

Little Maids: Program Report

**The WomaniTy Foundation and INSAF's contribution to the eradication of girls' labor in Morocco
2005 - 2014**



Photo credits: Marc Thorens

Executive Summary

The WomaniTy Foundation's longstanding partnership with the Moroccan NGO Institution Nationale de Solidarité avec les Femmes en Détresse (INSAF) dates back to 2005, when the WomaniTy Foundation, then the Smiling Children Foundation, began its activities with this landmark project to stem the flow of young girls into labor. The aim of the partnership has been to contribute to eradicate the practice of employing under-aged girls as *petites bonnes (little maids)*; child domestic workers, and providing them with a safe future by reintegrating them back into family care and with the opportunity to pursue an education and a professional career, rather than ending up abandoned and – in many cases – as single heads of households¹.

¹ 41% of single mother supported by INSAF's program *Preventing the abandoning of children born out of wedlock*, where former child domestic workers.

Little maids are under-age girls aged less than 15² who are sent by their destitute families, with the mediation of intermediaries, to work as maids in urban households. Despite initial promises of offering girls, and especially their family, better opportunities, the grim reality is that the girls are widely used as cheap domestic labor, with limited or no rights, and subject to physical, physiological and, sometimes sexual abuse. As adults they remain trapped in the cycle of poverty, dependence and abuse and, often, end up on the street, in many cases with children of their own.

With the program *Little Maids: Eradicating Girls' labor in Morocco*, INSAF and Womanity identified *little maids* and girls at risk³, reintegrated them with their families and communities or prevented their employment, and supported their education. In parallel, the program also supported prevention and advocacy activities to challenge cultural norms within local communities and lobby the government at national and local levels to ensure the approval of effective laws and their rigorous enforcement. Whenever violence against *little maids* was reported, or when INSAF learned of the death of a *little maid* as result of abuse, the organization pressed for investigations and prosecution, joined the legal proceedings to advocate⁴ for the families of the girl and to ensure justice.

During the 10 year partnership, Womanity and INSAF were successful in eradicating the practice of encouraging *little maids* in the province of Chichaoua, and in rolling out the intervention model in two other provinces of Morocco: El Kelaa de Sraghna and El Haouz.

The program's implementation has provided INSAF and Womanity key lessons on effective strategies and activities in dealing with such a complex and deeply rooted social and human problem in a manner that would address its causes and propose systemic solutions. INSAF is pursuing its assistance and prevention activities based on the learning gathered from this experience and with the support of other public and private strategic partners and funders.

² The legal minimum working age in Morocco is 15. However, domestic work is not regulated. Currently the Moroccan parliament is reviewing a draft law which provides that the working age be raised to 16. INSAF and a Coalition of organizations aim to raise this age to 18.

³ Girls out of school, who dropped out, or who already undertake household work.

⁴ This is allowed on the basis of the Statute of INSAF as organization of public utility.



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The Challenge

Despite the law prohibiting child labor under the age of 15 in Morocco, many girls and young women from poor rural and suburban communities are sent to cities to work as maids. Very often, these girls are promised an education, a part time job, and better living conditions. However, the reality is much worse: they have limited rights, restricted to move and subjected to sexual, physical and psychological abuse⁵.

In 2009, according to INSAF, there were between 60'000 and 80'000 girls aged 7 to 14 employed as maids in Morocco, and 60% of the families employing them are aware of the illegality of the practice⁶. Usually, the family of origin is extremely poor and the parents are illiterate or barely literate. They send their daughters to work to increase the income of the household and often are not aware of the working and living conditions of their daughters. These young girls from rural areas are cheaper for middle class families to hire and too young to cause trouble or escape⁷. This creates a generation of girls without formal education, exploited, dependent and often abused.

⁵ United States Department of State (2014), "Morocco", *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2014, p. 281-283

⁶ The Advocate for Human Rights (2014), "Morocco's Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Suggested list of Issues Relating to Child Domestic Workers (*Petites Bonnes*)", http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/morocco_rights_of_the_child_child_domestic_workers_december_2013.pdf (20.06.15)

⁷ Terre des hommes (2013), « Maroc : « Petites bonnes » mais grandes victimes », <http://www.tdh.ch/fr/news/maroc--petites-bonnes-mais-grandes-victimes> (20.06.15).

