as subordination, violence, and corruption, with women and men outside of the classroom. For Zakia, her lessons with her learners from Sidi Youseff Ben Ali were meant to promote Islam, prayer, and the basic principles that are recited in the Quran. For Najat and Zahara, their underlying message was to capture the essence of the moment, by recognizing appropriate opportunities where classroom topics such as "household relations", discussed with husbands and neighbours, would bring about the desired changes in family life. In most cases, the animatrices had specific objectives in relation to the classroom discussions, and they were in many ways teaching, and to some degree indoctrinating, the learners to "think correctly" (Freire and Macedo 1987, p. 76), and act accordingly. However, the learning objectives that the animatrices had for the women in the class did not always bring about results that were intended.

During the first class that Najat held in Aït Oumi, she began by asking the women what they hoped to gain by attending the lessons. She asked each learner to describe her expectations, and then drew common themes from the women's requests. She explained how she hoped to fulfill their wishes, and would try to incorporate the learner's desires, which were to know more about the Quran, money-making matters, their legal entitlements, and educating their children. They were also eager for Najat to find solutions to their personal problems. Najat was aware that the association was regarded with some suspicion from the learners' husbands and other family members, and took great care to avert potential conflicts. A discontented husband, who felt that the classes were treasonous to the values of the household or village, could start a rebellion; the association would be asked to leave, and the husband's wife would probably suffer.

In the beginning, Najat would hold back on information that she felt could prove harmful to the women under certain circumstances, and limited her discussions on legal entitlements, to basic matters such as obtaining identity cards, declaring newborn
babies, informing the regional authority of a change in marital status, and so on. As the classes progressed, and she felt confident that the learners were beginning to understand what Najat described as the "power" of expression, along with its potentially negative effects, they began to discuss topics such as voting and the role of the regional authority, which had previously been considered a man's domain. Over time, the women learned to discuss issues that were in the beginning considered hshouma. 64 They now offer solutions to women who have found themselves in difficult circumstances, by exploring the various scenarios that may arise from the proposals that they have suggested.

Zahara, an animatrice who is twenty-five and graduated from Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech in Geography, feels that she is very unpopular with the learners who attend the classes in the villages of Agjgal and Tourtite. As she has stated, if there was an election in the villages where all of the women were allowed to vote, she would not be elected. During a lesson on divorce, the learners were discussing two scenarios from the second workbook. Both scenarios involved women who were married to adulterous husbands, and questions from the workbook asked for solutions to resolve "Saida's" and "Fatima's" dilemmas. Saida had an advantage over Fatima as she had her own house, had a job, and was therefore able to look after her children without the help of her husband. Fatima was in a less-than-ideal situation, as she was unable to find shelter, did not have work, and had lost possession of the children to her husband. The discussion questions that were outlined in the workbook, made it clear that Fatima had no other option than to return to her husband, and to see if somehow, they could resolve their differences. Both the learners and Zahara agreed that this was the best decision for Fatima. However, the learners became increasingly frustrated with Zahara's insistence that Saida should try harder to please her husband, and that it was Saida's own fault for his interest in other women. This led to a classroom revolt, which was initiated by three young women at the front of the class, who began shouting, "but she tried three times!"

The young women who attend Amouna's legal literacy classes see her in a different light, in comparison to the relationship that Zahara has with her students. Amouna is highly admired, and the fact that she is married to a husband who allows her to continue to work and travel for the Law Group, makes her a role model in the eyes of the young women. Her contact with the students is honest and firm, and Amouna

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64 Hshouma means "taboo" in Berber.
strongly believes that the classroom dynamic creates a catalyst to develop innovative ideas, which can bring about positive social change in the community. To her, there is no "mistress/student" dichotomy, and the learners are highly encouraged to offer their own ideas and experiences to the classroom discussions. Amouna, like many other animatrices, employs the participatory approach to learning, and uses facilitation skills like "brainstorming", which she has learned by working for the Law Group.

Amouna will often begin by defining the topic that they are going to cover for that particular lesson. She will ask the class to define a specific word, scribbling the various definitions on a large sheet of paper, and through the synthesis of the ideas and jumbled information found on the paper, will write out a common definition. For example, during a lesson with a new group of learners at the maison de jeunes, Amouna began by asking the class how they would define a "human right". The learners have explored many other concepts, which include "equality", "liberty", "marriage", "divorce", "property", "polygamy", and "corruption". They have also looked at Moroccan law, and have compared it to the law codes of other countries. During one class, a learner asked Amouna the question, "where does all our money go?", referring to the widespread corruption that occurs within the government and the military. Amouna asked the class to share their own experiences with corruption. One learner explained how a man at the hospital had bribed a nurse to jump the queue, and how that everyone who had been waiting in line was irate. Amouna took the opportunity to explain that it was everyone's responsibility to point out such behaviour, which led to the discussion on what they could have done in that situation. Amouna concluded by saying that to remain silent, and to allow corruption to thrive in their society, was synonymous with being an accomplice.

6.2.3 The Quran

The Quran, which means "recitation", is considered the "only miracle in Islam" (Geertz 1983, p. 110); to recite the Quran, is to chant God himself (op. cit.). The Quran acts as a guide to living life as a Muslim, and for the overwhelming majority of Moroccans – more than 99% of the population are considered believers of Islam – life by the Quran, is everything. For a believer who is unable to read, the inability to recite the words of Allah, is a tragedy of immense proportion. Many of the women that I encountered during my research who were taking literacy classes, and quite possibly all of the older women, were doing so to recite the Quran. To learn a new ayaat, or verse from the holy book, for the purpose of recitation during prayer, had an irrevocable effect
on one’s life. The workbooks provided by the Secretariat, were testament to the importance of the Scriptures, as they were filled with descriptions, anecdotes, and ways-of-doing, all of which were taken from its pages. An animatrice who would not set aside time for the Quran, would not have students to teach; discussions on any of the topics that I have previously mentioned, would not have a reference point to situate within Moroccan daily life. In Morocco, Islam and the Quran, are omnipresent.

The Quran was used in different ways by the animatrices, and at times, it could be argued that it was being manipulated, or interpreted favourably, to defend a particular cause, or prove a particular point. Amouna would use the Quran to justify the rights and entitlements of women in Muslim society, by highlighting specific Surahs (chapters) and ayaats, which ran parallel with her line of reasoning. In Aït Oumi, Najat would make use of the Quran to preach the importance of healthy relationships with family and neighbours. Zakia would teach the Quran to ease the tedium for many of the women who attended the literacy classes in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. For her, the classroom recitation of the Quran was un bienfait, or an act of generosity. For all three of the animatrices, the Quran made up the focal point of classroom discussions, in that there was not a single lesson where a chapter or passage was not mentioned, to provide evidence for life’s little mysteries, or to re-affirm common occurrences in the daily rituals of the learners.

