

Morocco's Approach to South-South Cooperation: An Overview of the Moroccan Experience in the African Continent

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Abstract: South-South cooperation is a strategic pillar of the Kingdom of Morocco's Foreign Policy. In fact, Morocco has included South-South cooperation in the preamble of its constitution, and Africa constitutes the heart of the Moroccan foreign policy. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco is determined to further strengthen South-South cooperation through the establishment of strategic partnerships based on common values of freedom, democracy, solidarity, and mutual respect. It is also dedicated to the objectives of sustainable development and prosperity. This paper aims to introduce the reader to Morocco's South-South cooperation policy by presenting some examples of the Kingdom's actions in the African continent.

Keywords: Africa, South-South Cooperation, AMCI, Morocco.

Africa in South-South cooperation: A Strategic Pillar of Morocco's Foreign Policy

The development of the African continent attracts the attention of the world. As a southern country, Morocco has always expressed its desire to have close relations under a win-win policy with the countries of its continent of origin (Bakkacha & Touhami, 2019). Deeply rooted in Africa,

Morocco has always had close and deep ties with the countries of the South, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa. For centuries, Morocco has established cooperation relations with the countries of the African continent (UNDP, 2013).

Since its independence, Morocco gave great importance to the establishment of broad bilateral relations based on solidarity, mutual respect, preservation and promotion of common interests and

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ideals, while participating effectively and actively in efforts to resolve political, socio-economic and development issues at the regional, continental and international levels.

Strengthened by its secular, traditional, socio-cultural, spiritual and economic ties, particularly with a large number of African countries, Morocco has placed development issues at the heart of its foreign policy and is constantly working to create appropriate conditions to further strengthen its privileged relations. In order to structure the implementation of cooperation actions, Morocco and its partner countries from the African continent started establishing joint commissions to organise and manage bilateral cooperation in all the fields covered by the agreements, conventions and protocols signed between them in the 1970s.¹ These commissions created a favourable climate for periodic bilateral consultations, the increase of trade and investment exchanges, the strengthening of cooperation and the exchange of experiences in the technical, cultural, social and human fields and dozens of new cooperation agreements have been signed and implemented through this mechanism in the next decades.

Since his enthronement in 1999, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who has pleaded for active solidarity in favour of sub-Saharan Africa, has given a new dynamism to the South-South cooperation actions of Morocco based on the multiplication of field actions that aim for human development. The King has himself made more than 50 official visits to several African countries.

During those Royal visits, about a thousand cooperation agreements have been signed in several fields in the public, private and civil society sectors such as health, agriculture and agri-food industries, fisheries, education and training, water management and irrigation, basic infrastructure and urban development, information technology, banking financial management and banking, etc. Thus, has established South-South cooperation as the main axis of its foreign policy and is working, by various means, to strengthen this cooperation at the regional and interregional levels. To this end, the Kingdom of Morocco has developed an ecosystem for the promotion of South-South cooperation for the benefit of Africa that includes actors from all public, private and civil society sectors: ministerial departments, public institutions and government agencies, private sector, banking institutions, schools & universities, and NGOs and civil society.

AMCI: Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation

One of the main actors within the ecosystem for promoting South-South cooperation is the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation (AMCI), created in 1986 to contribute to the strengthening of Morocco's international cooperation, with a strong orientation towards the promotion of South-South cooperation.

AMCI's mission is to develop cooperation between people by contributing to the expansion and strengthening of cultural, scientific,

economic and technical cooperation between Morocco and its partner countries. It acts in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living Abroad in the implementation of actions carried out in partnership with the various Moroccan ministerial departments and the national partners concerned. The Agency's purpose is to be a major player in the implementation of Morocco's South-South cooperation, making use of the know-how and expertise the country developed in several fields to provide support to developing countries, mainly in Africa. Its actions are articulated around four main axes:

Scientific and cultural cooperation

Training of foreign students in Morocco (university, technical and professional), exchange of researchers, granting of Moroccan scholarships to foreign students and accommodation for foreign students.

Technical cooperation and sharing of expertise

The organisation of short and medium-term internships for working professionals as well as sending Moroccan experts on missions abroad.

Support for the implementation of sustainable human development projects

Assistance in the implementation of sustainable development projects in several areas: education, fisheries, health, agriculture and irrigation, drinking

water and sanitation, rural and urban electrification.

International humanitarian assistance

Emergency operations of humanitarian aid: donations of medicines, food, supplies and equipment.

Academic Cooperation: Sharing the Moroccan Teaching Experience

AMCI contributes each year to the training of thousands of international talents, including a large majority of African students, in disciplines essential to the growth of countries of the South, especially Africa. For the academic year 2019/20, approximately 14,500 foreign students were enrolled in Moroccan public institutions of higher education, including 12,500 students from 47 African countries. AMCI grants a significant number of scholarships from the Kingdom of Morocco to international students in higher education. Thus, more than 12,000 foreign students have benefited from the Kingdom of Morocco's scholarships for the year 2019/20 through AMCI, and 85% of AMCI's African students are scholarship holders.

