



Cooperazione Italiana  
allo Sviluppo

Ministero degli Affari Esteri  
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

*Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo - Ufficio III - Sezione Valutazione*

## 2020 | Summary of the Evaluation report

### Morocco

Evaluation of the initiative:

“Tous autour de l’enfance.  
Prevention and protection  
services for the benefit of single  
mothers, minors lacking family  
support and disabled children in  
Morocco”.

AID 10593

This independent evaluation report has been commissioned by Office III of the General Directorate for Development Cooperation - Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The company STEM-VCR was designated to carry out the evaluation by means of a public award procedure pursuant to art 36 of the Italian Public Procurement Code.

STEM-VCR evaluation team: Serena Saquella (Team Leader); Touria Eloumri; Saida Drissi Amrani; Mastafa Zahir; Mohamed Marir; Maurizio Floridi; Federica Floridi.

The opinions expressed herein represent the views of the evaluators, and are not necessarily shared by the commissioning body.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background aspects and Theory of Change .....	1
3. Logical framework of the initiative .....	2
4. Methodological aspects .....	3
5. Evaluation results.....	4
5.1 Relevance .....	4
5.2 Coherence.....	4
5.3 Effectiveness .....	5
5.4 Efficiency .....	13
5.5 Sustainability.....	13
5.6 Impact.....	14
5.7 Visibility.....	15
6. Conclusions, lessons learned and best practices.....	15
6.1 Conclusions .....	15
6.2 Lessons learned .....	17
6.3 Best practices .....	17
7 Recommendations.....	18
7.1 General recommendations.....	18
7.2 Specific recommendations .....	18

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

Ai.Bi.	<i>Associazione Amici dei Bambini</i> (Children's Friends Association)
CBR	Community-Based Rehabilitation
CDEPF	Collectif pour le Droit des Enfants à la Protection Familiale (Collective for Children's Right to Family Protection)
CLIO	<i>Centro Locale di Informazione e Orientamento</i> (Local Centre for Information and Guidance)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
INSAF	<i>Institut national de solidarité avec les femmes en détresse</i> (National Institute for Solidarity with Women in Distress)
MAECI	<i>Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OVC	<i>Organismo di Volontariato per la Cooperazione Internazionale</i> (Volunteers Body for International Cooperation)
SAFIR	<i>Service d'Accompagnement, Formation, Information et Reseautage</i> (Support, Training, Information and Networking Service))
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## 1. Introduction

This summary concerns the evaluation report of the project “*Tous autour de l'enfance. Prevention and protection services for the benefit of single mothers, minors lacking family support and disabled children in Morocco*”.

The initiative was carried out by the promoting associations *Ai.Bi. Associazione Amici dei Bambini* in partnership with *Soletterre – Strategie di Pace onlus* and *OVCi – La nostra famiglia*, and with some local associations in areas where the project was rolled out, including: Association “*Casa Lahnina*”; *CLIO – Centre Local d'Information et Orientation* ; Association “*100% Mamans*”; Fondation “*Rita Zniber*”; Association “*Dar Atfal Al Wafae*”; Association *INSAF (Institut national de solidarité avec les femmes en détresse)*; Association “*Osraty*”; Association “*SOS Village d'Enfants*”. In addition to these associations, two **institutional partners** were involved: UNICEF Morocco and *Entraide Nationale*, a public body answering to the Ministry for Social Development, Women, the Family and Solidarity.

Local **associations** were brought together in the Collective for Children's Right to Family Protection (CDEPF), an informal grouping created in February 2013 to make the Moroccan government aware of the creation of the National Family and Childhood Council as provided for by the new Moroccan Constitution (in force since 1 July 2011).

The initiative was implemented in Morocco and particularly in the areas of Casablanca, Tangier, Meknes, Temara, Rabat, Fez and the municipality of Ain El Aouda, territories where local partners are based. The initiative was presented on 5 December 2014, approved by the Directing Committee with Resolution no. 71 dated 29 May 2015 and officially launched on 4 January 2016. Activities concluded formally on 3 January 2018, resulting in an actual duration of 24 months, as scheduled.

## 2. Background aspects and Theory of Change

The initiative is based on a series of considerations made by the NGOs promoting the initiative regarding the situation of some **vulnerable** categories of the population in Morocco. In this regard, “...in 2009 8,760 children were abandoned (an average of 24 per day), of these 38% (3,329 children) were born outside marriage...”. The proposal put forward by NGOs to MAECI argues “...One of the factors behind the phenomenon of child abandonment is that of unwanted pregnancies as a result of rape and sex outside marriage. Social and cultural constraints, health problems (disabilities) and economic difficulties naturally compound the burden of poverty and vulnerability in an unprotected setting marked by family conflicts. The publication «*Le Maroc des mères célibataires*» (INSAF, 2010) states that between 2003 and 2009 340,903 children were born out of wedlock. About 80 children are born every day in Morocco outside marriage, resulting in about 30,000 such births a year. Children who will perhaps never be registered at the registry office, since mothers often decline to exercise this right...”.

In their proposal promoting NGOs also state that “... Two phenomena are particularly evident. Firstly, disabilities: according to the most recent survey “*Enquête Nationale sur le Handicap*” (2004), Morocco has 1.5 million disabled persons, of whom 230,647 are children. Secondly, a constantly growing social phenomenon is the vulnerability of single mothers, who currently make up 4% of women having children. 90% of these women profess to be excluded from their family setting and social networks, the victims of violence and in a state of poverty. In such cases there is a high risk of suicide, child abandonment and infanticide. Children born out of wedlock are also marginalised and discriminated against. For unmarried women a state of pregnancy is already a public show of breaking the rules. Healthcare facilities indeed are obliged to report childbirths to the Police. The stigma of having children out of wedlock is compounded by law, which recognises as a

*"legitimate" child "[...] every child both 5 months and 29 days after the date of its parents' marriage or every child born 366 days before notification of the parents' divorce or father's death [...]". The non-registration of newborns is often a sign pointing to the child's abandonment and possible institutionalisation (going into care), resulting in all the related difficulties - emotional, relational, place in society and the labour market, and so on".*

In terms of **change theory**, the premises of the project “*Tous autour de l'enfance*” derived from the observation of a difficult situation regarding the spread of **social exclusion** phenomena to the detriment of single mothers, abandoned children – or those at risk of being abandoned - and disabled children. These categories of persons are particularly exposed to the risk of being excluded from their family setting and from social networks, and to violence and poverty. The risk of exclusion, associated with processes of **social stigma**, is exacerbated by forms of legal discrimination (e.g. the fact that childbirths of unmarried women are reported to the police by healthcare facilities, and conditions on the registration of “legitimate” children in the civil register) and by shortcomings in welfare policies and systems, such as the weakness of local civil society organisations engaged in this area, the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon, the shortage of local services and of a policy promoting the rights of single mothers, abandoned children and disabled minors.

The initiative thus sought to foster a **change in the situation**, through a greater recognition of rights, improved services and specific policies and a national action plan.

### 3. Logical framework of the initiative

The initiative under review pursued the **general aim** of helping to promote and defend the social and economic rights of single mothers and their children, abandoned children or children at risk abandonment, and the **specific aim** of strengthening the role of civil society organisations engaged in these areas, with the study, drawing up, enactment and monitoring of policies and services dedicated to these vulnerable categories.

With regard to these goals, some **expected results** were listed for different lines of action:

- to raise knowledge about and disclose the phenomenon through research and sectoral mapping;
- to identify, consolidate and activate pilot local services that can be incorporated in the local network of social and educational services in relation to processes and forms of social marginalisation of single mothers, abandoned children and disabled children;
- to start up and strengthen political and institutional advocacy initiatives, through the creation of a national Platform on the topic and a Plan of Action to be proposed to and discussed with national institutions;
- to launch a national information and awareness-building campaign that can help to bring down the walls of silence and social stigma attached to single mothers, abandoned children and disabled children.

The main groups of **final beneficiaries for the intervention** and implemented services were:

- **single mothers** belonging to vulnerable categories and women at risk of unwanted pregnancies outside marriage;
- deinstitutionalized minors, abandoned or at risk of abandonment and with disability.

