Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking
Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to tackle the issue of prostitution for the first time in a direct and bold way, by breaking this taboo on the national level and breaking the widespread stereotypes on the international level. This paper is based on comprehensive research of over 17 articles and books in addition to first hand testimonies of Moroccan women that were directly involved in the prostitution mafia deception. Other primary sources were integrated in the paper from people that faced discriminatory treatment based on the stereotype of “the Moroccan woman”. The outcome of this research is a lengthy and thorough plan suggesting several strategies and approaches towards prostitution in Morocco in the form of an NGO under the name of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking (MMAHT).
Outline:

I- Introduction:

II- What is the problem?

III- Scope of the issue:

1- The international level
2- The national level

IV- Objective of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking

V- Stakeholders and their position on the issue:

1- The sex workers
2- The prostitution networks
3- Non-Governmental Organizations
4- The United Nations
5- The Moroccan Government
6- Tourist-exporting countries

VI- Pressure of the International Community: (The Global Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism) and the (Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism)

VII- The methodology of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking

1- Free language and skills classes to sex workers:
2- Awareness Spreading
   a) Schools
   b) Communities
   c) Sex Workers
d) Online and Offline Promotion

e) Promotion of Prostitution or is it?

f) Success Stories

g) Celebrity Campaigns

h) Civil Society Groups database

3- Legal Group (Policy Development)

4- Networking Development

5- Counseling Team

VIII- Outcomes of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking

IX- Funding
Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking (MMAHT)

Introduction:

The topic at hand is one of stressing importance, and is the outcome of many economic, social and cultural problems, all converging to make the perfect environment for prostitution to thrive at dreadful numbers in Morocco. This situation has made Morocco the top destination for child prostitution in Africa (ECPAT UK, 2006). Another outcome of this phenomenon is the stereotypes generated on the Moroccan woman in the Arab world. As reported by the Guardian, in an article entitled: “Saudi ban on Moroccan women is a stereotype too far”, in 2010, women of Moroccan origins were rejected their visas to perform the ‘Umra pilgrimage from fears of “exploiting their visa to trade sexual favours” (Malik, 2010).

Moroccan women have a “reputation” in the Arab world that is closer to repressed sexual fantasies of Middle Eastern men than it relates to reality. Looking at the prostitution through the scope of reputation or as a misleading stereotype sets a negative approach towards solving this issue.

“Morocco has the reputation of having a significant rate of prostitution. While it may not be as high as perceived by many in the Gulf countries” (Global Voices, 2008), as argued by the Global Voices Online, in their article: “Morocco: the Reality of Prostitution”. And thus, these stereotypical claims only encourages a passive attitude towards prostitution of Moroccan nationals. It is in the context of this debate that the idea of a Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking (MMAHT) was born, later being further outlined in this
paper, with an active rather than passive attitude. Taking into consideration the negative effects of stereotypes, in an attempt to change this perspective and spread a proactive attitude in this regard.

**Scope of the issue:**

**The international level**

Prostitution in Morocco is a multifaceted problem. The causes, effects and outcomes are numerous and converge in some cases leading into vicious cycles where the negative effects become a cause of the issue.

As an example, one of the many reflections of this issue is the reputation that Moroccan tourism holds worldwide and specifically among Arab states. This negative reputation is the outcome of prostitution undoubtedly, and in turn this reputation is spreading and playing the role of advertisement later leading to more sex-tourists.

The issue manifests in many daring ways, even some countries’ foreign policy enforces this vicious cycle. In addition to the previously stated example of denying access to Mecca for Moroccan women under the pretext of being underage (AlJazeera, 2010), the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan did not allow a Moroccan female student in LAU to acquire a Jordanian visa for the pretext that she is not above 30 years of age and does not have a male companion.

The Kuwaiti channel al-Watan, has misrepresents Moroccan women, during the month of Ramadan, in their show “Bu Qatada and Bu Nabeel”, which has spur outrage in the Moroccan streets. The al-Watan stations has published in its affiliated newspaper, of the same name, an official apology in an article entitled: “All love and respect for Morocco” (AlArabiya, 2010)
At the side of this humiliating treatment to Moroccan women and to the Kingdom of Morocco, this treatment legitimizes this downgrading stereotype and spreads a reputation that later attracts more Arab males to Morocco for the soul purpose of sex-tourism.

