

Women's Misery

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In an ever-changing Morocco, nobody can deny the progress made in the field of women's rights especially in legal matters, since the new Family Code and the Nationality Law entered into force. However, several reasons suggest that despite the progress and gains made, much remains to be done to advance the status of women from here and elsewhere.

On December 10, the world celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), under the theme of "Dignity and justice for all of us", announced by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. On the basis of the responsibility that we all assume on our shoulders, and within this international context of debate, we see it legitimate to reconsider women's conditions in Morocco. The challenges facing the empowerment of women are found in many sectors. They are both complex and varied. On this point, vulnerability is the phenomenon that seems to me the most obvious and which is growing following the many prevarications that have shaken the economic sphere.

To identify the causes, analyze them and then seek possible solutions, we should first answer the following questions: What is vulnerability? Is it related to female gender? Who is a precarious woman? In other words, is female gender a factor of precariousness?

According to *Lisan al'arab*, an Arabic reference dictionary, "*Alhachacha*" is a noun referring to flexible, spongy and likely to be broken thing, i.e. weak and powerless. Vulnerability, according to *Le Petit Robert*, determines the thing or person which or who is not immune, with a fragile character or that can be easily hurt, or defenseless. Vulnerary describes the product that heals the wounds and sores.

The vulnerability of women's physical structure is a factor of alienation. This idea is a socio-cultural belief. This is why a woman is underestimated when she wants to carry out a mission and one doubts her abilities. Despite the fact that they are physically vulnerable, women do not cast doubts on their intellectual capacities.

In a country where 17% of the population lives on threshold of poverty with a remarkable gap between urban areas and rural ones, women seem to be the group which is most affected by this scourge. They do not manage to take a step forward and to surpass their discontent. This is because of illiteracy, the main obstacle to their awareness. That is why they are subject to injustice committed against them without being aware of claiming their rights. On the other hand, when a woman is

illiterate, she is naturally deprived of skills and therefore delays the development of the country. If she was compelled to work, especially in rural areas and slums, where the rate of poverty is very high, depending on particular living conditions, she would be exposed to ill-treatment because she lays bare her daily needs of survival and self-awareness is for her no more than a dreamlike; no more than an inaccessible summit.

Precariousness is not necessarily poverty that manifests itself today in a different scale. It may refer to the difficulty of finding a job ensuring stable yields. The majority of illiterates are the portion of population who are most affected by unemployment. That is why when illiterate women get a job, they accept lower wages. In most cases, they are without social security, without family allowances and without safe future. Also, they work in illegal conditions under temporary contracts.

Even so, they have worries about perfectionism. They do their best to perform tasks that exceed their capacity in order to maintain their positions for fear of being thrown into the street and missing basic elements to lead a decent life. Besides, they are afraid of the unexpected life (illness for example); they face difficulty to handle stress, obstacles of everyday life and harassment. The goal is not to reach out or not to resort to some person to provide for one's needs and without being exposed to exploitation in its various forms. Job security is equal to the balance in life and to dignity.

Based on economic and social indicators, there are different types of inequality suffered by women in our society.

- Activities;
- Types of jobs;
- Job insecurity;
- Unemployment;
- Wages;
- Equal situations;
- Heritage and access to scarce resources;
- Consumption;
- Education;
- Health;
- Social mobility;
- Social justice;

- Political representation;
- Social occupational prestige.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

“Ensure the principle of equal rights, equal conditions, equal opportunities and meritocracy”.

Faced with an increasingly dreadful labor market, requiring skilled workers, women workers receive a partial income and therefore exposed to financial instability. They accept jobs with low incomes. They are in danger of abject poverty, expose themselves in the streets to beg, sell kleenex or their bodies. This scandalous image which has become a customary spectacle proves social neglect.

Women are fragile by nature. Even when they choose to work, they are entrusted with the task of cleaning. They are in charge of cooking and raise children after pregnancy and childbirth. Extra work prevents them from pursuing a career. But when the work is shared between the husband and his wife, the burden is less heavy and it can be manageable in all cases. But when a separation occurs, the wife alone assumes on a full-time basis all responsibilities, neglects her life and sacrifices herself for her children, while the husband can rebuild his life.

Created from the same breath, as said in the *Surat* of *An-Nissae* (Women), men and women in our Muslim culture must maintain relationships based on some principles, such as respect and mutual consideration. The *shri'aa* (Muslim law) defines the role of each, his/her rights and obligations. According to the same repository, a woman is like a man in the sense that she is an independent being. Each is entrusted with a mission he/she must fulfill to prove his/her existentialism. To ensure equilibrium, both of them must do their duties and fulfill their responsibilities to strengthen cohesion and maintain homogeneity of the family and a cohesive social structure. Any negligence by one partner creates an imbalance that can result in affecting children's education and therefore encourages delinquency, increases the rate of street children and other alienating social phenomena.