**Other direct targets** of the initiative were:

- at least **200 social workers** engaged in services coming under the project and in local (public and private) services in the cities of Tangier, Meknes, Fez, Rabat and Casablanca, or belonging to 20 Moroccan CSOs, involved in creating and activating the National Platform and beneficiaries of awareness-building and training activities;
- **30 journalists and press officers** given information and training about the topic and involved in public information activities and campaigns;
- **20,000 citizens** in the country reached through the project's information and awareness-building campaigns and services carried out by the project.

#### 4. Methodological aspects

From a methodological point of view, after a first phase of preparatory work including numerous interviews with managers and operators of NGOs / CSOs involved in the implementation of the activities, measures were taken to combat the spread of the COVID19 epidemic, beyond the documentary analysis normally carried out in the preliminary phases of the evaluation, it was necessary to **review the project tools** and adopt **remote consultation** procedures in relations with beneficiaries and the main actors involved. To consult information sources evaluators made use of a **host of tools, varying** depending on the interlocutor and on the data and information to be collected. It should be noted that because of the remote consultation procedures obviously **direct observations** could not be deployed as a tool to gauge how service centres involved in the project are working, even if a number of witnesses were collected to this end. Concerning the *focus groups* to be held remotely according to the methodological reformulation, their implementation turned to be difficult because of connection problems (severely slowed down due to the large use of the internet by those who were forced to confinement) and difficulties encountered with interactions with participants (in terms of immediacy of contact), on the other hand it should also be said that it was practically impossible to involve the beneficiaries of some initiatives (as it is the case of the service centres for single mothers of Fez and Meknes, minors leaving care, trained personnel from the CSOs, etc.). This situation caused the evaluation team to reject use of the focus group tool, and to make greater use of remote bilateral interviews in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Globally, **83 beneficiaries** were consulted through **four online questionnaires**: 46 to single mothers assisted by the project; 20 parents of as many disabled children; 12 to deinstitutionalized minors, or out of institutions; 5 members of the Moroccan CSOs benefiting from the training of the project. As for the main actors, **33 actors** were consulted through **online interviews**, in particular: 5 operators in the disability sector trained by the project; 8 representatives (at the level of the central offices in Italy and the peripheral offices in Morocco) of the three NGOs; 12 representatives of the local CSOs partners of the project; 5 representatives of the local CSOs not partners of the project; 1 journalist and communication operator; 2 MAECI officials (in addition to those who attended the start-up meeting, the conference call dedicated to the comments on the final report and the presentations of the report).

The results of the evaluation exercise were particularly affected by the existence of “parallel projects” or “twin projects” carried out by the same NGOs with actions very similar and in the same timeframe but financed by other donors. They are the following:

- another project from Ai.Bi. and funded by the European Union, entitled « *PLATEFORME CDE: Projet de création d'une Plateforme Nationale pour le développement, la mise en œuvre et le suivi des politiques publiques en matière d'enfance, dans le respect de la CDE* », officially launched in January 2016, **at the same time as** the start-up of the project “*Tous autour de l'enfance*”, and concluded in January 2019;

- the project Soleterre in partnership with the association *100% Mamans* entitled “*Mères en ligne*”, operational since 2015, with the same services foreseen by the project “*Tous autour de l’enfance*”). The project was funded by the European Union in partnership with the Social Development Agency;
- the project rolled out by OVCI regarding the expansion of the SAFIR service centre and application of CBR, funded by the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region, pilot project initiated in June 2015 and completed in November 2016.

The simultaneous presence of different projects with the same actors and the same beneficiaries has in fact produced an overlap between the different actions that have made it particularly difficult to attribute the effects of these actions to one project rather than another.

## 5. Evaluation results

### 5.1 Relevance

Generally speaking, the relevance of the intervention appears to be **high**. The strategies adopted in the intervention identification and formulation phase were in response to a national problem that is particularly widespread and difficult to eradicate. Also, from a theoretical point of view, the choice to make the initiative a “pilot” scheme was sensible (even though the project would not go on to have that trait), since the issues raised by the intervention require, when planning the project, but also in the rollout phase, an exploration of many solutions in view of the profound legal, social and cultural implications involved.

The theoretically high relevance to the context, however, is **greatly mitigated** by some aspects that compromise its possibility of success, in particular due to the predominance of a theoretical paradigm and operative methods related to children's rights, relegating the issue of women's rights and consequently neglecting the process of social stigma and marginalization to which they are subjected and whose effects are often the basis of abandonment.

### 5.2 Coherence

On the subject of **internal coherence**, the project **respects** the guidelines of Italian Cooperation and international standards and principles adopted for the issues of children's rights and the rights of disabled children. As regards coherence with Italian Cooperation 2010 guidelines “Gender equality and women's empowerment”<sup>1</sup> and “Operational guidelines for Italian Cooperation in the North Africa and Middle East region”, the project may be said to be **lacking in coherence**. The project actually made an **extreme simplification** of the question of abandoned children or those at risk of being abandoned by adopting as a **single paradigm** the issue of children's rights and neglecting the issues of **gender equality and women's empowerment**. In short, apart from rare exceptions, the project worked more on the **impact** (abandoned children) than on the **deep-rooted causes** (gender inequality and the process of social stigma and marginalisation/women's exclusion).

External coherence includes the factors complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with other actors, and ensures that the intervention generates value added, avoiding overlaps with other actions. The question of harmonisation with other actors and that of overlaps with other actions appear to present the **biggest problems**. In fact there are strong differences of approach between the various organisations involved, especially concerning the services aimed at single mothers, and also a strong

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2010-07-01\\_LineeguidaGenere.pdf](https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2010-07-01_LineeguidaGenere.pdf)

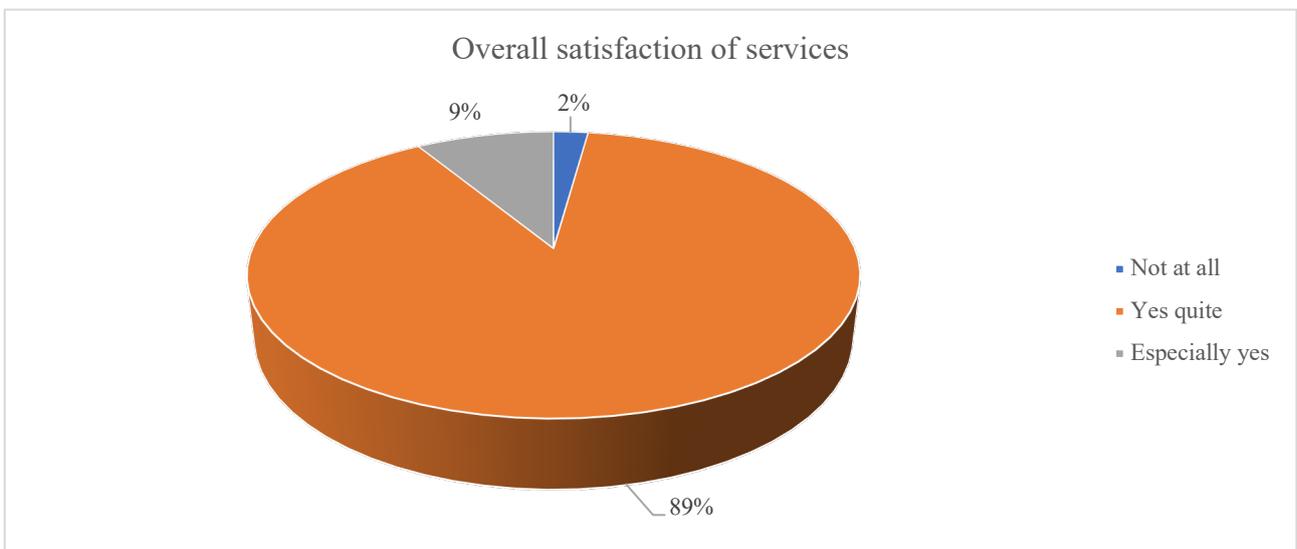
overlap with “twin projects” funded by other donors to the same organisations and in the same timeframe.