Another important international agent is the human trafficking mafias. In an attempt to inspect the numerous stories I have personally heard about Moroccan prostitutes in Lebanon, I have carried out a visit to the Red District of “Maameltein” in Lebanon. Two friends of mine and I went to “Maamaltein” to investigate the nationalities of the prostitutes in that region. By walking by the Super-Night-Clubs one can easily notice sport cars with license plates from the Gulf countries. ‘Pimps’, or prostitution dealers, started calling and offering their services, at the doorsteps of the night clubs, restaurants, and dark alleys. One says in Arabic: “Come take a look, I have girls between 17 and 19, Lebanese, Russians, Iraqis, and Moroccans”.

After asking a prostitute of Moroccan origins about the reason why she was there, she replied back stating that: “Two girls from [her] village left to Lebanon before [she] did, for work. They often sent back money. There was this one guy who used to come and promise young girls a job to support their families, so I thought I’ll have a better future but now I am here without any papers”.

The national level

On the national level, the situation is more alarming. Poverty, the taboo nature of the topic, low levels of education among girls and weak human development in general are some of the direct causes of the issue in the country. However, MMAHT is more concerned to direct its efforts to break this negative cultural stigma, through social empowerment. (Clarified in details under Objective of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking).
Another critical side effect of this phenomena is the shocking results related to the use of protection during sexual intercourse among prostitutes. In a study done in Morocco in 2008 by the Pan-African Organization for the Fight Against AIDS (OPALS), 43.5% of prostitutes surveyed did not use protection during intercourse. Also, 30% of the prostitutes who participated in the study had never been to school. This shows the high numbers of illiteracy and the relationship with awareness of sexual health practices.

What has been done before? (Literature Review)

At the level of Non-Governmental Organizations, and after closely searching the different NGOs in Morocco we immediately notice lack of relevant information to our main topic, whether the search was conducted in English, French or Arabic. We notice that prostitution is not tackled as the main issue, but rather dealt with through other themes, such as the NGO of “Bayti” which is for street kids and at the same time is protecting them from possible outcomes such as prostitution. Many NGOs have the same outlook at the issue and we find: “L’Heure Joyeuse” and “Al Karam”, both similar to Bayti, but localized in specific regions (CRIN, 2005).

A second group exists which is too specific such as: “Touche pas à mon enfant” this NGO, among others, deals with the intervention in cases that have to do with pedophilia in Rabat and Marrakech.

The third group, and these NGOs mainly deal with single mothers in difficult situations, they offer the necessary assistance and help preventing them from unwanted outcomes. Among this category we find: “INSAF” in the region of Casablanca; “Solidarité Féminine”; and “El Banine” operating in Agadir (Imane, 2009).
Last but not least we find the grouping that deals with a awareness on AIDS in specific such as the “Association Nationale de Lutte Contre le Sida (ALCS), or sexually transmitted diseases in general.

We can safely conclude that there is a vacuum at the level of Moroccan NGOs when it comes to directly addressing prostitution. We believe that this absence of anti-prostitution oriented NGOs is what is not making ground breaking progress in this issue.

At the level of governments we find that Morocco and with the collaboration with other states and the United Nations have signed and ratified several treaties and agreements to limit human trafficking and sex tourism. However, the efforts put forth by the Moroccan authorities under the form of enforcement remain weak, as they will be further discussed in details (under the following sections: stakeholders: The Moroccan Government, The UN, & under Pressure of the International Community).

Stakeholders and their position on the issue:

Based on an intensive review of the literature on prostitution in general and in Morocco in specific, the following are the major stakeholders in the issue (but not limited to): sex workers, prostitution networks (the mafias), religious parties, other NGOs, the United Nations and the Moroccan government. The listing of the different parties directly or indirectly in contact with this issue will help us understand the proper form our project needs to take; whether under a governmental agency, an international organization, or a local non-governmental organization.

The following is the list of the stakeholders and their position from the topic:
The sex workers: most of them are forced to get engaged in prostitution for social and economic reasons. Many get into it because of human trafficking. Most of the existing prostitutes in Morocco want to have better jobs, away from this degrading lifestyle.

The prostitution networks: it is an underground business heavily involved in human trafficking and abuse, clearly breaking the national laws and basic Human rights.

Religious groups: they are against prostitution, and can play a key role in rallying the people to generate donations, and spread awareness in the mosques about our work and ways to help. There is an opportunity of cooperating with these groups for more influence.