The classroom dynamic with the women that attend Zakia’s literacy lessons, is very much centred on Islam. Most of the women who participate in the lessons come specifically to learn verses for the purpose of recitation. During the afternoon lessons, the women will break for the Al-Asr prayer, and Zakia will bring out a large prayer mat for all of the women to pray together. Every Tuesday, the entire lesson will be dedicated to the Quran, and many women will bring small notebooks to the class, which are consecrated for writing down the different passages. At home, they will recite the verses that they have written down in their notebooks, for the daily As-Sobh, Ad-Dohr, Al-Maghrib, and Al-Ichaa prayers. Zakia informed me that during the previous year’s classes, she would spend two lessons per week discussing voting procedures for the local elections in SYBA. However, Zakia felt that the women were not interested in the subject, as their husbands would ultimately inform them of the candidate who would win their ballot. Instead, she hopes that by focusing on Islam, the passages and texts from the Quran will influence the lives of those who are in contact with the learners.
The Quran plays a large role in the legal literacy classes that Amouna instructs at the maison de jeunes. Each legal literacy session, whether the topic is to discuss “women’s human rights in the family”, “a right to freedom from violence”, or “a woman’s human right to reproductive health”, the Quran will be used as evidence to dispel what is perceived as the “natural order” in Moroccan society. For example, during the session that covers polygamy, Amouna will read from the Quran the passage stating that a man is entitled to four wives. However, she will highlight the verse which states that he is under an obligation to treat them all equally. Moreover, Amouna will emphasize that the equal treatment of each, must be done both materially and emotionally. The class will discuss the passage in greater detail, relating the passage to their own experiences with women that they know who have been in a polygamous relationship. The learners will talk about how there is always jealousy between the wives, and that the “new” wife will always receive preferential treatment. From the discussion, the learners will draw the conclusion that polygamy, as it has been outlined in the Quran, is not a favoured practice. With this knowledge, Amouna has said that women are able to dissuade their husbands from even thinking about polygamy.

The village of Aït Oumi where Najat has provided literacy training for the past two years, has been embroiled in a longstanding feud with the neighbouring village of Agjgal, where Zahara holds her classes. Najat and Zahara are unable to meet with each other in either village because the situation is so hostile between both douars. The feud has also hampered efforts by Tasghimoute to carry out joint projects, which includes an irrigation scheme to provide water from a source that is close to Agjgal, to the olive fields of Aït Oumi. Zahara and Najat resolved to alleviate some of the hostilities between both douars by discussing the passages in the Quran that call for respect between neighbours. They created a story about the cooperation that could exist between each village, if the learners were truly committed to the words of the Quran.

Their story begins by recounting that sincere believers of Islam are involved in more than prayer, and are in a never-ending search to find the good in others. Second, a practicing Muslim must avoid stealing and lying. Third, to work hard is tantamount to prayer. Finally, all of Earth’s creations have been a gift from Allah, especially true of water, which is essential for life. By discussing the story in class, both groups related the various themes to the volatile relationship that they have with the neighbouring village. In each classroom, they concluded that it is important to see the good in the villagers from the adjacent douar; they should not talk badly about their neighbours, as
what they say, may not be true; to work hard, together, and to share in God's gifts such as water, for the purpose of bringing to life plants for nourishment, is to follow the teachings of the Quran. Although there has been no end to the hostilities between Aït Oumi and Agjgal, the women from both literacy classes have begun a discourse on reconciliation.

6.2.4 Human rights education

"Human rights education" is less about a section devoted entirely to the education of human rights, and is more a culmination of the previous sections on learning the art of discussion, the Quran, and the other stories that I have presented concerning the discussions on human rights in the classroom. Amouna's lessons on legal literacy would be considered the only "pure" human rights education. However, as I have demonstrated above, the classroom experience allowed for a discourse on the rights of Moroccan women and men in a society where both the law, and culture, heavily favour les droits de l'homme. The discussions that the learners had on polygamy, voting, the Quran, corruption, language bias, violence against women, and the tenuous position that many of the women held by the mere participation in the literacy training, were important for three reasons: the knowledge that the learners acquired on the injustices within society was furthered, by coming to understand the diversity of actors involved in the economic, political and social subordination of women; a heightened awareness of where the learners themselves fit within their own communities, by discussing the juxtaposition of their relationships with family, friends, and neighbours; and, acquiring the means, know-how, and confidence to bring about positive social change, however incrementally, in their lives, and the lives of others in their social environments. In short, the knowledge that the learners acquired was provocative, and from the power of provocation, they felt obliged to take action.

Literacy training was then, both a medium and an objective of the animatrices. The objective of the literacy classes was to teach the learners to read and write, so that they could practice literacy in their daily lives. However, it was also used as a means to understand the rights, entitlements, and obligations of the learners, which was promoted through civic participation: respect for one's neighbours, reconciling conflicts, speaking

65 This is a story that was told to me by Rachida, who stated that both classes had come to the same conclusions after discussing the story as it was told separately by Bouchera and Rachida. She described the conclusions from both discussions (Bouchera and Rachida had spoken about the lesson that evening) as zoun-zount, which means "identical" in Berber.
out against corruption, voting for a just candidate, safeguarding young women from prostitution, creating the first women’s cooperative in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, and so on. Whether it was a debate in Amouna’s class on “what is a right?”, to disagreements as to how a wife should proceed with an adulterous husband, the learners were developing their abilities as agents of change, through their actual and contemplated interventions in the “on-going process of events-in-the-world” (Giddens 1976, p. 75). Considered “poor”, “marginalized”, “in need of development”, and “illiterate”, the women saw their participation in the literacy training as a step forward, “de sortir d’une période inférieure, à une période mieux que l’autre”. What the learners gained from the literacy lessons from a human rights perspective, and for that matter, any perspective, was what Zahara had described as “un renforcement et un pouvoir de la voix”, and what I have interpreted as the power of expression. What was also gained, was the firm belief that literacy, in itself, was a right.

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66 For the past twenty years, the various Ministries and development agencies, have introduced policies and programs in an attempt, as they see it, to bring poor women into development, with a focus on women from rural and peri-urban areas (see Mernissi 1987, Naciri 1998, Sadiqi 2003). The “illiterate” women who participate in the national literacy program, only become “literate”, after passing a small oral literacy test, which is administered in the learner’s class by an inspection officer from the Direction de la lutte contre l’analphabétisme. Many of the women that I spoke with, unfortunately, would describe their dispositions as “poor” and “marginalized”.

67 During a legal literacy lesson where they had been talking about the term “development”, or “tatour” in Moroccan Arabic, Selwa said that to her, literacy training was meant to “leave an inferior time and place, and to go somewhere better”.

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7 The community in the classroom – outcomes in progress

If the animatrices saw the provision of literacy training as an objective, and as a medium to promote other objectives, such as self-reflection, civic participation, or encouraging dialogue between family members, I would argue that the learners themselves saw the literacy classes in a similar fashion. Whether the core objective was to learn to write, participate in a group project, recite verses from the Quran, or to spend time with friends and neighbours, literacy training was often a means to pursue further objectives. For the women in Zakia’s literacy classes who had sought to create a money-making venture for themselves, presenting the idea to Naima to acquire funding and support, held promise for the realization of their shared ambitions. They were conscious of the financial opportunity and the expertise that a local development association, catering to women’s needs in their quartier populaire, could provide them. For Amouna’s learners, the opportunity to continue their involvement in the legal literacy training, after their sewing and embroidery courses had come to an end, was to propose to Amouna the idea of a young women’s association at the maison de jeunes. For the women who participated in Tasghimoute’s literacy classes, the opportunity to engage the association for financial support for an intended cooperative, and to help them develop a market for their merchandise, was one of few solutions to acquire development assistance.