### 5.3 Effectiveness

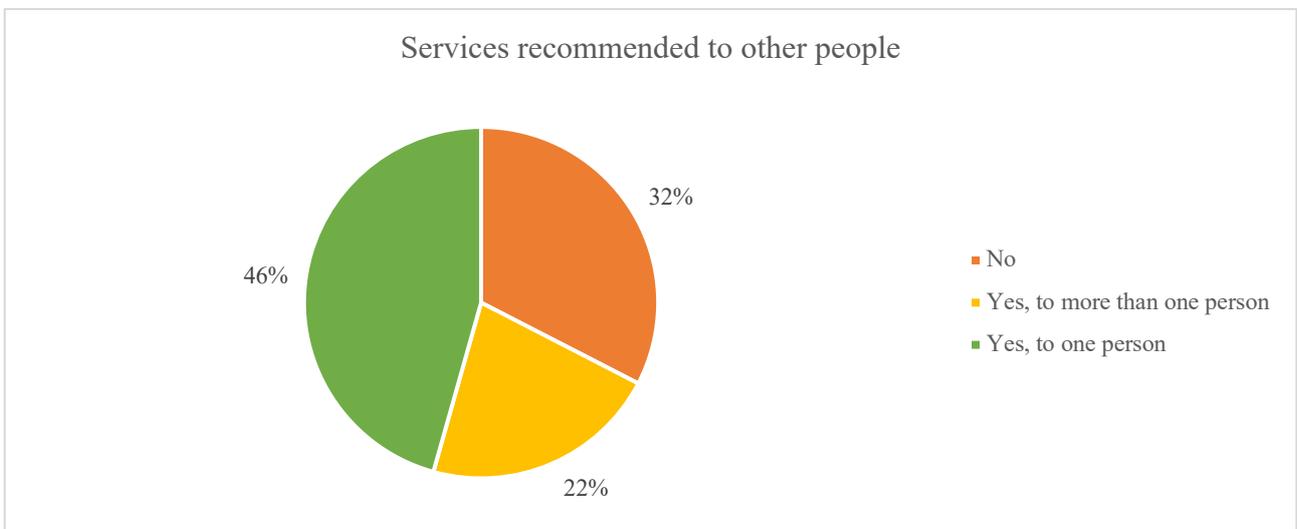
The project is characterized by an effectiveness at different speeds according to the actions and actors that carried them out.

#### 5.3.1 Service centres aimed at single mothers

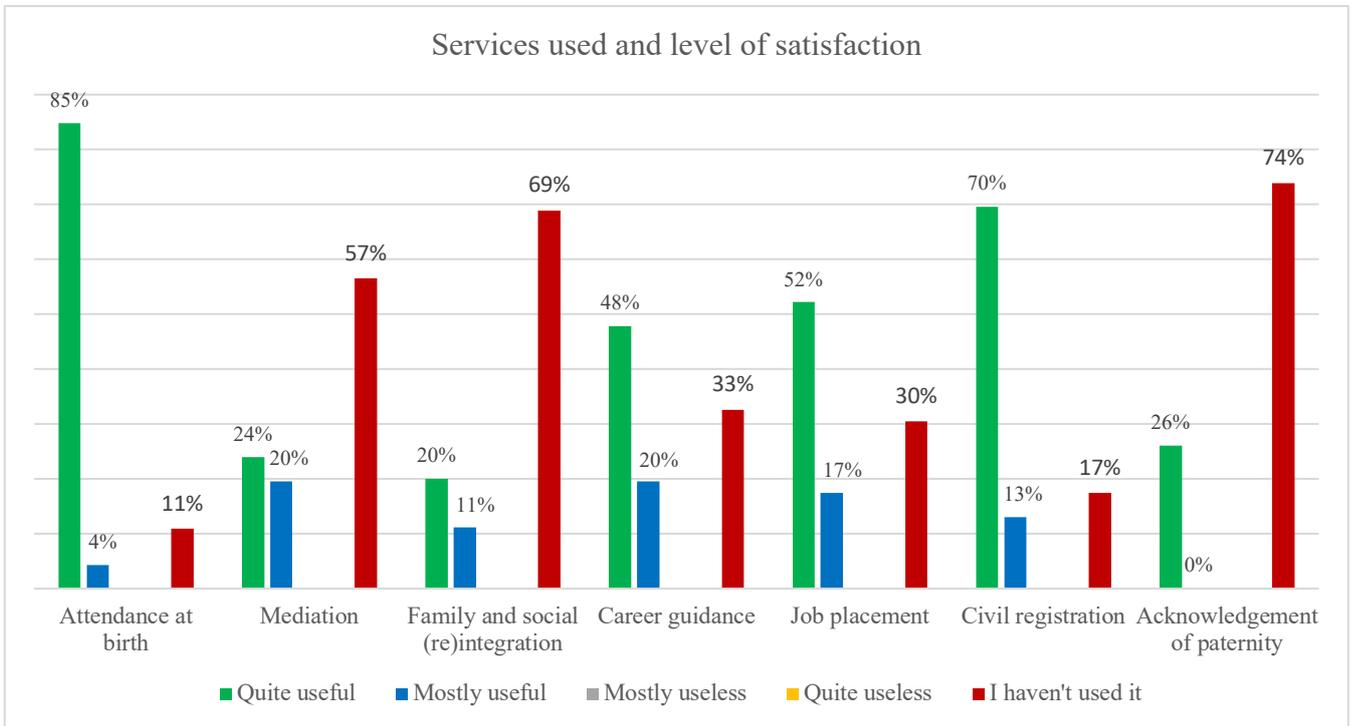
For service centres aimed at single mothers, the evaluation exercise showed a **very high degree of satisfaction** about the usefulness of services provided, which included social assistance and reception, legal representation, registering children with the civil registry office, career guidance, and so on. 89% of those interviewed said services used were very useful, 9% said they were useful, and just 2% were dissatisfied, as the graph below shows.



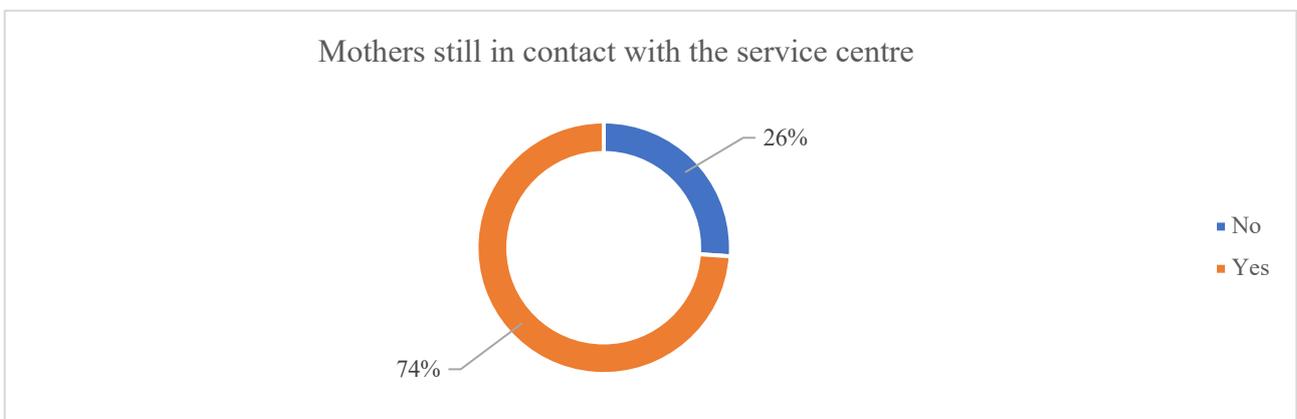
Mother’s satisfaction is confirmed by the fact that 68% of those interviewed said they had **recommended the services** offered by the service centre to others (22% of whom to more than one person).