Non-Governmental Organizations: Some have been working on the issue, under different subtopics, and would be possible partners. The greater vision of the MMAHT is to create a coalition getting all this NGOs united under our umbrella, to ensure effective results. However, there is no single integrated approach currently available.

The United Nations: it has a clear stand on sex tourism. “The UN opposes sex tourism citing health, social and cultural consequences for both tourist home countries and destination countries, especially in situations exploiting gender, age, social and economic inequalities in sex tourism destinations” (Andrew, 1997).

The Moroccan Government: With all the negative social effects of sex-tourism, not many strict measures were taken to fight the phenomenon, since tourism is the country’s economic engine, as the GDP composition shows a 52% of the overall GDP coming from services (CIA Factbook, 2012), and sex-tourism plays a big part of it. The need to enforce the laws against human trafficking mafias, is an urgent matter that the Moroccan government has to act upon on the national level. The Moroccan government has also been accused of “lack [on the] overall
progress in the convicting and punishing trafficking offenders […] in proactively identifying trafficking victims among vulnerable groups; and in ensuring that foreign trafficking victims are not subject to arrest and deportation” (Department of State, 2010).

Whereas on the international level bilateral agreements have to be carried out to allow the prosecution of foreign tourists committing or encouraging prostitution in Morocco.

Tourist-exporting countries: collaboration with the Moroccan government is a must, to ensure proper human development rather than encourage dependence on prostitution and the insecure future it holds for its practitioners. This can be carried out under the form of bilateral legal agreements, awareness of the travelers of the possible legal risks, or through financial support (Clarified in details under the funding section)

Pressure of the International Community: (The Global Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism) and the (Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism)

The number of countries allowing the prosecution of their citizens for child sex tourism related acts in the countries, in which the crime was committed, is around 32 countries and is still growing. In response to the child sex tourism phenomena, governments, NGOs and the tourism industry are more and more addressing this problem lately. And as a response to their efforts, the World Tourism Organization has launched an armed force unit to fight child sex tourism, and in late 2005, about 200 different travel agencies from over 20 countries signed the global code of conduct for the protection of children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism that was first introduced and issued in 1999 (Andrew, 1999).
On the international level, Morocco included, tourism is witnessing rapid growth that is of many economic benefits to the countries of destination. This phenomenon is of equal importance and concerns to both, tourism-hosting countries and tourist-providing countries. Member countries of the World Tourism Organization, took two major steps towards limiting and enforcing laws against sex tourism, by adopting the WTO, Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism (S-POST) in 1995, and in late 1999 the Global Code Of Ethics for Tourism also known as the global code of conduct for the protection of children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

**Why an NGO?**

The Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking comes under the form of an NGO for the great flexibility, neutrality and efficiency that a Non-Governmental status holds. Away from governmental bureaucracy and corruption MMAHT can seek worldwide donations and support, and at the same time will have easy access to the civil society to achieve the next phases of our long term vision.

As an NGO one can also “freely” test new work approaches on the ground and chose according to the local conditions what suits best the situation, and not necessarily be bound to one way of operating.

This way the complete administrative and initiatives structure will be made after carrying out the needs assessment study on the ground, to fit in the Moroccan civil society. (*The initiatives and the different approaches are to be found in detail under the Methodology section*)

**Objective of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking**
There is a stressing need for a multi-disciplinary approach that is inclusive in its consideration to awareness, education, and networking in order to render prostitution obsolete. The goal of our NGO is to decrease the number of sex workers and improve their health conditions through awareness, education, diverse language and skills-development workshops and advocating for new policies by playing the role of a pressure group in the Moroccan politics. We aim for a future where Morocco’s underground prostitution will be faced with fierce opposition from all segments of the society, and where alternative and promising futures can be guaranteed for those that have been caught in its webs.

MMAHT in its essence believes in the power of the grassroots in making positive change happen. Our strategy however consists of a mix between bottom-up by integrating in the civil society and empowering and top-down

**The methodology of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking**

The NGO would undergo many initiatives as part of its integrated approach. However, the following is a comprehensive list of our proposed strategy, which will not all taken place at once. This paper still needs an exhaustive study on the ground to determine the best way to jumpstart the MMAHT, while in parallel help quickly relate to other NGOs and form strong relations, and most importantly fill-in the gap of an anti-prostitution oriented NGO.