Technical Cooperation: Reinforcing the African Capacities

Through AMCI, Morocco plays an important role in capacity building in Africa. Technical cooperation has grown considerably over the years. More than 10,000 public sector executives

from partner countries have benefited from AMCI's training programmes in several key development areas (diplomacy, customs, justice, water, electricity, agriculture, climate, etc.). These cooperation programmes aim at sharing Moroccan expertise through the principle of active solidarity with its partner countries.

The technical cooperation programmes set up by AMCI are the following:

- Organisation of short and medium-term training courses in Morocco for the benefit of active executives (professionals, managers, researchers and technicians);
- Organisation of visits and study trips to Morocco for international professionals; and
- Sending Moroccan experts abroad to provide capacity-building support, with the establishment of delocalised² training courses.

The deployment of these technical cooperation programmes by AMCI can take different forms, either in the framework of bilateral cooperation or in the framework of triangular or multilateral cooperation, by associating with donor countries, cooperation agencies of partner countries, international and regional organisations or multilateral donors.

The actions implemented by AMCI within this framework are guided by the principle of Morocco's active solidarity with its partners in the South and by the concern for the effective implementation of the guidelines underlying Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC). Technical cooperation is experiencing

a notable craze due to the increase in demand from partner countries seeking to imbibe Moroccan expertise in a multitude of fields and specialties in which the Kingdom has a proven expertise at the regional, continental and international levels.

Cooperation Projects: Examples of Morocco's Sustainable Human Development Projects

AMCI works in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living Abroad, within the framework of its prerogatives, to implement sustainable human development projects in key areas of development in partner countries of the South, particularly in Africa.

Strengthening maternal health infrastructure: Djibouti.

- Project: Definition of a cooperation programme between Morocco, the Islamic Development Bank and Djibouti around a maternal health project.
- Assistance provided: Training and transfer of knowledge to 180 professionals in Djibouti's maternity wards in addition to the acquisition and installation of 45 cardiotocographs.
- Results: Human and technical capacity-building in the field of clinical and electronic monitoring of high-risk pregnancies and childbirth in Djibouti's maternity wards by capitalising on the rich experience of the Ibn Sina Hospital (Rabat University Hospital), through its Centre for Reproductive Health

(CRS).

ISCAE Guinea: Guinea Conakry

- Project: Creation of the Higher Institute of Commerce and Business Administration (Moroccan Business School) in Conakry.
- Assistance provided: Implementation of the project and provision of highly qualified Moroccan teachers.
- Results: Local training of several hundred Guinean and sub-regional executives.

Drinking water sanitation: Burkina Faso

- Project: Definition of a cooperation programme between Morocco, the Islamic Development Bank and Burkina Faso around the project of drinking water quality improvement.
- Assistance provided: Identification of technical partners from Morocco (ONEE) and Burkina (ONEA) who will work and propose the best biological solution to fight against the phenomenon of Eutrophication, through the introduction of silver carp fry in the ZIGA dam reservoir.
- Results: The technical teams of ONEE and ONEA are currently working together to combat eutrophication, through the introduction of silver carp fry in the ZIGA dam reservoir.

Emergency Humanitarian Operations: Assistance to Partner Countries

Humanitarian action has always been a lever of the Kingdom of Morocco's active solidarity towards countries that

are victims of natural disasters. AMCI coordinates, with the association of main national public bodies, the deployment of the Kingdom of Morocco's international humanitarian actions. This action takes the form of emergency operations generally consisting of donations of medicines, paramedical equipment, food products, tents, blankets, hygiene products, equipment, etc.¹ Morocco has also sent supplies to other African countries during the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen continental capacity to respond to the pandemic (Boulaksili, Hajel, Marzouki, & Hamiche, 2020).

Generally, the humanitarian actions taken by Morocco are instructed at the highest level of the State, by the King, to be implemented by the main public bodies.³

Conclusion

The Kingdom of Morocco has a strategic vision of bilateral, tripartite and multilateral cooperation with the African continent. This vision aims essentially to contribute to the awakening, the strengthening and the emergence of the striving continent of Africa. Morocco is aware of the African potential, its strengths, its weaknesses and the hindrances to its development and has the ambition to contribute to its growth by sharing its expertise in many other areas. It is also determined to work with its African partners and develop partnerships, visits, and projects and learn from the experience of its African partners.

Endnotes

- ¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Residing Abroad of Kingdom of Morocco – Moroccans Residing Abroad Department. Available at: <http://marocainsdumonde.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/cooperation-sud-sud-6-10-2017.pdf>.
- ² AMCI collaborates with the Office of Vocational Training and Work Promotion (OFPPT) in the field of technical cooperation. The Office is involved in 59 partnership agreements with 25 African partner countries. These agreements relate to two areas of support: support to partner countries in consolidating their professional training systems at the local level, and the reception of African trainees in OFPPT establishments in Morocco. The OFPPT also carries out diagnostic missions for vocational training systems in African countries, supporting the creation of training centers in 8 African countries, and provides training engineering, training of trainers and technical support through the establishment of vocational training centres meeting the needs of priority sectors in African partner countries (Alumni, s.d.).
- ³ Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation (AMCI) <https://www.amci.ma/>.

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