**The Third Sector and the New Moroccan Development Model**

**Which expectations? Which Challenges? Which Approach? What are the contributions of UNDP Morocco’s Accelerator Lab?**

The national context in Morocco offers very important opportunities for the evolution of civil society and cooperatives and the achievement of their objectives. In addition to the 2011 Constitution and the various laws that recognize the role of civil society and cooperatives in democratic and socio-economic development at the local level, the New Development Model (NMD in French) reserves a significant place for civil society the framework of the "third sector" where associations and cooperatives must play their leadership roles.

The NMD proposes to make the third sector a true third way, a lever for wealth creation, employment, inclusion, social progress and territorial development. The "third sector" refers to all actors at the intersection of the public and private sectors (associations, cooperatives, mutuals) that engage in economic activities with a social aim, organized in an autonomous manner and managed in a collegial manner, with limited profitability and on a local scale with a strong commitment from the concerned communities. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Such a proposal is based on the results of the review and analysis of international experience, in various countries. It demonstrates the capacitý of the "third sector" to provide solutions to meet social needs in new and geographically varied areas, to be a partner of the state to meet the social challenges accentuated by the current crisis of Covid-19 and finally to accompany the transition of Morocco to an inclusive, sustainable and human-centered development. Thus, by involving associations, cooperatives and mutuals in the third sector, the NMD hopes to "make the social economy emerge as a pillar of development" (strategic choice number 5 of the NMD).

This important place given to the "third sector" presents it with a major challenge, which is to live up to the aspirations of the NMD and to contribute concretely to its operationalization and to the achievement of the human development objectives to which Morocco is committed at the national and international levels.

In addition, for the "third sector" to play its role, a favorable environment that guarantees its performance is essential. This includes promoting an appropriate legal and fiscal framework and institutionalizing the partnership between the third sector and public institutions and administrations.

The "third sector" must also acquire the necessary resources and capacities in terms of governance, organizational development and the equipping of its structures with digital strategies and internal and external communication mechanisms in order to open up to its environment and be attentive to it.

The Accelerator Lab of the UNDP office in Morocco, being aware of the role of the third sector in development and the challenges it faces, contributes to strengthening the capacities of civil society and to their inclusion, through innovative initiatives, including:

* A project to promote the export of argan oil, its by-products and other Moroccan products. This initiative is part of the project "Strengthening Arab Economic Integration for Sustainable Development (AEISD)" and whose objective is to support the contribution of women's cooperatives to trade policy and Arab regional economic integration. This project is conducted in collaboration with the local ecosystem of argan oil including cooperatives in the Souss Massa Drâa Region, experts in foreign trade and customs procedures, in order to improve the valuation of key products of this ecosystem through an export policy to reach consumers directly in high potential markets such as the USA.
* The Tadamon project is part of the Civil Society Organizations Empowerment for Poverty Reduction program, which is sponsored by the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD), managed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other strategic partners. The main objective is to support associations to have better access to alternative financing, build and develop their community, give more visibility to their projects and engage more partners and donors. The project has benefited 19 associations that have started experimenting with this mechanism through the launch of the first campaigns.
* The Digital Ambassadors program developed for the benefit of a collective of more than 50 grassroots volunteering women. The objective of this program is to help these women face the many challenges of online business in low-income areas.  The initiative has two axes:   a) a local version of the eFutures toolkit – Provides basic digital literacy and business skills in a seamless way and will help in the development of an extensive digital literacy targeting low-income women in semi-rural areas ; b) experimenting ways we can encourage the community to use digital payments – Provides data for a behavioral insights study that we are conducting. This study, based on a collaboration that had originated in 2021, aims to support the implementation of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy for the design of action plans and the coordination of initiatives.

All of these initiatives aim to rethink the methods and approaches of intervention in the field and make available to associations and cooperations a set of studies, tools and innovative solutions to accelerate the achievement of local development objectives and the inclusion of the most vulnerable populations.

A more active and strategic participation of the Third Sector will allow a better consideration of the issues that concern citizens at the local level. It will contribute to gender equality and social inclusion of the most vulnerable populations by providing them with opportunities and possibilities for development.

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1. General Report, "The New Development Model", April 2021. p.72

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