However, the precarious nature of their circumstances, in their lack of financial and material resources, and their scant authority to carry out their actions without restriction, left them at the whim of others. There were forces that could facilitate or stifle the end products that the learners were proposing. Whether they were the local authorities, a Ministry, or even the local development association itself, these often-opposing forces were capable of taking control of, and limiting the access to, the means that they required for their collective endeavours. If the research that I undertook represents similar circumstances in other parts of Morocco, which I believe is the case, then the restrictive nature of the political system, and an economy in crisis, severely limits the ability of women and their households from so-called marginalized communities to develop a strong basis of social power and escape “poverty”. Fortunately, my story of women’s literacy classes in Marrakech Tensift-Haouz concludes with promising impressions of outcomes in progress, which hopefully mirror similar occurrences in many more communities of Morocco.
7.1 Arresting developments in the Haouz

7.1.1 Les Mariés de Marrakech, Ennour et Irfane, and the Ministry of Employment

When the women in Zakia's literacy class had proposed the idea of a textiles cooperative in December 2002, the president of the association was quickly able to acquire funding from the Ministry of Employment's poverty alleviation program for urban and peri-urban areas, in collaboration, and under the administration, of the UNDP. The idea of a “women's cooperative en milieu péri-urbain” was appealing to the UNDP office in Marrakech, and Ennour et Irfane received the equivalent of $2,100CAN to purchase eight sewing machines and other equipment. The following month, a small room was rented close to the association, and the members of the cooperative, who had received three of the machines, began the arduous task of finding contracts to support their newly-established enterprise. Amouna was approached to continue the literacy training, which was provided on a daily basis, among the sewing machines in their cramped locale.

Ennour et Irfane played the role of intermediary between the UNDP and the cooperative, and they were required to hold weekly meetings at the association. The eight members of the cooperative were responsible for providing a work schedule, which listed the hours and days that they would be working in the locale. They had also been obliged to provide Ennour et Irfane with information on their economic status, as proof of their need for financial assistance, and were required to submit photos of themselves. The information was then compiled, and the cooperative portfolio was forwarded to the UNDP. These strict requirements put forward by the Ministry, were implemented to limit the number of fictitious proposals that were being submitted by corrupt and self-serving associations fantômes. Also, under the stringent terms of the Ministry program, they were not permitted to carry the official designation of “cooperative”; to obtain this status, the members would have to submit a formal request to le bureau des cooperatifs in Rabat. For the time being, they were a cooperative in name only. However, they had the security from the funding that was administered by Ennour et Irfane, which was paying for their rent and electricity, along with the other costs associated with running a small business.

During their first month of operation, the cooperative was unable to find work from the limited number of textile wholesalers in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. With a surplus of tailors and seamstresses in the area, only a privileged minority were able to succeed in
making a reasonable living from their trade. Sherifa suggested that they expand the cooperative to encompass her wedding business, and the members began to help with the minimum, thrice-weekly ceremonies.\(^{68}\) Realizing the shortcomings of their minuscule locale, they rented a larger space, and paid the landlord a lump sum of money for a one-year period. They had a room for the sewing machines, and a second room was available to conduct literacy training and hold meetings. Amouna was able to acquire a micro-credit from the *Banque Populaire*, and a video camera was purchased to film the weddings and publicize their business.

Amouna then encountered a Frenchman who worked with cooperatives in the *Maghreb*, and he agreed to meet with the members. With Amouna acting as translator, the Frenchman asked detailed questions about their intended business practices, and their expectations for the future. After the two-hour meeting in their new locale, he decided that he would help the cooperative with their *modus operandi*. His advice upon leaving was, "Don't compromise your prices simply because it's a women's cooperative – you will be offering them an added service-with-a-smile." A few days later, Sherifa announced that she had acquired a sizeable sewing contract, although the profit margin was minimal. However, the members of the cooperative were elated, as they finally had a reason to use the sewing machines. Two months after *Ennour et Irfane* had formally launched their project for a *lutte contre la pauvreté en milieu péri-urbain*, their cooperative *les Mariés de Marrakech* was in business.

Unfortunately, *Ennour et Irfane* did not share in the high-spiritedness of the wedding cooperative's women. The President of the association had been demanding that the members attend their weekly meetings to no avail, and her colleague would find the locale "empty", in that with each day that she went to visit, the metal shutter protecting the front entranceway, was pulled down to the roadside. She was under the impression that the cooperative was closed indefinitely, not realizing that it had moved its location. Finally, the members of the cooperative who were also participating in the association's literacy classes, informed the President of their change in address and their broadening business interests. Although alarmed, Naima felt that they could resolve what she saw as a communication problem. Naima requested a copy of the lease, and informed them that they had to follow by the rules that had been outlined by the Ministry. If the rules were not followed, the association could be accused of

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\(^{68}\) They would help with serving, *henna*, sewing, moving equipment from their locale to the wedding reception, etc.
mishandling state funds. After a period of two weeks, the women had still not shown up for the weekly meetings, and Sherifa had not delivered a copy of the official lease from the landlord. Therefore, Naima hired a moving van – ironically, the same moving van involved in the cooperative’s initial relocation – to return the sewing machines and chairs to Ennour et Irfane.

7.1.2 Creating Association el Amane

The young women who attended Amouna’s legal literacy classes had a concern: in three months they would be finishing their two-year sewing and embroidery courses. On June 1st 2003, they would receive a diploma from the Ministère de la jeunesse et des sports, and would return to their roles as full-time caretakers of the home. The thought was frightening. Over the last four months, they had hosted guest speakers from le domaine associatif and were intrigued to know more, and for many, were eager to continue their participation in Morocco’s growing civil society. Some of the young women in the class suggested that they become part of the wedding cooperative that Amouna had talked about. Other learners felt that the idea was nonsensical, as the cooperative was having its own difficulties in getting started. Shaima suggested that they start their own association, based out of the maison de jeunes, to continue providing the education that Amouna had begun with young women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.

The last four months had been rather special for the fifty-odd women who were taking part in the legal literacy lessons. In a quartier populaire that rarely has the opportunity to host guest speakers of this kind, the young women were privileged to listen to active members of the burgeoning civil society movement, and talk to them about their various activities. Jamila Ben Slimane, an advocate of youth and women’s causes and proprietor of a small bookstore in Marrakech, was the first of many guests. She spoke to them about the activities of a book club that she had started, and how the young members were hosting events in their quartiers. She also spoke to them about Fatima Mernissi, a friend, and an internationally-acclaimed feminist author, who had caused rumblings in the Muslim world over her “controversial” works. I myself, had invited a Lebanese colleague by the name of Jean-François to lead a workshop on civic participation, and he began by asking the learners, “What makes up a community?” I was also present for many lessons, and spoke to them about my own experiences in Canada, Morocco, and Tunisia, and what I saw as the challenges in their country.
Ahmed, a young man involved with le domaine associatif in Marrakech, gave a presentation on forming an association, and said that he would assist the young women with their association.