TESTIMONIALS

To bring my presentation closer to reality, it seemed to me important to listen to women who live in insecurity in their daily lives. I should emphasize that few women were willing to talk about their situation of vulnerability because they consider it a taboo. They do not manage to exceed what they see as a complex.

Nothing is true and more expressive than the daily reality and the inner truth of some women who are here for other victims. For example, Khadija, 38-year-old, from a rural area, visited the city for the first time in her life to work as a little maid, a type of white slavery, to increase the poor yields of the small piece of land of her old father. She wanted to provide her family with a salary which she has never got. During a

chaotic journey, from house to house, she experienced all types of exploitation before challenging society, from which, in her view, she has gained nothing. So, this status drove her to prostitution which she has practiced for over 8 years, after having tried odd jobs as stop-gaps.

She said: “currently, “the market” is no longer the same as before, “customers” are more demanding and new younger, sophisticated and sexy competitors have invaded the scene, they provide more efficient “services””. From her thin appearance, her look of melancholy and hatred emerge excessive disgust, despair and bitterness, especially after having caught a disease about which she did not want to talk. Her comments suggest a set of painful living experiences.

Her friend, Fatima, belonging also to a poor background, suddenly found herself caught against her will in the world’s oldest profession, after having tried to escape the image of a divorced which her surroundings considered as dishonor. Since then, she has started a risky labyrinthine route in brothels where she experienced incarceration several times just to gain a living for her children in divorce and to prove her existentialism.

One must hear the complaints of these extremely sensitive women who need to be listened to. Their language has become unusual and trivial; wild expressions of nudity choke the listener. This is a pessimistic picture, but it remains an expressive voice of what they have endured, and a sample of many other women in our society.

Marginalization in all its forms is associated with women. A woman inherits half of what a man does. Again, she is the victim of fraud of her husband or her brother who robbed her part. On the other hand, she is a victim of his Don Juanism. She is exposed to infidelity that a male and unjust society pardons. This situation gives off a scent of revenge. Being humiliated, abused, beaten and raped, women experience hatred with varying degrees. A woman’s malice turns into revenge and sometimes atrocious crime.

She sometimes seeks more peaceful and obedient solutions. She cuts herself off in patience and silence, in the noblest expression, when words do no longer express her pain. She hopes that the other serves as a psychological relief, that he restructures his thoughts, proves his maturity and greatness, through meditating women’s situation to overcome the perennial battle between the sexes as regards their balance of power. Women aspire to equity and social reconciliation.

We keep highlighting that women have access to all positions of responsibility, but the reality is different because there are still barriers to their advancement. In the political field, for example, qualities and achievements are required more for women than for men. When a woman is given a post in general, it is closer to social field than to financial one.

According to reports, violence still dominates. Sexual discrimination and gender disparities remain a socio-cultural reality rooted in the mindsets. Conditions of women linked to socio-economic constraints remain inadequate.

Suggestions

- The issue of human rights is still open. Hence, there is a need to continue to campaign, increase efforts, hold more discussions and meetings by involving leaders from all sectors and disciplines, and opening up to forces that fight against the barriers hindering development. Signing agreements is not enough. A committee for monitoring their implementation should be set up to move forward in the debate.
- A national gender observatory and a high-level committee on women should be set up. This initiative will be the crowning achievement of all stripes of associations operating in Morocco. These associations should be pillars in assistantships and known for their geodynamic and micro societal analysis in all areas.
- Foreign and local humanitarian actions should be sought to support in parallel the work of these associations, especially in remote areas, to advance women who live in bad conditions, as regards medical and preventive issues, for example.
- Investigations should be conducted to diagnose and assess women's status, by involving specialized study centers; urgent necessary steps should be taken and potential action plans should be developed and implemented; necessary expenses should be sought (research for sponsors); and monitoring arrangements should be established;
- Assess the need to define new policies on gender approach and create centers of study in this direction in collaboration with international bodies working for the same goal; involve stakeholders in evaluation, including independent bodies;
- Draw up rehabilitation programs;
- Raise awareness about planning to reduce undesired pregnancies;
- Improve multisector-based coordination to enhance the impact of development;
- Raise the budget earmarked for development and resources;
- Create opportunities for development by promoting the creation of projects, the delivery of aids and their implementation;
- Involve migrant workers and encourage them to invest in development projects; seek the help of international expertise mainly;

- Urge women to participate actively in promoting their image and in the various actions undertaken for their advancement;
- Develop action programs including preliminary steps to involve women in political affairs and decision-making positions, by merit and not by quota;
- Take a set of staggered measures by raising the awareness of institutions, elected officials, researchers, while putting in place monitoring arrangements to assist women in precarious situations;
- The state cannot do everything. It needs its women and men to achieve transition to democracy, a long-awaited aspiration of all Moroccans. Without women, it will be a flawed democracy. Let's extend our hands to women. Together we can make miracles come true.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION