

Cities Without Slums

Context



Morocco has been experiencing a strong rural exodus since the 1960s. As in many other countries at an advanced stage of economic transition, the share of urban population has risen sharply: from 29% in 1960 to 41% in 1980, and in 2002 it reached 57%. If this pace continues, the urban population will double every 17 years. In a country where annual per capita income stood at only 960 euros in 2002, this development has taken place too quickly to be well controlled and unsafe housing, clandestine housing and slums have sprung up in the major cities.

Every year, some 240 000 people migrate from the countryside to the cities. Many of the migrants, drawn by the growth in urban centers, settle temporarily – they hope – in unsafe housing which accounts for 30% of urban housing.

The phenomenon of unsafe housing gains momentum every year. There is a continuous rise in housing demand, while the shortage of viable and affordable land is constantly worsening: between now and 2012, 170 000 homes will have to be built every year in order to meet population needs. The current production of legal housing – i.e. built on serviced land, with a plan, a land title and planning permission – covers less than 60% of Morocco's needs.

Clandestine housing, with no sanitation system, sometimes without water and electricity supply, concerns some 2 million people, including 1.3 million slum dwellers. Makeshift constructions, tin shacks and shacks made out of other salvaged materials have sprung up in extremely precarious conditions.

The number of slum dwellers seemed to have fallen during the first half of the 1990s, yet the major droughts that struck Morocco in 1994 and 1995, then 1999 and 2000, caused a new rural exodus and an influx of the most vulnerable families towards the cities. Existing slums grew larger and new settlements sprang up. These areas of dire poverty are mainly located in the major cities of Casablanca, Agadir and Marrakech. The cities in the north and east are less affected.

Project description

The Moroccan government has set out to combat the expansion of these “cities of joy”. In order to make up for the shortage of authorized land it has designed a project which includes 13 priority operations to develop land in a total of 10 municipalities. This operation targets 70 000 people, including 25 000 slum dwellers.



The project has been entrusted to the ANHI, the National Shelter Upgrading Agency, an entity that provides disadvantaged populations with land for the construction of affordable housing.

The operation aims to service land via road and sanitation works and the installation of water and electricity networks, then to sell the land to the most disadvantaged populations so that they can build new homes.

It quickly became clear that the ANHI needed external financing due to the scale of the planned operations and the lack of resources. Agence Française de Développement (AFD) was very enthusiastic about this project and, as early as 1999, offered to participate in an urban development program. AFD allocated a 15 million euro concessional (with a very low rate) loan which financed almost 70% of the development operations.

Half of the operations conducted by the ANHI aim to resettle slum dwellers. The serviced plots are sold to the slum dwellers at an affordable price – a third of the cost price – with instalments spread over a long period. The only condition is that they hand back the previously illegally occupied land.

A second component of the ANHI project will anticipate and prevent the creation of new slums by making new areas of serviced land available for building. Part of the land is earmarked for poor families in order to provide them with an affordable alternative to unsafe housing. These plots are sold at cost price.

Finally, the project aims to break even financially so that it can be reproduced and have the biggest possible impact on the lives of populations concerned. In order to make up for the shortfall from the plots being sold at a very low cost, the plots in the best locations (where shops can be built for example) are sold at market prices.

Impacts

Today, eleven out of the thirteen operations are in the completion phase: 7 000 plots have been created, including 2 800 that directly reduce slums. The objectives have been reached.

75% of the plots have already been purchased and almost all the plots for slum dwellers have been allocated. The plots are occupied quickly: 50% are already under construction. From an economic point of view, the intense construction activity and the investments that followed the resettlement of slum dwellers have generated sizeable profits for a number of micro-enterprises in the construction sector and have provided work for inhabitants in the different areas.

Between 23 000 and 27 000 slum dwellers have been rehoused.

Dates and amounts

Start-up: 1999

Financing: 15 million euro loan to the ANHI

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