It was not until an up-and-coming Moroccan writer presented her recent book on prostitution and the trafficking of young women, that an agent de police paid a visit, to ask Amouna about her relationship with the “foreigners” who were frequenting the maison de jeunes. Unlike Casablanca and Rabat, where this comportement militant had become commonplace, the women’s legal literacy lessons were causing their own rumblings. I was concerned that I would cause harm by being a true foreigner, and asked Amouna if I should discontinue my research in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. She responded that the pervasive nature of the local authority was a fact of life, and no harm would come from this event; the struggle would continue. Shortly after, a film-maker from Germany, and a friend of the bookstore owner, shot footage of the legal literacy lessons for a documentary on women’s activism in Morocco. Ahmed returned and suggested that he would try to incorporate el Amane within an existing local development association. This would facilitate obtaining their official designation.

7.1.3 Silenced discourses in Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite

From the beginning of April 2003, Tasghimoute began to conclude their literacy classes in the twenty-two douars around Aït Ourir. Aït Toumi, Agjgal and Tourtite were among several villages that had benefited from two years of literacy training. Tasghimoute had provided the first literacy classes voluntarily, and had provided the second year of classes after the association signed the agreement with the Secretariat. Although the learners in all three of the villages insisted that the literacy lessons were needed for a third term, the association was required by the Secretariat to search out new villages, as the campaign to “eradicate illiteracy” was forced onward. Moreover, Abderrahim, a highly talented, educated, and respected member of the association, who was influential in creating the strong ties with many of the outlying douars, was awarded a highly coveted, public sector position, and left the association.69 However, Tasghimoute was able to have a dwelling built in each of the three villages, which was made possible from the capital provided by wealthy village families, for the purpose of hosting life and business development classes. As of December 2003, the association

69 His position was not the cause, nor was it related, to the work that he carried out in le domaine associatif.
is still searching for funding to purchase the equipment for the classes, and for a proposed textiles and carpet cooperative, which will be run by the graduates from the villages' literacy classes.

### 7.2 “Etre patiente, shwia-shwia”

After conducting five months of research, I left the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz, and Morocco, in June 2003. As I write five months later, there have been positive advances with the literacy classes, and with the outcomes that have developed from them. Although *Tasghimoute* is still searching for the capital to equip the village cooperatives, the young women’s association and the wedding cooperative have made significant inroads to creating something, dare I say, “sustainable”. As Sherifa once stated, patience has been the guiding principle that the members of the cooperative have followed from the beginning. Little by little, or *shwia-shwia*, they have established their own collective space, which will allow them to carry out meaningful work on a daily basis, and will provide them with the opportunity to make a little money for themselves, and for their households. The young women of Amouna’s legal literacy classes, with the assistance of new-found “colleagues” in *le domaine associatif*, are moving ahead, and have set the foundations for a local development association in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.

*Les Mariés de Marrakech* has been able to iron out the initial misgivings with *Ennour et Irfane*. The association was at first, eager to treat the cooperative as a showpiece for their innovative development practices in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. Realizing that they were interfering with the cooperative’s abilities to develop independently, Naima and her colleagues are now satisfied with fulfilling the minimum requirements that are put forward by the Ministry. By the same token, the members of the cooperative have begun attending the weekly meetings at *Ennour et Irfane*, and are providing them with the mandatory information that is sent to the UNDP, which includes a weekly work schedule, a list of new contracts, and their financial earnings and expenditures. The association and the cooperative have come to appreciate the symbiotic nature of their relationship. The affiliation with the Ministry and the UNDP carries with it prestige, respect, and “selling power”; what is good for the cooperative, is good for *Ennour et Irfane*.

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70 I have kept in touch with Amouna, Naima and her colleagues at *Ennour et Irfane*, and with the staff from Tasghimoute.
After waiting eight months for a reply from le bureau des cooperatifs in Rabat, the wedding cooperative has been granted its official designation, and they have been steadily increasing the number of contracts from the textiles wholesalers in SYBA, which are proving slightly more profitable than their initial travail. The members of the cooperative are looking to expand their business, and dream of opening a "wedding centre", where under one roof, they hope to host large wedding ceremonies, and continue working on their sewing and embroidery contracts. The Frenchman has returned on two occasions, and has spoken to them on further developing their business practices. He has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both renting and buying equipment, and has facilitated a few detailed discussions on the principle of amortization with three of the women who are in charge of the cooperative's finances. He has also spoken to them about investment options with the main Moroccan banks, and they have looked at ways to improve their marketing skills. He has also shown them examples of embroidery and other work from the different cooperatives that he is associated with, and has discussed with them on how to improve the quality of their merchandise.

The daily literacy classes that Amouna had been providing have dropped down to twice-weekly events, due to the time constraints of both Amouna and the cooperative. Amouna has focused on practical literacy lessons, such as simple arithmetic, and the use of literacy to publicize their business. Occasionally, Amouna will devote a lesson to the Quran, but every lesson will still incorporate topics of discussion that the women experience in their daily lives. For the most part, the major tasks that involve the use of literacy, such as filling in forms, or writing a letter to the local authority, are being performed by a neighbour who has agreed to take on the role of "official" literacy mediator. The eight women who have been with the cooperative from the beginning, have had an influence on the five new members, after talking to them about their experiences with Zakia's literacy training. The new members have shown an interest in participating in her lessons, and hope to take part in the national literacy program when classes begin, inschallah, in the New Year of 2004.

Association el Amane has been able to acquire an official designation with the Ministry of the Interior, thanks to Ahmed, who has successfully integrated the young women's association within a local development association from another quartier. Comprised primarily of young women and men, both associations have come together to talk about their activities, which has been very inspiring for the newly-established
women's association. Amouna has been promoting the association throughout Marrakech, and the young women have been given the opportunity to further their skills and knowledge of le domaine associatif. Ten of the members are carrying out internships with five prominent associations in Marrakech. Other members have participated in a two-week civic caravan, traveling with Amouna and her team of facilitators on their daily excursions to speak with women from outlying douars on health, education, and legal issues. About twenty of the young women benefited from a training session for young adults, who were responsible for promoting the participation of women – both voters and candidates – in the September communal elections. The ambitious project, entitled Marrakech a nous deux: pour une commune plus civilisé, recruited young individuals to talk to the Communauté urbaine de Marrakech about the importance of voting for the right candidate. All of the young women's unique educational experiences have given them the opportunity to leave the boundaries of Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.