As adults, these women are trapped in the cycle of poverty, without education and real opportunities. In the framework of its program *Preventing the abandoning of children born out of wedlock*, INSAF works to support poor single mothers and has identified a correlation between former little maids and homeless adults, prostitution and other forms of exploitation.

Womanity and INSAF have worked together for 10 years to enable these girls to fully realize their rights as recognized by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to ensure suitable family-based care and formal or informal education that protects them from exploitation.

The Project's Goals

Between 2005 and 2014, Womanity and INSAF pursued three main objectives in order to eradicate the practice of girl-child labor in Morocco:

1. To **identify** under-age girl laborers, **help** them to **return home** and build a future for themselves.
2. To **raise awareness** on the conditions of little maids among the populations at risk and prevent their recruitment into labor.
3. To **lobby** the Moroccan authorities at all levels to adopt stronger laws protecting children from exploitative labor, and to ensure their effective enforcement.

Womanity and INSAF's Contribution

AIM 1: Identification of little maids and help with the reintegration in their families, communities and schools

INSAF identified little maids and helped them to return home, by facilitating family reintegration, school enrolment, tutoring or vocational training, depending on how long the girls had been out of school. INSAF provided in-kind support (stationary, books, etc.) and some scholarships to ensure the girls' education.

From 2005-2014, a total of 218 girls were taken out of domestic labor, re-integrated in their families and enrolled into school. Many of them completed their education and some enrolled into University.

A support system, including informal education classes, was developed to assist these young girls in their education and their transition back to their communities.

Results 2005-2014:

Education

- 218 *little maids* were returned home and offered a scholarship to enroll in school and pursue their education;
- 33 tutoring classes were set up and reached 167 girls in 17 different villages of Chichaoua province;
- 17 informal education classes were organized and benefitted 425 girls;
- 384 children (aged 4 and 5) were offered pre-school education in 12 regions.

Medical treatment

- 45 little maids received medical treatment due to various illnesses upon their release from slavery.

Impact:

- 218 former little maids received support throughout the 10 years, and all of them remained enrolled in school.
- 60% of the girls in the program at the time passed their exams during the 2013/2014 school year with honorable mention.
- In 2014, 7 girls graduated from high school and enrolled in University. They received support from the Ministry of National Education.
- 81 girls left the program for different reasons over the years (61 for early marriage; 11 decided not to go to high school; 9 moved away from Chichaoua with their families); however, none of them, or their sisters, went back to work as *little maids*.
- According to the 2007-2009 external evaluation of the program, INSAF's program had an overall positive impact on the lives of girls, their families and their communities.

"My name is Siham, I am 17 years old and I am currently enrolled in the 1st year of high school. When I was 11, following the deterioration of the health of my father, I was sent to work as a maid in Casablanca. I worked for a family who exploited me for two years. I remember this period as marked by emotional shocks, suffering and insecurity. INSAF helped me return to my family and supported me in re-gaining confidence and hope. Now, I feel that I can shape my future and pursue my aspirations".



Photo credits: Marc Thorens

Aim 2: Prevention of domestic labor by informing and educating girls, parents and communities

INSAF's second objective has been to prevent child labor through education, awareness campaigns and by working with local organizations and authorities. They have succeeded in drastically reducing the recruitment of girls in the Chichaoua region, where the practice is practically eradicated.

Results 2005-2014:

- 47 awareness campaigns for parents were organized in 22 different regions of Chichaoua province. The campaigns reached nearly 10,000 community members;
- 59 awareness campaigns reached 14,218 children of which 6,432 girls;
- INSAF also organized workshops to sensitize local organizations and authorities about the risk of domestic labor. Outreach included 187 local organizations and 318 representatives of local authorities.
- Throughout the program's duration, 424 schoolteachers and 77 school principals were informed of the risks associated with child labor and were given tools to identify cases at risk of dropout and refer them to INSAF.