**Free language and skills classes to sex workers:**

This initiative is aimed at increasing the language skills of sex workers to increase their chances of employment in other industries. For example, business fields that employ clerical positions require only secondary education and experience, and the ability to communicate with
several languages. Also, classes on French language as well, can be provided for the same reason, and to promote a generally more educated environment, thus allowing sex workers to enter industries that were otherwise out of reach due to the lack of certain skills. Practical work skills workshops can be held in the areas such as sowing, weaving, and pottery etc., these skills can facilitate a transition from the sex tourism industry to other technical areas where these skills will prove helpful and expand opportunities. Interested volunteers and interns from both local and international backgrounds would conduct these Language and Work skills workshops, they can also provide other creative ideas in which sex workers can transfer from the industry. Gaining these skills would be part of the rehabilitation process and would eventually give these women abilities that go beyond prostitution and are likely to increase their self-worth.

**Awareness Spreading**

a) Schools:

While there are various reasons for the outspread of this phenomenon throughout Morocco, lack of sexual education can be attributed as one of these main causes. Morocco is in transition between traditional and modern values that result in contrasting societal standards. It is precisely for such reasons that in cooperation with schools, a program targeting middle and high school students on sexual education and dangers of unprotected sex should be integrated within school systems. Another program by the MMAHT that illustrates to students the importance of completing at least a high school education, and the opportunities missed if done otherwise. The aim of reiterating the importance of education is to decrease the numbers of dropouts and stress on the importance of higher levels of education for better future living conditions. Also, another program that will eventually lead to forming a “Dropouts Database” would allow the MMAHT
to follow up with the students who do eventually dropout, and therefore ensure that they are not lead into prostitution or the industry.

Education is the base of decreasing prostitution and battling human trafficking, and specifically child trafficking. If the children are in schools and not begging on the streets or street vending, the possibility of their kidnapping and use in the industry is likely to drastically decrease.

b) Communities:

Local communities can act as “watch groups” because the reality is that they are the most aware of the situation and they directly benefit once it has been contained. In Casablanca alone, reports have mentioned about five thousand furnished apartments and villas open for prostitution, communities in Casablanca, for example can create a “calling tree” where they report such places through a seemingly untraceable chain that will not lead to them, and therefore they do not have to fear the punishments by prostitution mafia leaders.

Religion is still a part of big part of Moroccan society and as such religious groups may assist in promoting assistance from the communities through religious concepts of preserving “religiosity”.

Municipalities can play an important role with religious groups in denoting underage marriage as well as shedding light on the importance of education attainment, especially for women.

Q&A sessions, in addition to debate sessions and counseling sessions can be provided to community members for further reassurance and convincing, and as process of maintaining their commitment to the program.
c) Sex Workers:

Sex workers need to be further educated on the dangers of unprotected sex, sexually transmitted diseases and alternative work opportunities.

Through these free workshops, networks can be built to provide an estimate of the number of sex workers in a certain area, as well as “word of mouth” on the workshops can help spread the ideas they introduce. Unanimity and safety are guaranteed and in cases of psychological disturbances, doctor/patient confidentiality is also ensured.

Distribution of condoms and basic tests can be provided with the help of other partners. Also, contraceptives can be provided to ensure lower rates of pregnancies that might lead to abortions.

d) Online and Offline Promotion

Both online and print media can be used to raise awareness on the issues related to education, underage marriage, sex education and prostitution.

These will include intense print campaigns in the forms of posters and pamphlets. And campaigns using social media, websites and blogs will direct users to the website that contains all of the above information.

The designs will be in Arabic, French and English, to be understood by even tourists who are also in need of more awareness on this topic, especially since they are large sustainers to the problem.

e) Promotion of Prostitution or is it?