The learning experiences for the young women have had a positive effect on their opportunities to practice their different literacies. The ten young women who are interning at various associations, are involved in everything from reading legal texts on the moudawana, to assisting staff members with the endless reports that the various government agencies and funders require, to improving their abilities to communicate in French. Two of the young women are assisting the écouteuses of a drop-in centre for women who have experienced violence, and they are learning valuable skills in listening, and empathizing with women who are going through unspeakable trauma. A number of the young women are carrying out the role of receptionist, and are learning how to communicate by welcoming people into the association, answering the telephone, using a fax machine and the internet, and taking down information. The women who have assisted Amouna with the civic caravan have been privileged to hear about the life-circumstances of women in the countryside. They have helped in preparing the locales by setting up the various display cases, and have learned a great deal by observing the facilitation skills of Amouna’s colleagues. The young women who have been involved with the local elections campaign have benefited by improving their speaking abilities with people from different social and economic backgrounds, and have improved their abilities to persuade others to see their point of view. They have also had the opportunity to meet with Marrakchis from many different neighbourhoods, which has expanded their knowledge of how other people live, work, and survive in the city.
The association has set in motion the provision of legal literacy lessons for other young women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. They have been discussing with Amouna how some of them would like to facilitate the legal literacy training, and they have proposed to host classes after Ramadan, sometime in December 2003. Amouna has suggested that she will facilitate the new classes, with the aid of two or three co-facilitators in each classroom, until she feels confident that they can present the information accurately without her. The association has been allocated a room in the maison de jeunes, and the members have begun to hold meetings in their new locale, to see how they can best serve young women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali. Their first venture into initiating a dialogue with their community will be to speak with young women during Ramadan, when the streets are filled with people in festive spirit. In this environment, they will encourage the young women to visit their locale, and engage in discussions on their fears, concerns and dreams for the future. Although Fatima, who expressed her trepidation of the unexpected during the interviews that I conducted with the young women, she, along with many of her other classmates, feel that they have a little more control over their lives. Shwia shwia, their contact with other people in le domaine associatif has broadened their horizons. After many of them had expressed to me that they wanted their lessons to go on indefinitely, they are now a little closer to realizing their aspirations in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.
8 Conclusion

The term "civil society" has become ubiquitous in all things that relate to the development game. The participation of local people, their organizations and their know-how, is now considered a fait accompli when it comes to planning, policy and research on this playing field. In Morocco, as in many other Muslim countries and other parts of the world, civil society has become synonymous with democracy, civic virtue, responsible governance and modernity: to engage civil society in the development of the nation is to move forward to new fields of hope, stability and prosperity. As a relatively new constituent of the Secretariat's direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme, le domaine associatif has become the driving force to seek out, motivate, and facilitate literacy training to those who previously had limited or no access to a formal education. In Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, Ait Toumi, Agjgal, Tourtite and other communities across the country, le domaine associatif has become the intermediary between the state and its citizenry, through interpreting local forms of literacy, knowledge, need and reality. In essence, it has become both facilitator and messenger in articulating local spheres of development.

In this paper, I set out to explain the ways in which local development associations provided literacy training to rural and peri-urban women in Marrakech Tensift-Haouz by describing the motivations, classroom learning, and the outcomes of the training, in order to illustrate the influence the classes had on the learners, and to a lesser extent, the local development associations and animatrices that collaborated to provide the training. I argued that the literacy classes served the multidimensional purpose for women to learn to read and write in Standard Arabic – and in some cases French, debate the politics in everyday life, and propose scenarios of inclusion, self-development and social justice. Furthermore, I suggested that by proposing these scenarios and acting upon them, the literacy classes helped women in attendance acquire greater access to social power. The stories of the classroom dynamic and the "outcomes in progress" illustrated various displays of social power, which included the actions of women in Agjgal and Tourtite who came together to find common ground in order to end hostilities between their respective villages; women who presented the idea of a cooperative to Ennour et Irfane and who have benefited from the financial rewards and the social status that has come from membership in a locally-driven, money-making venture; and, the work of Association el Amane and their human rights education aimed at young women in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali.
I would describe the work of Amouna, Ennour et Irfane and Tasghimoute as stories of success, despite the difficulties of Tasghimoute to continue with its literacy classes in Aït Ourir, Agjgal and Tourtite due to state funding restrictions. My travels in the region of Marrakech Tensift-Haouz and other parts of Morocco were filled with many other accounts of the determination and ingenuity of local people forming local development associations, and engaging in local development initiatives. However, I was also witness to numerous development schemes that resulted in failure due to the severity of circumstances of a particular village or neighbourhood, and the meddling and corruption of the local authorities that inhibited local people's actions. Moreover, I was aware of, and was asked to collaborate with, a number of associations fantômes that had been formed for the sole purpose of personal financial gain, through acquiring funds from the state and various international donors; I myself, would be able to benefit from le domaine associatif. Having had time to reflect on my experiences in Morocco, I realize the difficulties le domaine associatif will face in the ensuing years to maintain a balance to ensure its own self-interests, and the interests of the many women and men who have come to depend on their programs and support networks.

8.1 Le domaine associatif: opportunities and opposition

The promulgation of a new era of governance under King Mohamed VI has given the country hope of a brighter future after the tumultuous reign under King Hassan II. Moreover, the burgeoning of le domaine associatif has allowed many Moroccans – a large proportion who are in their twenties and thirties and unable to find employment – to contribute in the development of the so-called new era. Le domaine associatif has created a new industry of gender, education and environmental specialists, etc., all of whom vie for the attention of the state and various international agencies. Development conferences in cities such as Marrakech, Casablanca and Rabat create a frenzy of activity as local development associations, women's groups and other organizations scramble to have their professional conduct acknowledged by the international development community. Moreover, the partnerships forged between local development associations and international agencies often disrupt and weaken the established relationships between associations and their local "clientele", as different forms of clientelism with the World Bank, USAID, UNESCO, CIDA, etc., take hold. As international agencies are quick to forge linkages with prominent local development associations, a large number of smaller associations involved in genuine grassroots
development are left by the sidelines. Disgruntled and often disgusted with the partiality and corruption they observe, many of les bénévoles temps plein - young, dynamic and talented individuals - abandon le domaine associatif to devote their time and energies to other domains.

These were my own observations of what I then described as the “gentrification” of le domaine associatif, and most of my Moroccan colleagues agreed with my general point of view. They were quick to indicate other threats to civil society, and were particularly concerned with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which culminated with the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on May 16th 2003. Shortly after, the state imposed strict measures that curtailed the civil and political liberties that many Moroccans had fought to attain, and that King Hassan II had slowly granted during the last years of his reign. All of my colleagues feared the progress that had been made in regards to human rights - and especially concerning the rights of women - would begin to flounder, as tensions between the Monarchy and the various political factions - Marxist-Lenin, liberal and Islamist - boiled to the surface. However, they were perturbed by my suggestions of a “small is beautiful” notion of le domaine associatif; to become an effective partner with the state to promote social and economic development, le domaine associatif would have to focus on growth, professionalism and accountability, in order to counterbalance the paternalism and inappropriate practices that embroiled the current discourse on development. What they perceived as “development-as-Westernization” would further support a privileged minority, and would continue to alienate a large number of Moroccans living in marginalized and isolated communities (Rowlands 1998, p. 12). To them, the bidonvilles and quartiers populaires of Morocco’s urban centres were ripe for an alternative development. They were adamant that to bring about a more inclusive development that was conscious of Morocco’s cultural norms and societal values, it was imperative for the state and civil society to work together. However, thus far, they professed the main advocates and indeed instigators of such a development had been the Islamist intégristes, undermining a more “civil” society and its efforts to work in collaboration with the Monarchy, in a new era of so-called freedoms and opportunities.
8.2 A return to literacy

Literacy is often associated with *le domaine associatif*, as the 1990s saw the flourishing of Morocco’s contemporary civil society movement, which coincided with the government’s renewed efforts to establish adult literacy education as a national priority. In 1997, improvements were made to the curriculum in order to tailor the program to the learners’ needs and interests; in the following year, the state sanctioned *le domaine associatif* to help provide the national adult literacy program. Moreover, in 2003, coinciding with the launch of the “March towards Enlightenment” adult literacy campaign, a new Secretariat of *le direction de la lutte contre l’analphabétisme* was formed, imparting greater operational control of the adult literacy program to the regional academies and delegations of the Ministry of National Education. Among prominent figures of *le domaine associatif*, it was assumed that by working more closely with the regional satellites of the Secretariat, there would be a greater opportunity for *le domaine associatif* to influence adult education policy (Mrini 2003). Moreover, subsequent to the terrorist attacks in Casablanca, King Mohamed VI announced that by significantly increasing the literacy rate, Morocco would deter further acts of terrorism, and proposed the funding of additional literacy classes. “Eradication of illiteracy”, as the King stated, “is a requisite for citizenship” (Al-Aly 2003).