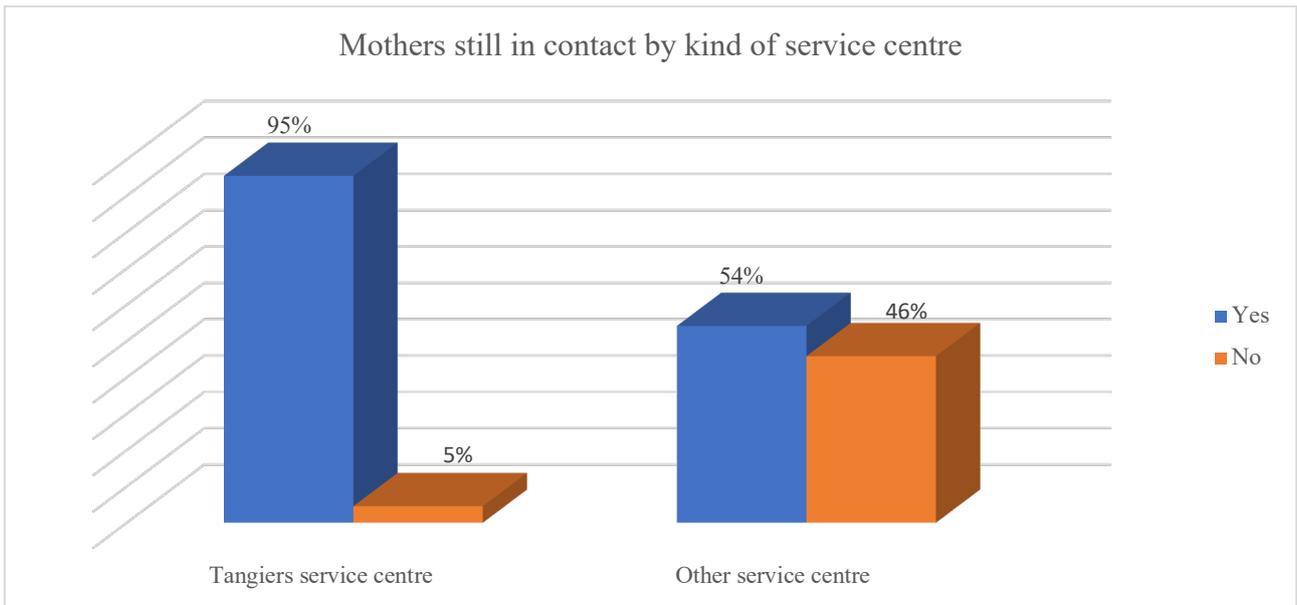
Looking at user satisfaction, all values regarding services are **extremely high**, with the most satisfaction expressed for assistance with childbirth and registering children. It is interesting to note that none of those interviewed said services did not serve a purpose.



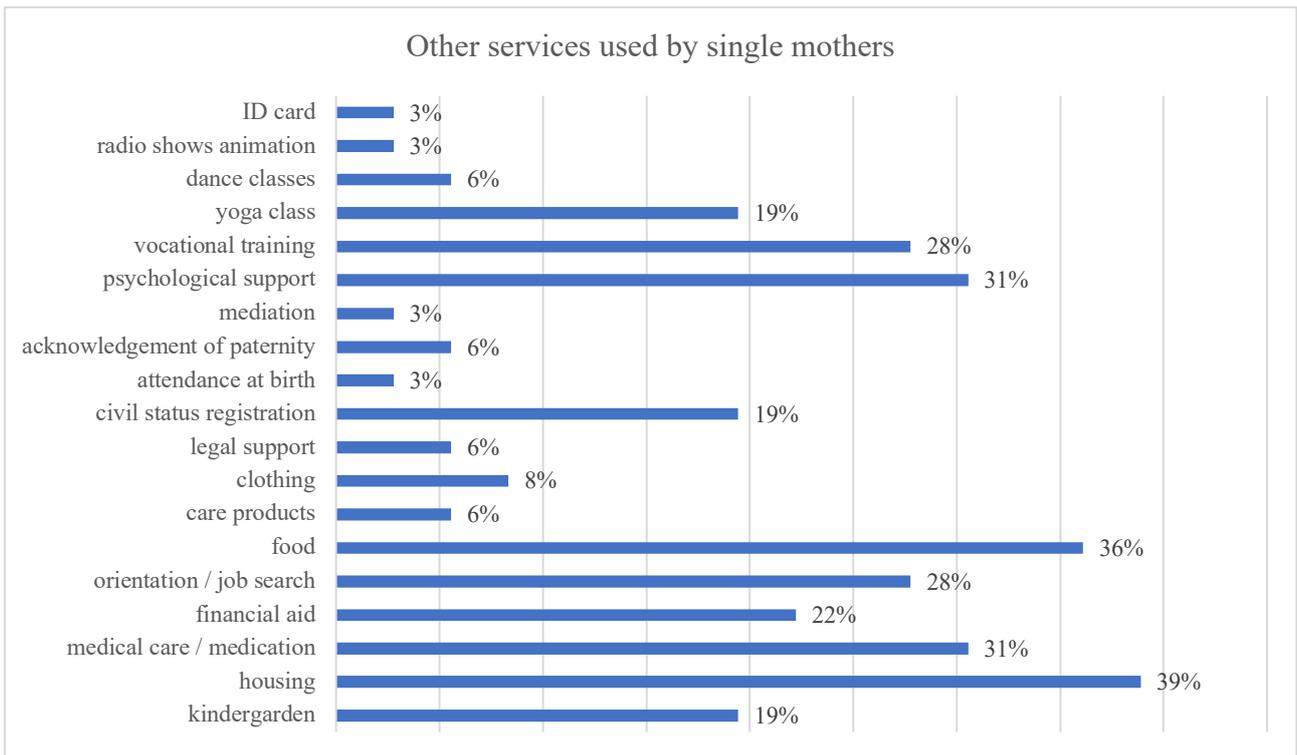
A **significant percentage** of mothers remained in contact with the centre even after the birth of the child: 74% of mothers continued to attend the centre, while 26% did not.



Those mothers that said they continued to attend the centre came for the most part from the **Tangier** centre.



With regard to **services provided by the centre**, as well as more traditional services provided, 78% of mothers said they had used, or are continuing to use, ancillary services in the period after childbirth, between 2017 and 2018.



There was a **wide variety of support** offered by service centres, especially that of Tangier, to mothers even after the birth of the child. The most frequent help provided was that of finding housing, followed by food and medicine provision and medical check-ups. It is interesting to note that psychological help, career guidance and work placement come above financial support.

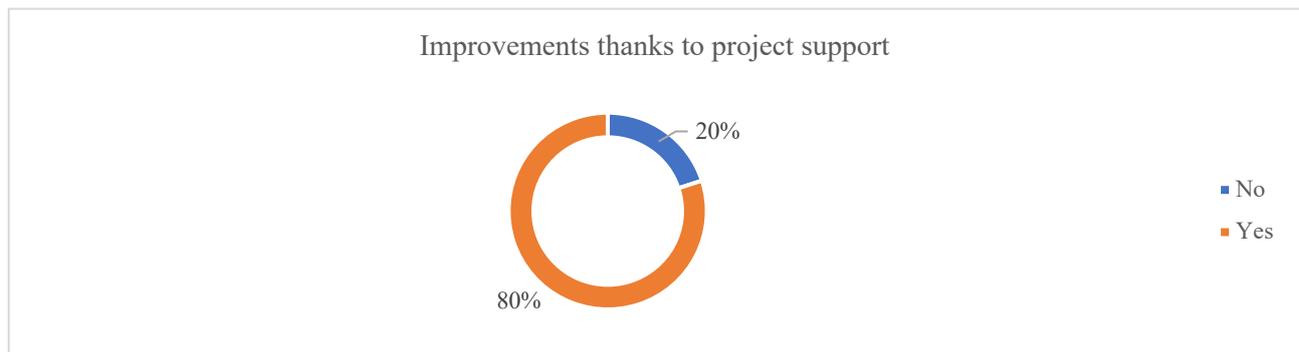
However, it is worth to precise that **not all** service centres for single mothers have got the same level of effectiveness, indeed while service centres of Casablanca and especially of Tangier have very high level of performance, the centres of Fez and Meknes assisted just 45 mothers globally over the full

duration of the project. Moreover, the latter ceased their activities after the conclusion of the intervention.

