

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #3: Morocco

HLTH 4700: Global Health

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Introduction

Morocco is classified as a lower middle-income country, located in the northern part of Africa. It is about the same size as California, has a Mediterranean climate, which is hot and dry for most of the year, with milder but still relatively cold temperatures and rainfall from November to March. The Kingdom of Morocco is a constitutional monarchy, with the prime minister being the head of state/government, but the king has the absolute say and appoints the prime minister. Morocco also holds 75% of the phosphate reserves of the world and is ranked third in the world in its production, contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP) in Morocco worth 134.18 billion US dollars in 2022 (Achy, 2010). Despite Morocco being a popular destination for international tourists due to its delightfully warm weather, breathtaking natural landscapes, delectable cuisine, culture, and thriving tourism industry, Morocco remains a lower middle-income country. Although there are many challenges and threats negatively influencing Morocco's development as a country, improving the quality of the education system, decreasing the unemployment rate, and the enhancement of healthcare reform will all contribute to the progress of achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) #3, "Good Health and Well Being", by 2030.

Morocco has been fighting for reform and changes. However, there are a few obstacles that they must overcome to move forward as a country, and to progress into the positive development of SDG #3. The Moroccan government must be able to significantly increase public resources devoted to health care to expand coverage, meet the health demands of the population, and broaden the scope of the benefit package. Morocco spends 4.5% of their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita on health care, but roughly half of that funding comes from direct household payments (net of reimbursement from mutuals or insurers), with employee

contributions to insurance accounting for only 5 percent (Achy, 2010). Furthermore, lower-income households spend a higher proportion of their income than higher-income households. To secure adequate funding for reforms, the government must not only raise additional funds, but also shift funding sources, reducing funding from households and increasing funding from employers and the government. The allocation of government spending is severely unbalanced.

Urban areas received three-quarters of funding. On the other hand, rural areas housed half of Morocco's population and three-quarters of the poor (Achy, 2010). Wealthier populations benefited more from government spending than poorer populations, making the distribution of resources unequal. There are also large gaps in economic opportunities for women. Women make up 50% of the population and make up about 47% of enrollment in tertiary education. However, only 26% of women make up the labor pool (Morikawa, 2015). Gender inequality is a problem in Morocco, causing major drawbacks in the development of the country. From discrimination to low wage pay for women, it is pivotal for this issue to be fixed, as economic growth is essential for an improvement in living standards, health care, and infrastructure. Addressing these issues will benefit Morocco's efforts to progress with change through the end goal of reaching SDG #3.

Improving the Quality of the Education System

To see a significant change within the education system, it is of utmost importance to address the quality of education as the issue through a holistic view. To address the disparities, any educational policy should aim to increase the level of human capital stock through investments in public infrastructure (schools, roads, etc.), particularly in rural areas (Ibourk & Amaghous, 2014). Many rural areas in Morocco are severely lacking in infrastructure, such as

deteriorating roads, no access to electricity, schools located miles away from residential areas, unsafe drinking water, lack of healthcare facilities, and limited public transportation.

This means that not only adults, but children, must walk for miles every single day, in hazardous conditions and dangerous roads. All these factors contribute to children missing school and dropping out, which has been very common in rural areas. Thus, an increase in human capital stock through public infrastructure investment is one of the many steps in improving education (Ibourk & Amaghous, 2014). It is in Morocco, where we witness the highest illiteracy rate and the lowest average number of years of schooling (Ibourk & Amaghous, 2014). Although rural areas are susceptible to receiving a lower education or none, the country's whole education system is affected. One of the most critical solutions to Morocco's education challenges is to invest in teacher training and professional development. The Moroccan government should provide more opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching skills and learn new teaching methods (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014). Teachers should be encouraged to work in rural areas by providing them with better pay, housing, and other benefits. This approach, along with improved infrastructure, would help address the shortage of qualified teachers in rural areas while also improving students' access to high-quality education (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014).