The *animatrices* with whom I spoke did not share in the same optimism as the changes to the program would suggest. For one thing, Najat, Zakia and Zahara felt that the program did not enable the learners to adequately develop their reading and writing abilities in Standard Arabic. Inspectors from the Secretariat’s *bureau d’études* rarely visited the classes, and seemed more concerned with the statistical outcome than with the quality of education. Furthermore, Najat, Zakia and Zahara were reticent to encourage their peers to take on the *animatrice* position, as the Secretariat was unreliable in paying their salaries, and both Najat and Zahara highlighted the trials and tribulations of teaching in the rural milieu. Perhaps more disconcerting was the feeling they had never received the appropriate training to instruct adult literacy classes. Although they were interested in further contributing to the endeavours of the Secretariat, with visions of working at one of the regional satellites to develop innovative teaching methods and facilitate the training of future *animatrices*, Najat, Zakia and Zahara were sceptical that such an opportunity would arise. Invariably, individuals from a higher social class with the required connections would obtain the coveted government positions. The President of *Ennour et Irfane*, Madame Naima Bihane, expressed hope
that her *animatrices* would find stable employment with an international agency to teach literacy, like the facilitator position that Amouna held with the International Human Rights Law Group.

In theory, a greater collaboration between the regional satellites and local development associations will result in the sharing of both knowledge and resources to improve the adult literacy program: *le domaine associatif* will be able to provide the Secretariat with a detailed synopsis of the ethnic, linguistic, and social contexts in which women live and practice literacy; in return, the Secretariat will provide the institutional framework to develop a more comprehensive and innovative program to reflect the social and economic realities of the program's learners. In previous years, Madame Naima Bihane has visited the national office of *le direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme* in Rabat to suggest ways to improve the program. It is almost certain that she, along with other prominent members of *le domaine associatif* in Marrakech Tensift-Haouz and elsewhere, will be in a better position to influence the Secretariat, when the regional offices take on the full responsibilities of the planning and implementation of the program in the upcoming academic year (Chbani 2003).

However, as Madame Naima Bihane has confirmed, it is unlikely that *animatrices* from *Ennour et Irfane, Tasghimoute* and similar associations will find employment in one of the regional offices, due to the limited number of positions that will be made available, and government hiring practices that favour a privileged minority.

To bring to a conclusion both the chapter and the research paper, the significance of local development associations and the provision of literacy classes has been to initiate a new discourse on women's literacy and development. This has come from the determination and ingenuity of many local development associations to find an operational space within often-delicate national and social circumstances, and the classroom dynamic of the *animatrice* and women in attendance, which has encouraged the articulation of local needs and realities. In large part, local development associations have been able to interpret and accommodate women's motivations to attend literacy classes, and at the same time, the classes have become important social organisations for women to strengthen their support networks in the community. The scenarios of inclusion and social justice that have developed from the classroom discussions, which are drawn from rural and peri-urban women's own perceptions of gender, class and religion, along with the consequent actions and everyday conduct that have taken form, have given rise to an "insurgent citizenship": the active participation of women in
“communities of political discourse and practice”, which has encouraged them to defend and preserve existing democratic principles and rights, and claim new rights (Friedmann 2002, p. 77). *Le domaine associatif* is in no way isolated in its pursuit to promote literacy and women’s rights in Morocco, and has the support and encouragement of King Mohamed VI and numerous politicians eager to witness a genuine new era, along with feminists, academics, artists and other women and men who make up Morocco’s civil society. Moreover, there are a growing number of international agencies and organizations of expatriate Moroccans, providing resources and maintaining pressure to help ensure that these positive developments unfold.
References


Appendix 1 – Methodology

The research was carried out over a period of five months between January and June 2003. With the knowledge acquired from completing an undergraduate degree in anthropology and an ethnographic methods course at UBC, I arrived in Sidi Youseff Ben Ali to begin conducting interviews and taking notes. The objectives of the research were to find out everything I possibly could on the following: (1) the national adult literacy program; (2) local development associations that provided literacy classes, regardless of whether the associations were affiliated with the national program; (3) the role and raison-d’être of the animatrices; and, (4) the motivations and interests of the learners who attended the classes. My method of enquiry resembled that of a sponge, taking in everything to maximum capacity, and then slowly processing the information during evening sessions with my notebook and dilapidated laptop computer. These sessions resulted in many unanswered questions, and as time progressed, the questions became more specific, transforming my method of enquiry from sponge to funnel. I would spend the occasional weekend in the coastal village of Essouira to analyse my findings and formulate further questions.

My time was spent gathering information from the local development associations, animatrices, and learners of the associations’ Ennour et Irfane and Tasghimoute, along with Amouna and the learners of her legal literacy and functional literacy classes. I also spent a considerable amount of time at the association Ennahkil pour la femme et l’enfant, speaking with and interviewing the President and the association’s former animatrices. On numerous occasions, I attempted to interview government officials of the Secretariat, and was granted one interview with a senior official in Rabat, although very little came from our meeting. At all times, my language of interaction was French, which was occasionally interspersed with phrases I had learned in Moroccan Arabic. In Sidi Youseff Ben Ali, Amouna conducted all of the interviews with those who only understood Moroccan Arabic, although I was present at all times. My classroom visits to both Ennour et Irfane and the classes provided by Tasghimoute were accompanied by Samira – a friend of Amouna’s – who would act as translator for conversations in Moroccan Arabic. Classroom discussions that were carried out in the Berber dialect of Tashelhit were translated by either the Secretary General of Tasghimoute, or the animatrice. In all, I conducted 45 formal, individual and group interviews, and wrote down a collection of ideas, opinions, and criticisms from many
informal occasions. The formal interviews and classroom visits consisted of the following:

- 7 interviews with Amouna (ranging from 15 to 45 minutes for each interview); 9 individual interviews with women from the wedding cooperative (20 minutes for each interview); 5 group interviews with women that attended the legal literacy classes (45 minutes for each group interview); 12 visits to the wedding cooperative’s classes (ranging from 1 to 2 hours for each visit), and, 10 visits to the legal literacy classes (ranging from 1 to 2 hours for each visit).

- 2 interviews with the President of Ennour et Irfane (40 minutes for each interview); 3 interviews with the Secretary General (20 minutes for each interview); 3 interviews with the animatrice Najat (20 minutes for each interview); and, 4 visits to each of three classes (ranging from 1 to 2 hours for each class visit).