### 5.3.2 Reinforcement of the SAFIR centre and the start-up of a community based rehabilitation pilot service aimed at disabled children

As for the SAFIR service centre and the start-up of the RBC service, aimed at 120 families with a total of 120 disabled children, the project **filled a void** that no one would have filled. In fact families cannot count on any kind of external public or private support.

Looking at the criterion of effectiveness, it is noted that according to 80% of parents in the panel formed for the administration of the online questionnaire, the project, and especially the application of RBC strategy, helped to **improve** the condition of their disabled children.

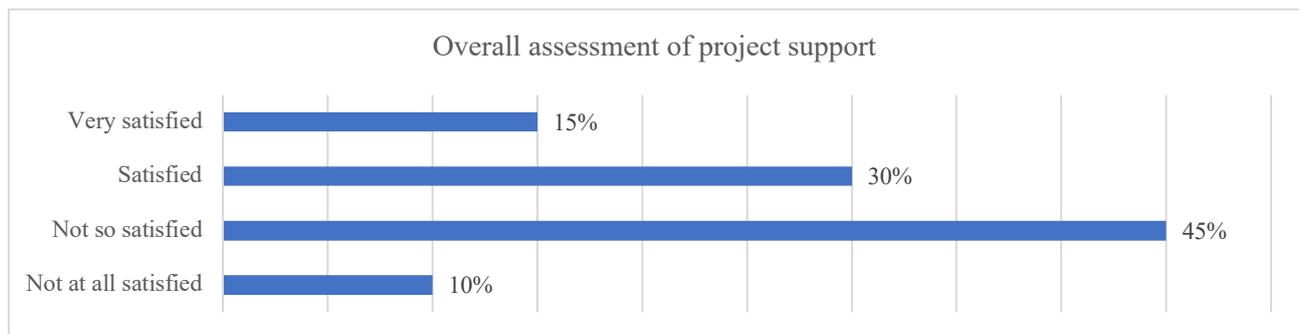


These are **important improvements**, especially if one considers the brief lifespan of the project. This judgement appears to be **confirmed** by children/teens parents' perception of project activities.

The positive results of the application of this strategy in terms of improving of beneficiaries quality of life, were measured by the project with a scientifically based assessment scale inspired by the parameters of the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) and confirmed by the numerous testimonials of the beneficiaries consulted during the evaluation exercise.

The project helped to break, or at least mitigate, the state of **isolation** suffered by both beneficiaries and by their parents caring for them every day. Nevertheless, an important factor appears to relate also to the type of approach adopted, based on the **customisation of support**, adapting to the individual situations of the beneficiaries.

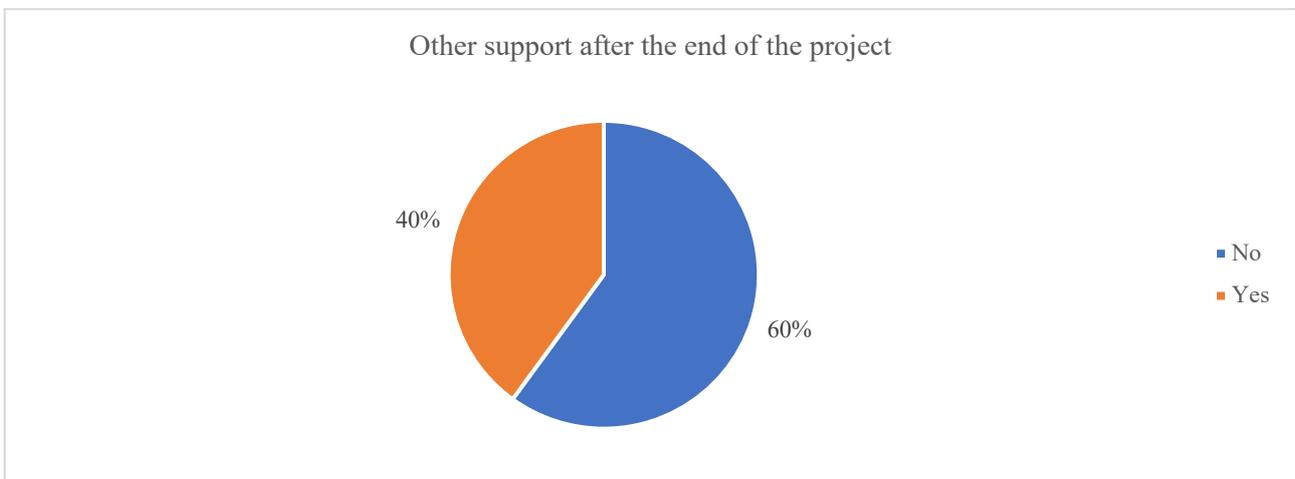
Although parents admitted there had been important and positive changes, the general view expressed by them about the support received through the project **tended to be negative**. Satisfaction was expressed by 45% of those interviewed, while 55% gave a negative judgement about the project.



In actual fact, although these figures appear to be in **contradiction** both with the improvements observed and the responses of beneficiaries as expressed by their parents, it is worth to note that an

adequate **exit strategy** for the project had not been put in place. In fact, this lack of an exit strategy, which is an aspect shared by other project activities, may have resulted in feelings of frustration, with parents' expectations disappointed, and lead to negative judgements. Secondly, interlocutors have frequently stressed the need for **continuing support over time**, since the process for the recovery and/or re-education of motor and cognitive capabilities of children and adolescents is an **extremely slow and gradual** one, and is **not compatible with a set of project activities lasting just two years**. A sudden interruption in support, as appears to have happened in some cases, may often lead to **processes of regression** that can be difficult to stop, rendering workers' efforts vain and disappointing the hopes and expectations of beneficiaries and their parents.

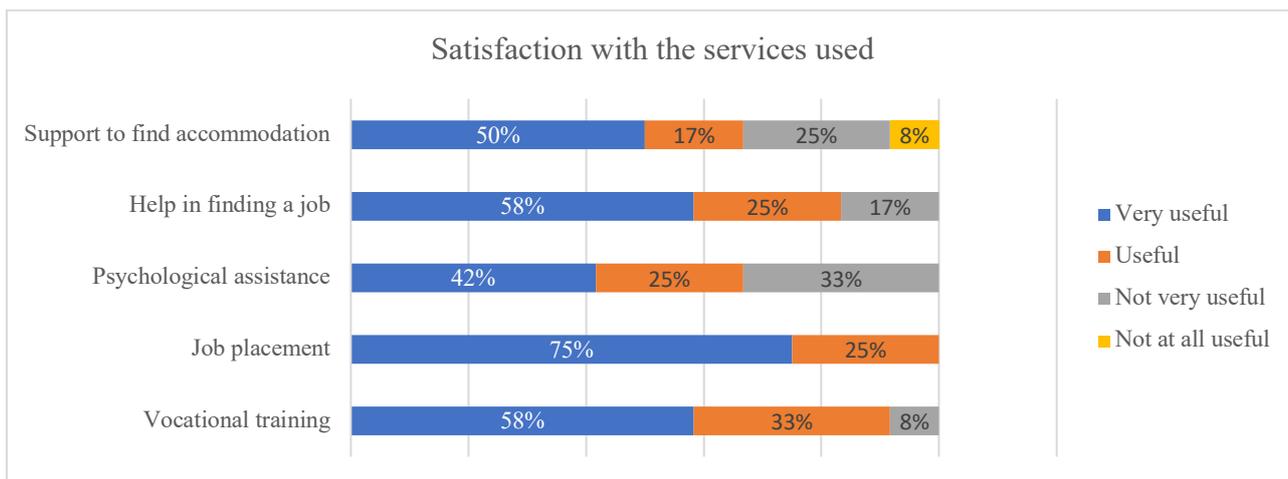
The void left by the project **could not be** filled by other initiatives. Just 40% of interviewed parents said they had had some form of support after the project from other NGOs, while 60% said they had received no support at all.