Decreasing the Unemployment Rate

A big reason unemployment rates among youth are high is because there is a disparity between education and applicable jobs. First off, unemployment causes stress, a drop in self-esteem, and a shift in young people's expectations about their ability to enter the labor force, which is not great for someone's health. Due to their lower levels of education, Morocco focuses

more on skilled labor, with findings showing that young people without diplomas have lower unemployment rates than young graduates. These findings back up the research of Ibourk and Amaghous (2014), explaining that the likelihood of unemployment increases with education level. This disparity could be explained by a mismatch between the number of skilled workers graduating from postsecondary institutions and the number of job openings that require skilled workers. To address this disparity, Morocco's new government plan calls for "immediate" and "concrete" measures to strengthen the country's economy and increase youth employability from 2021 to 2026 (Latrech, 2021). This government plan also commits to funding critical sectors such as healthcare and education, as well as assisting a variety of industries such as agriculture, fishing, industry, and tourism (Latrech, 2021). By enhancing job opportunities not only for the educated youth, but for the whole population, this will see an increase in the economy, therefore improving other aspects of the country as well, like healthcare and education. Morocco has limited funding, however, if the panel decides to allocate more funding and additional resources towards these main recommendations, Morocco will have the capacity to reach SDG #3.

Enhancement of Healthcare Reform

To improve the healthcare system, it is imperative to address resource disparities, increase funding and workforce, manage non-communicable diseases, adopt digital technologies, and prioritize prevention. It is crucial to understand that education, health, and the economy are all interrelated. There can be no improvements if there are no qualified health personnel, or if there is no funding. Despite that, the Moroccan government has invested in expanding healthcare infrastructure, including the construction of new hospitals and clinics as well as the renovation of existing ones (Mahdaoui & Kissani, 2023). Furthermore, several e-health services have been developed to improve healthcare access and efficiency, such as telemedicine and electronic

health records (Mahdaoui & Kissani, 2023). Morocco has been implementing interventions over the years, but there has been no significant change. The recommendations and planning here are great, however, the threat here is the lack of funding/unequal distribution of resources.

Throughout these findings, it has been examined that urban areas have more resources and access to healthcare than rural areas. This distinction is particularly apparent when it comes to specialized care, medical equipment, and healthcare infrastructure (Mahdaoui & Kissani, 2023).

Inadequate healthcare funding is a major impediment to expanding access to care, improving infrastructure, and supplying necessary medications and technologies. Also, medical professionals, particularly physicians and nurses, are in short supply, particularly in rural areas, explaining the quality of the education system in Morocco. Due the shortage, patients must wait longer for care, and access to specialized care is limited. Including but not limited to, the Moroccan healthcare system faces challenges in managing health data and information, limiting its ability to plan healthcare strategies, monitor care quality, and make sound decisions (Mahdaoui & Kissani, 2023). This is the main determining factor for the development of SDG #3, good health, and wellbeing. Without adequate governance, guidance, and an allocation of resources from all these organizations, especially for the enhancement of healthcare reform, Morocco will leave a positive, overall, lasting impact in the development of the country.

Conclusion

While Morocco faces numerous obstacles and dangers that impede its progress, improving healthcare reform, lowering unemployment, and raising educational standards will all help the country move closer to meeting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #3, "Good Health and Well Being," by 2030. Morocco is a country in northern Africa with a lower middleincome. Morocco has significant external debt as well as structural unemployment. In 2021, the youth

unemployment rate was 27.2%. There are large income disparities, and approximately 80% of jobs pertain to the informal sector. Despite the many obstacles, Morocco has been worked on improving various aspects of their country, including but not limited to better healthcare reforms, improving employment rates, and better education systems. There are still many underlying factors that influence the country's ability to change, the allocation of financial and other resources towards these targets will help the country of Morocco achieve SDG #3 by the year 2030. This will be achieved by improving the quality of the education by critical to approach the issue of education quality holistically to see significant change within the education system. Next, decreasing the unemployment rate is essential, as the mismatch between education and available jobs is one of the primary causes of high youth unemployment. Lastly, an enhancement of healthcare reform is needed to improve the healthcare system, with this being critical to address resource disparities, increase funding and workforce, manage noncommunicable diseases, adopt digital technologies, and prioritize prevention. Should the panel decide to support Morocco, focusing on these three main components will drastically change their current state, leaving a positive impact that will result in significant change for years to come, assisting Morocco in achieving Sustainable Development Goal #3.

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