

Results in Morocco Before Spending a Dime

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Having collectively spent over half a century monitoring the performance of companies and organizations in the private sector, we have learned a fundamental truth: Results reign. Nothing speaks of accountability and transparency better than delivering results that clients and shareholders can touch and the bottom line can quantify.

When, in August 2007, the two of us witnessed the awarding of a \$697.5 million U.S. government poverty reduction grant to the Kingdom of Morocco through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), America's innovative development assistance agency, we knew that we had partnered with a country that shares our philosophy about foreign aid.

Like the United States, Morocco maintains that assistance should be keyed to benchmarks, designed to yield economic rates of return, and linked to delivering results that make a difference for the poor. It is notable that our partnership with Morocco is delivering such results even before one dime of this aid has been spent.

High-level officials, private sector leaders, and workers alike in Morocco believe in their country's tremendous potential. They also would acknowledge the hurdles that hinder long-term economic development and negatively confront the poorest 11 percent of their fellow citizens. Through its cooperation with MCC, Morocco has created a platform for a results-driven partnership that is designing innovative solutions to spur economic growth. And, even before the bulk of this money starts flowing, this cooperation in Morocco is already bearing fruit.

This is apparent in the groundbreaking reforms Morocco has undertaken to address poverty. For our part, American assistance through MCC is awarded only to countries that govern justly, invest in health and education, and encourage economic freedom. For its part, Morocco responded on its own to these criteria and seized the opportunity to change its laws and improve internal processes. For example, Morocco is working to bring the fishing sector up to international environmental standards in order to maximize MCC's investment in this critical industry.

Nowhere is the early success of Morocco's MCC partnership more apparent than in Morocco's leadership of its development agenda. American aid through MCC asks countries themselves to determine what they need most to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth.

Morocco responded with incredible seriousness and reached out to its citizens - at the national, provincial, and local levels - to discuss which productive sectors would create the most jobs for the majority of the poor. After extensive deliberations, Moroccans determined that their MCC investment should target fruit tree

productivity, small-scale fisheries, artisan crafts, financial services, and enterprise support.

This is a win-win outcome. Americans know that U.S. funds are going to a country committed to addressing poverty issues it identified. And, the program encourages continued government reforms and promotes a more stable environment. The Moroccans win because they are reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth through a country-determined program that is expected to increase their gross domestic product by approximately \$118 million annually.

Morocco has implemented programs that leverage and complement this investment of friendship and support by U.S. taxpayers. After signing its MCC grant but before implementing it, Morocco unveiled its five-year agricultural development strategy, the Plan Maroc Vert or Morocco's Green Plan. Through this plan, every U.S. dollar spent to improve agricultural productivity in Morocco will be reinforced or matched by other donor or government funds. At a time when every dollar counts, stretching our resources abroad to deliver the greatest impact makes good sense, and Morocco proves this.

Americans should take note of what is happening in Morocco as an example of a respectful use of U.S. taxpayer money in the fight against poverty. Before spending one dime of MCC's grant, Moroccans were already putting their solutions, their resources, and their people to work to reduce poverty. Instead of simply measuring dollars out the door, one can see results through positive and meaningful change taking root in a country that is taking charge of its development.

This type of partnership creates conditions for American investments to do the most good. In the midst of the global financial crisis, this illustrates healthy "smart aid" at work that is extraordinarily efficient and effective not only for our partners, like the Moroccan people, but also for Americans.

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GROUNDBREAKER -- Morocco has undertaken groundbreaking reforms to address poverty in the country. The photo shows King Mohammed VI of Morocco at an official dinner at the royal palace in Marrakesh in October 2007. (Image by ABACAPRESS.COM via Newscom)