

T. Dichter

Learning Agenda Mini Case #4

Morocco

Fondation Orient-Occident, Rabat

This NGO was founded in 1994 to help disadvantaged kids in cities. The Rabat centre, an enormous complex covering about 3/4th of an acre, with several buildings, opened in 2001. The impetus for the organization's growth, which has been significant in the last 7 or 8 years, was the May 16th 2003 Casablanca terrorist bombing. Donor (and probably government) interest in their work allowed them to expand to Oujda and Casablanca (in the Sidi Moumen slum area) in 2005 and then to Safi and Larache in 2007. There are two other centres in other cities now in process. They run a crèche for small children, do job training for disadvantaged youth, language, IT and other courses for adults, and have a hotel and restaurant where they train young people for the tourism industry. They have learned that for girls especially they need to do "estime de soi" (self-esteem) workshops, so now they have a 2 hr per week, 2 month long course where the pedagogical concept is "coaching." Their funding is from many sources, including some partnerships with some of France's regional governments, Spanish aid, the Swiss, and the Dutch. In the last years they have opened up to all in the community, including adults.

All people who want to use the center's services pay a symbolic 50 dirhams (ca. \$5.50) per year to join. They have about 100 staff and a department of 3 persons who basically do fund-raising. They also do some work on legislation (lobbying,) especially on child labor laws. And their newest "axe" (theme) is trying to integrate African immigrants and refugees, and change the image among Moroccans of Sub Saharan Africa (an African festival was going on during our visit). The funding for this work comes from OIM and UNHCR. They also have money from individuals and some contributions in kind.

We visit a crèche on the campus, where a lively young woman is engaging some 25 kids in various games. The children are between 3 and 5 years old. Across the way African young men and women in their twenties are preparing food for the festival. And on the top floor of the main building is a large library (most of the books were contributed by one family). On the same floor is a training room, with flip chart pages on the wall showing aspects of a small business start-up. We learn later that one of their projects is helping local women form a cooperative to market their craft products. They have a contact in Paris who, we are told, is going to help them on this particular challenge.

The director tells us that their big challenge is long-term institutional support and sustainability. She says they have to continually look for small projects so that they can get funding to make sure they do not have to fire their people.