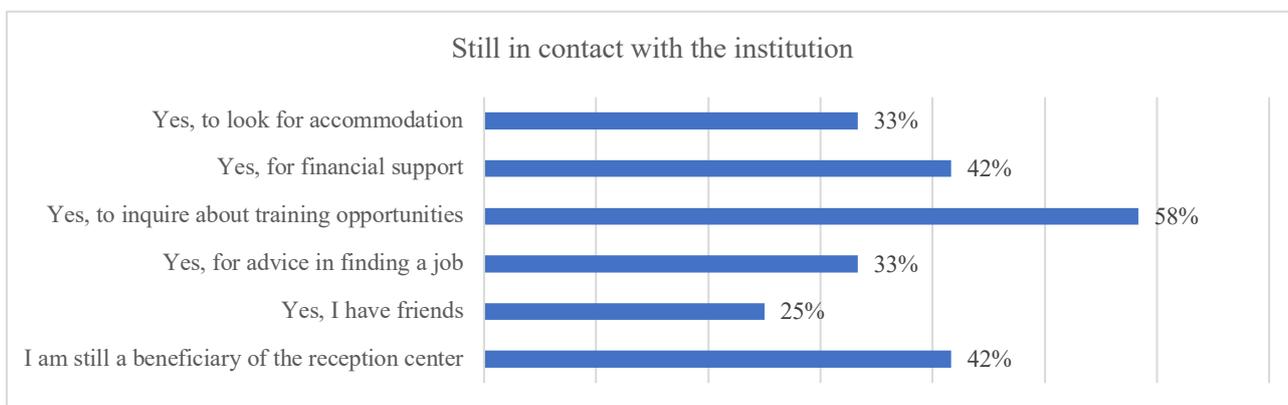
### 5.3.3 Opening of two service centres aimed at institutionalised children

The project included actions to open two service centres aimed at youngsters leaving care, having reached adulthood or almost (*care leavers*), housed at the association *SOS Village d'Enfants* in Casablanca and *Fondation Rita Zniber* in Meknes. The services provided by the two centres were social integration and career guidance for entry in the workplace, also through an Individual plan to access work. Thus, a total of 269 youngsters were registered, compared with the initially planned number of 1,000. This marked a **considerable difference between initial aims and actuality**, which should have deemed an in-depth and serious analysis by the managers of the project.

The degree of **satisfaction regarding services** provided by the service centre was **high on average**, although **differences were noted** for single services. The most popular service offered was vocational training, with a positive view given in 92% of cases (very useful for 58% and useful for 33% of those interviewed). Services that received a less good, but still positive judgement they were psychological support and search for accommodation, which both received a 67% satisfaction rating. However, support in searching for accommodation was also the only service to have obtained a very negative judgement from 8% of those interviewed.



Finally, an interesting value was recorded for youngsters **remaining in touch** with their residential care structure. Indeed, all those interviewed have remained in touch, for sundry reasons, with the care structure they have lived in for most of their lives.



These results merit further consideration. While the satisfaction level for services offered by the service centre is high (or very high) on average, there is still quite a clear tendency for youngsters to consider their residential care structure as a fundamental **point of reference**, in terms of friendships and above all problem solving. Interviewed youngsters that used the service centre gave a generally positive judgement on its services, yet they are **still seeking solutions** to the fundamental aspects of their lives, especially somewhere to live, vocational training and finding a job.

#### 5.3.4 Training for CSO personnel

The project proposed **2 training courses** on the subjects of *lobbying* and social communication respectively, in order to strengthen the skills of 35 CSO workers and of the National Collective CDEPF. Trainings were held, with 32 participants for the lobbying course, and 28 participants for the social communication course. However, there is a degree of uncertainty about the actual number of participants in these two training courses. Indeed, consulted documents and interviews appear to show that the number of participants was estimated from attendance registers, which also included the names of instructors and, probably, technical support staff.

Training activities **overlapped** partially with the complementary Ai.Bi. project in Morocco, funded by the European Union, which made available an international trainer and a local trainer.

**Questionnaires were not given out** to participants before and after training to gauge initial and acquired skills, but we can say that of the 46 persons trained by the project, only 10 persons have remained in contact with the implementing NGOs. If persons given training with the only aim to

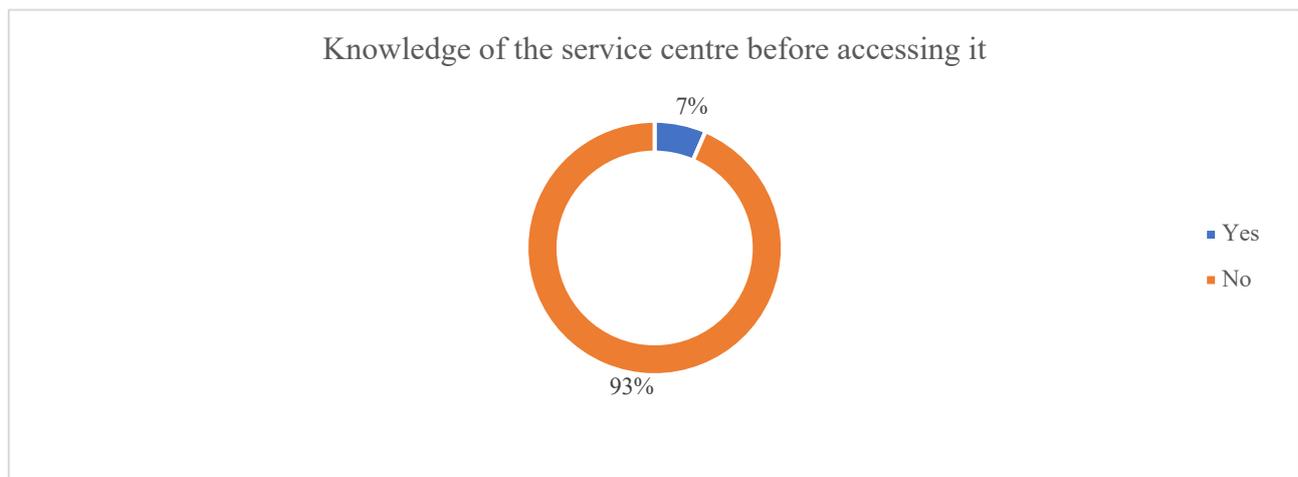
strengthen the organisation followed other paths immediately after even outside the associative movement, then the investment done in terms of human and financial resources to develop the training **vanished** and turned out to be absolutely ineffective.

### 5.3.5 Service charters

The drafting of **Service Charters** with reference to single mothers and *care leavers* saw the involvement of project partners and other associations belonging to the CDEPF working domestically on the issues tackled by the intervention. At the end of the project a total of **1,490 Service Charters** were distributed to different beneficiary groups: 290 for disabled youngsters, 780 for single mothers and 420 for *care leavers*.

The final versions of the Service Charters were presented during the project's concluding conference. The electronic and paper-based versions were distributed to the various associations so that they could pass them out to the respective target groups. It appears from interviews however that the Service Charters were not distributed effectively, and **failed to reach** the project's final beneficiaries. The Charters, for instance, were not distributed through the network that was accessible to all actors, and were not adequately distributed to the offices and service centres responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of these categories.

This information is corroborated by answers given in the questionnaires: 93% of single mothers interviewed **had no knowledge** about the existence of the service centre before they used it, even though most of them used the services mainly towards the latter end of the project.



### 5.3.6 The Platform

The project helped to create and/or reinforce forms of dialogue and cooperation between institutions and associations working on topics tackled by the project. This was an action **that had begun before the start of the project**, with the establishment of the National Collective in 2013, subsequently strengthened thanks to European Union funding and the creation of the Platform into which – in October 2017 - a part of the National Collective was moved, and which continues to operate today thanks to further funding from the EU.