- 4 interviews with the Secretary General of Tasghimoute (ranging from 15 to 45 minutes for each interview); 5 interviews with the animatrices Najat and Zahara (ranging from 15 to 30 minutes for each interview); 1 group interview with five of the association’s animatrices (30 minutes); and, six visits to Aït Oumi, Agjagal and Tourtite (1 hour in each class);

- 2 interviews with the President of Ennakhil pour la femme et l’enfant (40 minutes for each interview); and, 4 interviews with various former animatrices from the association (ranging from 15 to 45 minutes for each interview).
Appendix 2 – Literacy and school enrolment rates

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UNESCO figures [www.unesco.org/uis/ev](http://www.unesco.org/uis/ev) Statistical tables

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<td>Small and medium cities</td>
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<td>Rural</td>
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<td>83.0</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>61.9</td>
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Direction des statistiques: les indicateurs sociaux 2000
### Figure 4  School enrolment rates (% gross)

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>66.0</td>
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<td>92.3</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>100.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1975</td>
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<td>66.0</td>
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<td>83.7</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>95.5</td>
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<td>87.8</td>
<td>94.4</td>
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<td>87.8</td>
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<td>38.5</td>
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World Bank Development Indicators (2003)

### Figure 5  Illiteracy rates by age (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>Rural Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>47.6</td>
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<td>15-24 years</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44 years</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59 years</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 years +</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>93.6</td>
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Direction des statistiques: les indicateurs sociaux 2000
### Figure 6  Illiteracy rates in correlation with monthly individual spending (in %)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 283DH</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>283DH to 409DH</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>57.6</td>
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<td>409DH to 567DH</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>48.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>567DH to 860DH</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>860DH +</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
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Direction des statistiques: les indicateurs sociaux 2000
## Appendix 3 – Partnership agreements with local development associations and the Secretariat for Marrakech Tensift-Haouz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Local development association</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of learners who successfully completed the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Association Ennakhil pour la femme et l'enfant</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Ass. Sidi Belabbas</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>2240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Grand Atlas</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>1050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Ennakhil pour la femme et l'enfant</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Ass. Sidi Belabbas</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Ennakhil pour la femme et l'enfant</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Tasghimoute</td>
<td>El Haouz</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Ass. Ennakhil pour la femme et l'enfant</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Solidarité et auto-développement El Kelaâ</td>
<td>El Kelaâ</td>
<td>4100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fédération Ass. de développement Ben Guérir</td>
<td>El Kelaâ</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Tasghimoute</td>
<td>El Haouz</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Ennour et Irfane</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>1208</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Ass. Sidi Belabbas</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
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<td>Ass. Afoulki pour les femmes</td>
<td>El Haouz</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ass. Coopérative Al Maarifa</td>
<td>El Kelaâ</td>
<td>800</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ass. Grand Atlas</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>1500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Al Manahil pour les Institutions Prê-Scolaires</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>1018</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. Tahanaout</td>
<td>El Haouz</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>32 376</strong></td>
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Royaume du Maroc: direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme, 2003
Appendix 4 – Literacy workbook sample pages
(All pages translated by Samira)

Fig. 1 – An example of the larger print of the first literacy workbook (vol. 1, 29), which is in sharp contrast to the finer print of the second and third workbooks (fig.2) for which many learners with troubled vision were unable to read the print clearly.
القراءة والكتابة

الغذية السليمة: نصائح غذائية

لا تتناولوا النصائح إذا كنت صاحباتها لأنها قد تحدث تسممًا. احتجروا الأطعمة النسية والتوابل المفرومة، وإذا كان ذلك من المحتمل، واختاروا المشروبات الغازية، واختر النباتات كالثوم والقهوة، ولا تضرروا العقاقير إلا إذا وصفها أخصائي الطب. افتحوا كمًا من الفواكه والخضروات، فأخذوا أطعمة الحمية وتطهير، وتطهير الخضروات والفواكه بأطعمة النبات، وقد أكلوا أيضًا الفواكه الجافة من ما جاء في النص.

الفواكه والخضروات

اختاري المغذى المناسب لشرح الكلمة الآتي: النصائح الأتية:

الخضروات، المشروبات، الفواكه، التوابل

عنين في النص الحمل الذي تنتمي بالمعنى الآتي:

- الأطعمة: ما يحدث التسمم - مادة مفرومة - أنواع النباتات.
- شروط تناول العقاقير.
- النصائح الغذائية.

Fig. 2 – An example of the smaller print of the second and third workbooks (vol. 3, 24).
Fig. 3 - Many women who attended literacy classes with the associations Ennour et Irfane and Tasghimoute found the negative depictions of large families synonymous with their own familial situations. This page explains the consequences of parents who decide to have a large number of children. Many of the learners did not appreciate these depictions, when compared with the depictions of "modern" Moroccan families represented in figure 5, and the correlation with access to modern amenities, which is represented in figure 6 (vol 3, 80).
Fig. 4 — This page explains the causes and consequences of rural-to-urban migration, describing the difficulties of urban life for rural newcomers, who inevitably end up in the city's *bidonvilles*. Many of the learners were aware of the realities of the city; they were more concerned that with the tenuous livelihoods of their own villages, there was often no alternative than to migrate towards urban centres. Many of the learners' husbands were already living and working in Marrakech, and in some cases, further afield. The contradictions of the workbooks lay in the depictions of rural development, and were accompanied by an official development treatise (see figs. 6, 7 and 8). If the learners were not part of the rural development treatise — they had no access to running water, electricity, modern irrigation or farming machinery — and were being dissuaded from migrating to the city, where did they themselves stand? (vol. 3, 81)
Fig. 5 – In contrast to figure 3, many learners did not appreciate the way that the illustrations depicted "rural" and "modern" families (vol. 2, 153).
Fig. 6 – As explained in figure 3, urban life is synonymous with a modern lifestyle and access to modern amenities (vol. 1, 89).
This page explains the role of parents to ensure that their children complete their homework. However, for the women in the villages of Ait Oumni, Agjgal and Tourtite, the closest school was 20 kilometres away, and students were obliged to stay at the school for long periods, returning home infrequently. To ensure their children’s success at school, they had demanded their local authority to build a school closer to their respective villages, in line with what they felt was articulated in the official development treatise (vol.2, 125).
لقد ساهمت التطورات في الآلات الزراعية في تحسين فعالية وسرعة الزراعة. فالآلات الحديثة تجعل القيام بالأعمال أسهل وأسرع. وعند الزراعة اليوم هو أكثر المكائن الزراعية فائدة، فهو يستخدم لتحريك عدّة الآلات أخرى.

قدماً كان حصاد الجبوب ودرسها في المزارع الكبيرة يستغرق وقتاً طويلاً وإيادي عاملة عديدة. لكن الحصادة الحديثة قادرة اليوم على حصاد المحصول ودرسه وفصل الحب من القش (والتبين) في عملية سريعة واحدة.

