

Women, Migration, and the Media in Morocco

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I will start this brief expose from the premise that migration is a reality, a product of modernity. Migration has political, economic, social, political, and gender aspects. I will focus on two things:

1. Women as a neglected, although central, actors in migration
2. Ways of improving the migration reality through an exploitation of the media aspect

The nature of Moroccan migration has changed according to changing historical conditions. Both legal and illegal migration have accompanied Morocco's political ups and downs. One aspect of the changing nature of migration is reflected in the fact that the latter has started to be more and more feminized. Indeed, a fast-growing number of women of all ages are being involved in migration today.

Two types of Moroccan women are involved in migration: those who migrate and those who stay behind when their men (father, husband, brother, or son) migrate. Both types of women have never constituted monolithic and homogenized groups. They are divided by important social variables such as class, level of education, geographical origin, and marital status.

Socio-cultural constraints affect Moroccan migrant women in different ways. Seemingly, migrant women are affected by migration in different ways. For example, a richer, more educated, urban married woman is less affected by the negative aspects of migration than a poorer, uneducated, rural, and unmarried woman.

Even when women integrate the societies in which they migrate, they, more than men, are close to their culture. In fact, Moroccan society and culture put more pressure on women. Many routes have been taken to remedy this situation; today I take one route and concentrate on it: the media. The following statements are based on research in process:

1. There is a terrible lack of information on both sides (the sending and receiving countries). There is, thus, an urgent need of information
2. In addition to this lack, and as a result of it, there is a real deadlock at the level of mentalities on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.
3. As a result of both lack of information and deadlock, there is lack of communications between the people on both sides of the Mediterranean. This renders the problems associated with migration more complex and the remedies more complicated.
4. Inserting religion in the debate on migration makes the problem even harder to solve.

The question to ask is: what to do? How to react?

In my view, more focus is needed on the social and cultural aspects of migration. Here are some hints that need research to be developed:

1. “Deblock” the mentalities is on thing that the media can do.
2. Given that cultural stereotypes are pernicious, the media can change attitudes through changing the current picture they give of cultures on both sides of the Mediterranean.
3. A revisions of the images vehicled on both sides of the Mediterranean is urgent, especially now that bigger problems like what is happening in the Middle East and Irak are making the situation worse.
4. More work is needed on images of Islam, of women and Islam, of Islam and Human Rights, of gender and Human Rights, are needed.
5. We also seriously need to hierarchize and deconstruct while avoiding the theory of dichotomy.
6. We need more approaches based on public opinion.
7. The illiteracy problem needs to be considered. For example, we need more use of TV as a means to reach all women, especially the illiterate. All women, especially the illiterate (who happen to be the poorest) need to have access to useful information. Radio and TV commentaries, sketches, comedies can help here.
8. Documentation in the filed of women, migration, and the media is badly needed.
9. The use of internet and websites can also prove to be useful.
10. We should define goals and structure them; we should also define our missions and set up horizontal and vertical committees.
11. Bridges between researchers and NGOs and the fostering of a culture of such bridges is needed.
12. Strategies and operational initiatives
13. Mobile units, agents of development to implement field work. Very little of this is indeed done up to now.
14. Collect information from places where problems exist and put what is collected into synergy.
15. Information given by professionals of information (people who listen and decode) needed to be privileged.

16. Follow-up and evolution
17. Strong recommendation to promote communication in both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.
18. Adopt the concept of “gender” as an analytical tool and cooperate with people working in gender studies.
19. Prepare future generation: continuity.
20. Develop strategies with researchers, media practitioners, and NGOs with the aim of improving the images of migration in the sending and receiving countries.