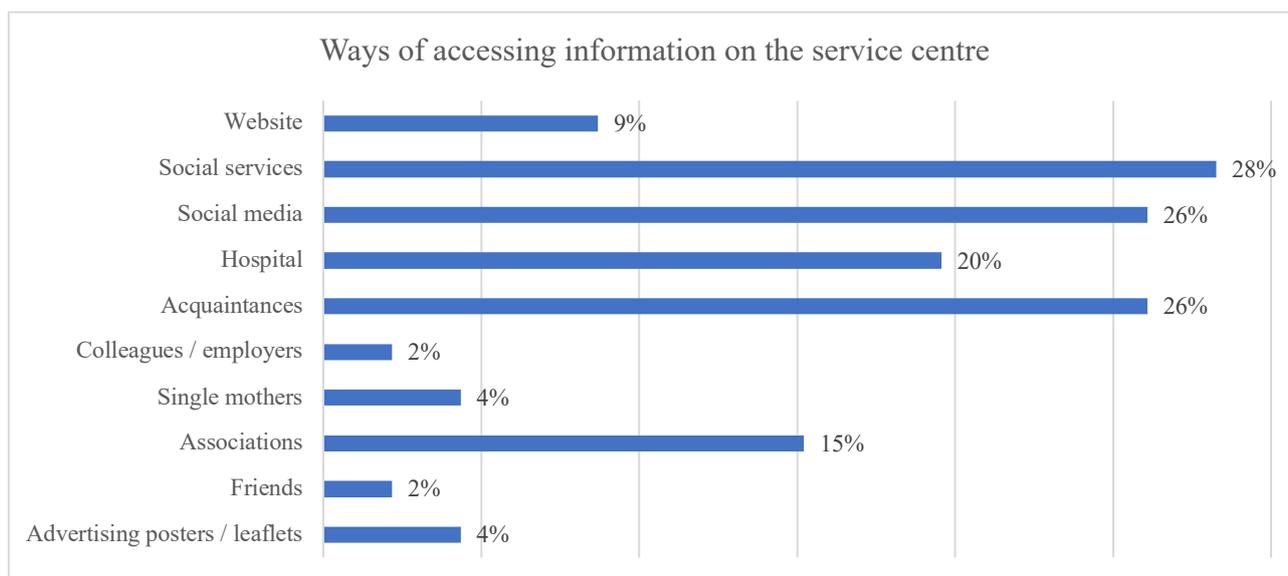
It appears **difficult** to attribute any contribution made to the project “*Tous autour de l’enfance*” to the Platform, bearing in mind the gradual federative process over time and the overlapping of contributions from sundry donors towards the same initiative.

### 5.3.7 The website

The website of the project ([http://enfancemaroc.org/?page\\_id=35](http://enfancemaroc.org/?page_id=35)), was put online on 23 May 2017 on the occasion of the press conference to launch the project's media campaign, is **still working, but has not been updated**, having been moved to the website <http://www.plateformecdemaroc.com/> of the EU project «*PLATEFORME CDE : Projet de création d'une Plateforme Nationale pour le développement, la mise en œuvre et le suivi des politiques publiques en matière d'enfance, dans le respect de la CDE*».

The Platform of the EU project - and relative website - was created in June 2017 and launched in a conference in October 2017, one month prior to the concluding conference of the intervention to which this evaluation refers. The website [http://enfancemaroc.org/?page\\_id=35](http://enfancemaroc.org/?page_id=35), financed by Italian Cooperation, thus **lasted just 4 months**. The few materials that had been uploaded can longer be downloaded or consulted.

In short, in terms of effectiveness, the performance of website activities may be said to be **very poor**, not just for the reasons given above but above all for not having served its purpose. Indeed, project activities were not suitably or effectively publicised, for instance only a few single mothers were made aware of the activities of service centres aimed at them through the website.



### 5.3.8 Communication and awareness activities and information campaigns

A number of communication activities through awareness campaigns and public initiatives have been staged. These activities' effectiveness is difficult to assess, both because of the lacking of adequate tools - considering the little time available - and the limited resources for the evaluation exercise, and because of the difficulty to distinguish – as for many other activities – the actions allocated to the project, from those under similar projects financed by other donors. It must be said, however, that the effectiveness of these activities seems to be quite good.

### 5.3.9 Effectiveness in synthesis

In synthesis, the effectiveness of the project shows many elements of variability, sometimes even within the same activity, such as in the case of service centres for single mothers: consolidation of those already existing, in Casablanca and especially in Tangier, shows a good level of efficiency, while for the two new service centres of Meknes and especial Fez, is very low.

The efficiency of the service centre for disabled minors is quite high but mitigated by a basically negative judgement of the parents.

Efficiency level for the training to CSOs representatives, as well as Platform functioning, the website and Service Charters, is quite low or very low. Judgement for communication and awareness activities is quite good, despite the difficulty of attributing the actions to one project rather than another.

## 5.4 Efficiency

The initiative did not undergo **any delays**, and was completed within the set deadline. This promptness was no doubt helped by the clear division of roles and the experience acquired in past National Collective initiatives, in which most of the associations involved in the project had participated. Each partner played an active role in the project rollout, with specific responsibilities and roles for the performance of project activities and attainment of given results. These responsibilities were formalised in a number of operational partnership agreements. Coordination among the various associations involved **worked well**, and did not result in conflicting situations, barring the decision in 2017 to exclude from the project an orphanage, “Centre Lalla Meriem” based in Rabat (Services for families and disabled children), which was not a project partner but rather a beneficiary, due to a form of collaboration viewed by heads of the proposed intervention to be non-productive, due to a divergence of views about which approach to adopt.

Upon the conclusion of the initiative a **slight rise** in costs was recorded. Compared with the initial budget (€ 527,726.08), total reported expenses came to € 529,752.61. During the first year a total of € 211,742.33 was spent, compared with the estimate of € 254,248.96, a difference of € 42,506.63. The second year of activity had a budget of € 273,477.12 which, added to the sum left over from the first year, produced a total budget of € 315,983.75. Reported costs in the second year totalled € 318,010.28.

Generally speaking, the resources made available for the project proved to be **adequate**, although it should be noted that some activities, such as help given to care leavers, were quantitatively well down on planned levels (269 youngsters helped compared with a target of 1,000), furthermore the situation regarding the use of resources does not appear to be clear due to the project overlapping with similar or “twin” initiatives financed by donors other than the same organisations over the same period of time.

Basically, the efficiency of the project **was in theory good, but again this judgement was strongly mitigated** by the overlapping of similar projects funded by different donors.

## 5.5 Sustainability

Sustainability of the project was rather low, due both to the absence of an *exit strategy* and especially for the disappointed expectations of beneficiaries, leading to frustrations over the sudden cessation of services provided (except for those services already in place prior to the start of the project, such as the service centres helping single mothers in Tangier and Casablanca). In fact, **the lack of specific measures** to ensure the sustainability of single actions meant that these actions **ceased** after the project's conclusion.

The initiative was thus marked by the **lack of a clear-cut sustainability strategy** that might have allowed actions and their results to carry on after the end of the project. This shortcoming led to concrete difficulties regarding the operation of the created system.

Questions naturally remain **uncertain** regarding the ability of associations to carry on the process/system in the long run. There are some positive aspects relating to sustainability, however as

already mentioned for other evaluation criteria, these are not attributable solely to the financing provided by Italian Cooperation and to the project rolled out, but rather to the set of actions performed, which have tended to raise the level of sustainability.

## 5.6 Impact

Just as for effectiveness, it is quite **difficult** to evaluate the impact of the initiative under review for a number of reasons:

- the lack of initial figures (baseline) and the difficulty of identifying comparable situations: no baseline was defined at the start of the initiative. Moreover, the data given in project documents are of little significance in respect of the initiative and its impact;
- the lack of in-depth data: data in the possession of the actors involved related above all to activities performed and the number of direct beneficiaries;
- the difficulty in reaching those persons that were really impacted by the project, above all CSO workers and some service centres and persons reached by the information and awareness-building campaign;
- the absence of an internal monitoring and self-evaluation system based on objectively verifiable indicators.

The most important factor however is the fact that in the same period the lead partner and other partners were busy rolling out other projects, having very similar aims, and with some local associations: it has indeed proved **impossible to separate the impacts** of different initiatives having very similar characteristics **with any degree of certainty**.