Fig. 8 – “Modern farming equipment”. Refer to Figure 4 (vol. 2, 119).
Fig. 9 — The caption above the depiction of the two rural women states, "It is important to recognize and value the work of rural women" (vol. 3, 161). Many women expressed insult over similar depictions throughout the literacy workbooks, as they felt the text and depictions of "development" excluded them. They were strong contributors to the household economy, and thus, strong contributors to development.
Appendix 5 – Major changes introduced to Moroccan Family Law
(Moudawana)\textsuperscript{71}

In April 2001, efforts to pass Family Law reforms were suspended while a commission established by His Majesty King Mohammed VI studied the possibility of revising the Moudawana, Morocco’s Civil Status Code that encompasses the Family Law governing women's status. The continued advocacy and awareness-raising efforts of women's rights activists, the strong backing by government leaders such as Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi, and the public support of King Mohammed VI contributed to the Commission’s decision in favor of a reformed Moroccan Family Law. In October 2003, almost two and a half years after the establishment of the Commission, King Mohammed VI publicly announced new reforms creating a modern Family Law consistent with the tolerant spirit of Islam and “lifting the iniquity imposed on women, protecting children’s rights, and safeguarding men’s dignity.” During the fall and winter of 2003, women’s rights organizations – organized within the “Printemps de l’Égalité” network – analyzed the details of the draft legislation’s text and organized workshops, round tables, and discussion groups to prepare for renewed lobbying efforts in Parliament and to educate the public about the reforms.

On January 25, 2004, the government of Morocco adopted a landmark Family Law supporting women’s equality and granting them new rights in marriage and divorce, among the granting of other rights. On February 3, 2004, the Presidents of both Houses of Parliament presented the unanimously approved Family Law to King Mohammed VI. The legislations within the new Family Law include the following reforms:

1. **Upholding the principle of equality between men and women:**
   a. Equality in terms of family responsibility. The family is now placed under the joint responsibility of the husband and wife. (Under previous legislation, the family was the responsibility of the husband only);
   b. Equality with respect to the rights and obligations of both parties. (The stipulation that the wife should obey her husband has been rescinded. In return, the wife must contribute to the household expenses);
   c. Suppression of the stipulation submitting women to the guardianship of a male member of the family. Women who have come of age are now entitled to guardianship and may exercise it freely and independently;

\textsuperscript{71} From Women's Learning Partnership (2004).
d. Equality between men and women with respect to the minimum age for marriage, which is now set at 18 years for both. (Instead of 15 years for women and 18 for men under the previous legislation);

e. Repudiation and divorce, defined as the dissolution of marriage, are a prerogative that can be exercised as much by the husband as by the wife, under judicial supervision, and in accordance with legal conditions set for each party. (Under previous legislation, repudiation and divorce were left to the discretion of the husband only, and was often exercised in an arbitrary way);

f. Adoption of the principle of divorce by mutual consent and under judicial supervision;

g. To preserve the family institution and ensure equality and fairness between husband and wife, the new legislation states that the divorce claim introduced by the wife on the grounds of financial support shall be dismissed if it is established that she has sufficient means to support herself and that her husband is impecunious;

h. Possibility for the grandchildren on the daughter's side to inherit from their grandfather, just like the grandchildren on the son's side (dropping an obsolete tribal tradition favoring male heirs in the sharing of the inherited land);

i. The girl, just like the boy, shall have the possibility to freely choose her custodian at the age of 15. (Suppression of the bias in favor of the boy, who could choose his custodian at the age of 12, whereas the girl had to wait until she was 15.)

2. Polygamy is allowed, subject to the judge's authorization and to stringent legal conditions:

- The judge must make sure that there is no presumption of iniquity. He must be convinced of the husband's ability to treat the second wife and her children on an equal footing with the first, and also ensure that they enjoy similar living conditions;

- The woman now has the right to make her acceptance of marriage conditional upon a pledge by her husband-to-be to refrain from taking other wives;

- If no such condition is set, the first wife must be informed that her husband is going to remarry, and the second wife must also be told that her husband-to-be is already married. Moreover, the first wife has the possibility to ask for
divorce because of harm suffered. (Under the previous Family Law, the husband had to inform his wife of his decision to marry a second wife, and also inform the latter that he is already married. The judge’s authorization was not required).

3. Concern for fairness and justice:
   a. In keeping with the Royal instructions aimed at upholding the rule of law, the Family Law assigns a key role to the judiciary. Thus, it now provides for the public prosecutor to be a party to every legal action involving the enforcement of Family Law stipulations. Provision must be made for emergency cases to be dealt with during the week-ends and holidays. The creation of family courts and the establishment of a family mutual assistance fund will contribute to effective enforcement of the Family Law. (There were no such provisions under the previous legislation);
   b. Protecting the wife against possible misuse, by the husband, of his right to divorce: the new legislation protects the woman’s rights by making repudiation conditional upon the court’s prior authorization. It further enhances the chances for reconciliation, both through the family and the judge. It also requires that all monies owed to the wife and children be paid in full by the husband before divorce can be duly registered. Verbal repudiation by the husband is no longer valid, as divorce is now subject to a court ruling. (Under the previous legislation, repudiation was an exclusive and unrestricted right of the husband);
   c. Consolidating the woman’s rights to file for divorce because of the harm suffered (conjugal violence, unjustifiable absence, lack of financial support...): Divorce is pronounced by the judge, at the wife’s behest;
   d. Sharing, between husband and wife, of the property acquired during marriage: While confirming the principle of separate estate, the new legislation makes it possible for the couple to agree, in a document other than the marriage contract, on how to manage and develop assets acquired during marriage. (No such provision existed under previous legislation).
4. Enhancing the protection of children's rights:

a. Protecting children's rights: Provisions containing a reference to the international agreements on children's rights ratified by Morocco, have been inserted. (This is the first time such provisions have been officially included in national legislation);

b. Child custody: taking into account the child's interests, the new legislation is innovative again by giving the woman the possibility to retain custody of her child, under certain conditions, even upon remarrying or moving out of the area where her husband lives. She may also regain custody if the reason (voluntary or otherwise) which caused her to lose this right disappears. (Under the previous legislation, the woman irrevocably lost child custody in the above conditions);

c. Child custody is now to be granted to the mother, then the father, and then the grandmother on the mother's side. Should this prove to be impossible, the judge will entrust custody to the best qualified relative in the child's family, keeping in mind the child's interests. (Under previous legislation, no such role was assigned to the judge: The text simply listed the child's relatives who could have been granted custody, without taking into account the child's interests or whether his relatives were fit to assume the responsibility);

d. Protecting the child's rights to acknowledgement of paternity in case the marriage has not been officially registered for reasons beyond control, by expanding the scope of the legal evidence to be submitted to the judge (There was no previous provision for recognition of children born out of wedlock. The only accepted proof to establish paternity was the testimony of 12 witnesses, a complicated and archaic exercise);

e. Setting a 5-year period for settling outstanding cases in this regard. (This is a new provision designed to put an end to the suffering endured by children in this situation);

f. Child custody: Ensuring that the child gets suitable accommodation which is consistent with his or her living conditions prior to the parent's divorce. This requirement is separate from the other alimony obligations (nafaqa). (Under previous legislation, the alimony consisted of a paltry lump sum and did not specify how much should be allocated to the child's accommodation).
5 Miscellaneous provisions:

a. The new Family Law uses a modern form of wording, removing degrading and debasing terms for women. Thus, women become men's partners in rights and obligations, in accordance with the firm determination of His Majesty the King to ensure that women are treated fairly, to enhance the protection of children and the preserve the dignity of men.