Impact:

- The dropout rate of students in primary education decreased from 16% to 4% in the areas covered by the project.
- INSAF estimates that 19 out of 22 regions in the province of Chichaoua abolished the practice of girl domestic labor outside of their homes.

- School directors have also contributed to identifying new cases of *little maids*, and directly supported the girls recently reintegrated
- Local authorities, such as religious leaders and community chiefs have been actively involved by facilitating INSAF's intervention in communities and the organization of action campaigns.
- Since 2009, INSAF, in partnership with Association Migration Solidarité et Échanges pour le Développement (AMSED), have trained and collaborated with four organizations willing to take over and expand the program to new regions. This has allowed the local associations to strengthen their management skills.

Aim 3: Public advocacy and lobbying of provincial, regional and national authorities to create stronger legal frameworks to protect children from exploitative labor and ensure their rigorous enforcement.

Although there is a legal ban on employing children under 15 years of age, their protection is too weak and the enforcement of the laws is too lax. Culturally, there is still tolerance for child labor and cases of illegal employment are rarely prosecuted, except when it involves serious physical abuse or death. The legal and cultural changes are intimately linked, and evolving very slowly. Public advocacy, information campaigns and lobbying are the means used to bring about cultural changes and a stronger legal protection for children.

Results 2005- 2014:

- INSAF created a coalition of 60 local and national Moroccan organizations who campaign and lobby for better enforcement measures to prevent child labor. The network is led by Amnesty International Morocco, The Moroccan Association of Human Rights, la Fondation Orient-Occident and INSAF.
- The coalition launched numerous actions to pressure the government to introduce a new legislative framework that ensures the elimination of girls' domestic work. Reports, information campaigns, petitions and demonstrations were organized to lobby the government and put the issue of little maids and child labor on the public agenda.
- The coalition met with MPs, organized legal workshops and conducted and published a legal study to improve the framework for the eradication of child labor.

Impact:

- While the government suggested, as a compromise, to raise the minimum age for domestic workers to 16, the coalition continues to lobby to increase it to 18.
- The awareness-raising efforts sparked a national debate on the practice of little maids.

- INSAF has taken part in the work of the Council for Child Rights at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.
- As a result of the coalition's advocacy program, more than 80 TV (national and international) and radio broadcasts have covered INSAF's and the network's work and the practice of underage girls employed as maids in Morocco.



Crédit photo : Marc Thorens

Lessons Learnt

The 10-year long collaboration has presented an enriching journey of learning and growth for Womanity and its implementing partner INSAF. During the program duration, Womanity has helped INSAF to achieve its objective in the region of Chichaoua and expand the program from a local pilot to a movement that has the capacity to lobby at the national level. In recent years, INSAF has become one of the key leaders in the fight for eradicating girls' domestic labor in Morocco and has brought the issue to local, national and international attention.

However, many challenges remain as the root causes of child labor sit in the extreme poverty of families, unstable livelihoods, lack of education and illiteracy. In rural Morocco and remote areas, school drop-out of girls, often linked to early marriage, remains high, thus perpetuating a cycle of uneducated girls, mothers and families. Culturally girls are considered inferior to boys and therefore remain vulnerable to harmful social practices.

By supporting girls' reintegration into families and communities, and investing in their education, INSAF is working on a durable systemic change: the education of girls to end the cycle of poverty and accelerate progress within their society.

Cost of the program 2007-2014: CHF 456'000

The Womanity Foundation is proud to have collaborated with INSAF in piloting, testing, scaling and replicating its approach over the past 10 years. We wish INSAF and their allies and partners full success in the realization of their worthy mission.

We would like to give a special thank you to all the donors who kindly supported our work in eradicating child labor in Morocco over the years, and whose contribution allowed the reintegration of girls into their family, school and community, and the prevention of their recruitment into slavery.

INSAF is continuing its important work. If you wish to contact INSAF, kindly visit <http://www.insaf.ma> or contact Womanity for a referral.

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