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Features/Analysis North Africa Research and Development

Morocco: Literacy program empowers women toward sustainability

 By **Guest Contributor** Mar 10, 2023



Image credit: High Atlas Foundation

Following International Women’s Day on 8 March 2023, the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) collected the highlights and milestones from the first year of their Family Literacy program in Morocco.

The program included empowerment workshops, literacy classes and business and agricultural training for over 1,000 women from rural areas, giving them a chance to improve their lives and the lives of their families and communities.

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Last year, the **women**—in groups from 40 different communities throughout the Beni Mellal-Khenifra and Marrakech-Safi regions—joined together to discuss their goals and dreams, contributing their individual voices to group decision-making.



Each group completed a four-day, rights-based "Imagine" workshop of self-discovery, reflecting on and gaining insight into their innermost desires for their futures.

Furthering literacy in pursuit of sustainability

The women began the journey of furthering their education through literacy classes taught by women from their own villages who were trained through the National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy. And they started and grew business cooperatives to sell goods for additional household income.

In this second year of the program, the women will continue with their literacy lessons and the development of their cooperatives.

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Preschool lessons for their children will also commence. By learning together and reading together at home, the concept of ongoing family literacy is anchored within the household and throughout the community.

Through the program, women are also **empowered** to become models of achievement for other women, inspiring their family members and mobilising their communities toward sustainability.

Family literacy in numbers: Year 1

- 40 cooperatives and women's groups participated in four-day Imagine empowerment workshops addressing seven life areas
- 48 women's groups engaged in participatory community planning
- 42 community learning centres created
- 37 rural women trained as literacy teachers by the National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy
- 20 university students trained to assist the literacy teachers
- Thousands of books, markers, and other school supplies were distributed to women in more than 40 communities
- 966 rural women were tested to determine literacy levels and engaged in six months (144 hours) of literacy classes
- 27 workshops conducted in agricultural skills by the USAID Farmer-to-Farmer program and in managing business cooperatives by the Office for the Development of Cooperation

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Women embracing collective entrepreneurship

Having attended self-empowerment workshops, women participating in the Family Literacy program have shown great interest in making a change for the better. In attending literacy classes, they've expressed genuine enthusiasm about learning to speak, read and write in the Arabic language. And having learned how to establish their own cooperatives, they're now doing just that.

In Khenifra, for example, women are already collaborating on new, empowering endeavours. With a knack for making traditional Moroccan pastries, bread and cereal products, some of these women have decided to together establish an agricultural cooperative, calling it *Tamlalt*, that will grow plants and raise livestock.

Another group has decided to use their artisanal skills to create an industrial cooperative named *Alahed Aljadid*, which produces traditional clothing. They have already begun to market their products.