In an attempt to fight prostitution by targeting those that pay rather than the prostitutes themselves, a strategy will be carried out to expose those that encourage and nourish the
prostitution market by publishing the names of those that get caught on national newspapers. This will make everyone think twice before committing this act, and at the same time it plays the role of deterrence and law enforcement assistance.

f) Success Stories

To be able to ensure the participation of sex workers and communities, success stories of sex workers that were once part of the industry but are no longer due to opportunities provided by such campaigns, as well as increased public awareness. This will encourage others to approach the process more seriously and with greater will for success. An example of a success story is in 2005, when Fatima Abou Ali who was suffering from AIDS/HIV in a bold televised interview revealed her face to create more awareness on this taboo topic, as well as the illness she suffers from. This happened during a telethon that raised more than 20 million dirham in donations, following the telethon she was able to purchase a flat for her and her kids to live in.

g) Celebrity Campaigns

Celebrities are important popular culture icons and have a wide reach towards audiences that would otherwise neglect the topic. If celebrities, both local and regional, were to get involved in campaigns that promote awareness on the issue, the grasp of the MMAHT would be able to reach further. Also, Yosra, famous Egyptian actress has expressed her interest and admiration towards spreading awareness on this issue, and therefore if a celebrity campaign were to involve such an admired figure, then the campaign can spread to the North Africa region and eventually to the Middle East as a whole. Perhaps prostitution is more prevalent in Morocco but it certainly exists in all other Arab countries.

h) Civil Society Groups database
As a backbone to the campaign, civil society groups and organizations that target this issue may create databases that include all names, locations of known sex workers, leaders, promoters to be able to approach them and expand the reach. This division is also responsible for getting contacting the respective authorities and declaring any breaches.

**Legal Group (Policy Development)**

This group’s goals would be to develop new fairer draft laws regarding issues of prostitution and human trafficking, in order to reach a more protective and sustained legal system. In addition to specific laws regarding sex tourism, targeted towards the incoming tourists. This step could be achieved with the help of volunteer lawyers and law students, in addition to interested individuals with a law background.

**Networking Development**

The NGO would network with existing NGOs, civil groups, and other grassroots initiatives in order to increase the access of target individuals to different services offered, in addition to the mutual benefits that the groups would offer each other. This also the foundation group to establishing the long term vision of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking, MMAHT’s vision to create a coalition of Moroccan NGOs linked and operating under the same roof and cause, each with its specific niche of expertise, in collaboration with other international NGOs.

**Counseling Team**

The counseling team would be formed of volunteer counselors we would partner with, who would be give specific weekly hours (based on their schedules) to affected individuals, in
order to promote psychological health among sex workers, which would boost their chances at finding and pursuing healthier lifestyles. There could be future cooperation with universities offering Psychology majors and related fields, in order to give the students the opportunity to do internships within this organization. This would ultimately ensure a smooth transition of the victimized individuals towards a healthier society.

**Outcomes of the Moroccan Movement Against-Prostitution and Human Trafficking**

The outcome would be a society where there would be much fewer individuals involved in prostitution, in addition to a general awareness on the importance of education and sexual health. This initiative is also aimed to higher human rights and children rights’ standards in the Kingdom of Morocco, which would help its human development index.

The NGOs role is to reach a healthier society where the individual is of the highest importance, and spread a culture of respect of the human potential and human rights.

**Funding**

The initiative is foreseen to easily bind with different UN initiatives as it goes in parallel with the Organization’s core values. This would help bring forth professionals and founding. The EU Commission for Human Rights and Democratic Assistance is expected to be a strong partner to ensure the success of MMAHT.

By the end of year 2000, the European Commission provided about one million Euros to raise awareness, educate, train, and support research concerning the exploitation of children in tourism, under the name of “The International Campaign against Sexual Exploitation of Children in the World” (UNWTO, 2000).
All of the above are possible partners and/or donors. The World Bank in collaboration with Morocco, hold what is known as the National Initiative for Human Development (World Bank, 2013), and as the nature of our NGO falls under the umbrella of Human development; we believe that the World Bank and the Moroccan Government can support the MMAHT as our goals converge on many points.
Resources


Retrieved from: http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/0e5fc167-3ee3-457d-88ae-a719ced1f839

http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/T/talking_points/sex_tourism/

Ariane, C., 2012“After Bangkok, Marrakesh Forced To Face Plague Of Sex Tourism”.


http://www.crin.org/docs/Morocco_ngo_report.doc

http://www.ecpat.org.uk/downloads/Morocco05.pdf

http://pub.unwto.org/WebRoot/Store/Shops/Infoshop/Products/1235/1235-1.pdf


“Moroccan Culture Series: Women in Morocco”. Retrieved from:


worldbank.org/2Fprojects/2FP100026%2Fnational-initiative-human-development-support-project-indh%3Flang%3D