In short, considering the above elements, it is very difficult to state whether or not the project has actually had any impact. Some “positive effects” can undoubtedly be seen, even though these positive aspects cannot be attributed solely to the intervention under review, but rather to the **set of initiatives and actions** carried out thanks to the contributions of several donors (European Union, Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, Social Development Agency, Italian Cooperation). In actual fact, there is no real element that can point to a pilot and experimental project (this is rather a duplication of actions already realised in many cases since several years) actually having had an impact, if one considers the project singly and not as part of a broader set of similar initiatives.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the initiative **contributed to** – yet did not itself generate – the following impacts:

- a direct and immediate local impact, in the short term, in terms of an improvement in the quality of life of disabled youngsters; this improvement was temporary however, since when the project concluded families and their disabled children returned to a state of almost total isolation and solitude they were in before the project got under way, except for the involvement – to be considered as a best practice – of young volunteers from the local neighbourhood who assisted disabled children/adolescents. This activity carried on partially after the conclusion of the project;
- the affirmation of the CBR strategy, which in 2018 received further funding from the European Union: the project "Youngsters as a pillar of inclusive development in Morocco", submitted by OVCI and the Moroccan CBR National Network, with the start-up and monitoring of 8 CBR programmes in four Regions of Morocco;
- a direct impact on improving access to support services for single mothers, limited to the service centres of Casablanca and, in particular, Tangier, which in any case existed before the start of the project and continue to be operational thanks in part to the boost provided by the project; the impact on the other two service centres aimed at single mothers is on the other

hand almost negligible for the Meknes centre, and completely negligible for that in Fez, which ceased all activities when the project came to an end;

- a weak impact in respect of activities to create service centres for institutionalised minors leaving care, firstly because the majority of these youngsters did not solve their problems, and secondly because, in this case too, activities slowed down or actually stopped when the project concluded;
- a less direct impact, and above all a medium/long-term economic impact, namely the mobilisation of resources by the Ministry for Solidarity, the Family, Women and Social Development to standardise methods for the reception and socio-economic placement of *care leavers* as applied by Ai.Bi.;
- no impact in the case of training activities, since only 10 of the 46 persons given training (as already mentioned, we have no real idea of the actual number of trainees because the documents consulted contain only attendance registers, which include trainers and, probably, technical assistance and logistical staff) carried on working with their organisations or more generally within Morocco's association movement; if the aim of training initiatives was to strengthen civil society organisations, then the activities in question should be seen as a failure;
- an undoubted impact of the federative strategy pursued with the creation of the Platform not due to the strategy itself but the fact that this operation was supported and also funded by other donors, in particular by the European Union, and this would have been possible even without the intervention of Italian Cooperation. Coordination among Moroccan civil society and international organisations with a presence in the country is fully operational, and is undoubtedly an important step forward in terms of the effectiveness of their action, however it would be stretching things to attribute this result to the impact of the project funded by Italian Cooperation;
- a good media impact, in all likelihood facilitated by the favourable state of public opinion, grown more alert to issues relating to the rights of women, children and disabled children. Without considering the overlapping of projects and donors, this impact related almost solely to children's rights and only partially to the rights of disabled children, and practically did not touch women's rights.

## 5.7 Visibility

We may generally state, further to the above, that the initiative under review undoubtedly gave **great visibility** to the information and awareness-building campaign and to the National Collective, even though the latter might be said to no longer “exist”. The respective logos appear in most of the produced materials (videos, banners, *roll-ups*, bags, T-shirts, etc.).

The same cannot be argued if one considers the visibility of Italian Cooperation, although the logo was included in official project documentation and on materials used during events (banners, roll-ups, folders, etc.). Indeed, the Italian Cooperation logo is **practically non-existent**.

## 6. Conclusions, lessons learned and best practices

### 6.1 Conclusions

Despite the fine intentions of its promoters in attempting to tackle very delicate issues, such as those tackled by the project “*Tous autour de l'enfance*”, the intervention under review was marked by some positive aspects as well as some negative aspects, relating to both its conception and the ways in which actions were implemented.

Looking at the plus points, the project undoubtedly made a contribution to uncovering, in relations with public opinion, policymakers and actors involved in the issues of pregnancies out of wedlock and child abandonment in Morocco. It also made available a national and international stage, through both Platform activities and, more generally, awareness-building activities relating to children's rights.

Moving on to negative aspects, the first thing to note is that the intervention did not really possess the traits of a “pilot project”, since the various planned actions were already being performed as part of other interventions promoted by the same three NGOs, funded by the European Union, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, and the Social Development Agency (a Moroccan ministerial body) as part of the Gender Equality Support Programme 2012-2016. Indeed, it was a duplication of actions previously already realised rather than of pilot actions.

Secondly, the way the project was conceived had fatal flaws at an institutional level, with the allocation of tasks among three promoting NGOs that followed very different intervention logics and missions. This division resulted in a sort of specialisation of the three promoting NGOs on the basis of their competences. This brought about the risk of having three different projects, one for each of the three NGOs responsible for the implementation.

These differences could also be seen in approaches to how the same action should be performed, such as for service centres offering assistance to single mothers. Two centres that were already open and operational prior to the intervention, that of Tangier, and in part that of Casablanca, were able to strength their services for mothers thanks to the support provided by the project, while the other two service centres, those of Fez and Meknes, created from scratch thanks to project funding, stopped operations as soon as the project was concluded.

Here we must stress the effectiveness of the holistic approach adopted by the service centre of Tangier aimed at single mothers and run by Moroccan NGO 100% Mamans. This approach was not only more effective in creating a comfortable, receptive environment for single mothers, but it also enabled these women to come out of the shadows by means of activities to raise the awareness of public opinion, including actions to denounce the stigma and social marginalisation of their situation.

Looking at performance, analysed on the basis of the evaluation criteria adopted, the project appeared to be:

- in theory very relevant (or pertinent) in respect of the local context, but strongly mitigated by some aspects that hampered its chances of success, due in particular to the predominance from both a theoretical and operative modalities point of view of the rights of children, relegating to a side issue the question of women's rights and thus neglecting the process of social stigma and marginalisation that women undergo;
- a low level of coherence, both internal and external, due above all to overlaps with “twin projects” funded by other cooperation agencies involving the same organisations in the same time frames, while taking different approaches, sometimes conflicting, within different parts of the intervention;
- various degrees of effectiveness depending on the actions and the actors performing the actions. In some cases actions are difficult to evaluate due to overlaps with other projects. In general they were very good for some service centres providing assistance to single mothers and for activities performed in favour of disabled children, while they were poor, or very poor, for other service centres; as it is very poor the effectiveness of trainings for NGOs/CSOs and the relative loss of trained human capital. Other actions were again difficult to assess (or were assessed negatively or very negatively), due to the aforementioned overlapping of projects (like the Platform), and to the limited amount of resources at the disposal of this evaluation (e.g. for public communication activities);

- the efficiency of the project was in theory good, but again this judgement was strongly mitigated, among other things, by the overlapping of similar projects funded by different donors;
- its impact was difficult to evaluate due to the absence of baselines, even for activities that had been in place prior to the project, such as for the service centres of Tangier and Casablanca, which in any case appear to have benefited from the support of the project in expanding their services; for the other two centres of Fez and Meknes, the impact appeared to be very poor (the two centres assisted just 45 mothers in two years). Even for very interesting activities such as the service charters, impact was actually poor, due to the problems encountered disseminating these charters. For many activities, including those connected with the Platform, the impact did not appear to be particularly significant, considering the fact they were performed without the support of Italian Cooperation, thanks in part to funding from other cooperation agencies, in particular the European Union. Finally, the impact made by training to strengthen the association movement may be considered to be null;
- sustainability was generally low, due to i) the absence of an *exit strategy*, and ii) the disappointed expectations of beneficiaries, leading to frustrations over the sudden cessation of services provided (except for those services already in place prior to the start of the project, such as the service centres helping single mothers in Tangier and Casablanca);
- visibility was made difficult due to the confusion caused to beneficiaries, as well as some project service workers, by the presence of different funding sources for similar or identical activities in the same time period and for the same NGOs involved in the project “*Tous autour de l’enfance*”.

## 6.2 Lessons learned

Based on the evaluation results, it is possible to highlight the following lessons learned:

- The coexistence of extremely different approaches, such as those seen in the intervention “*Tous autour de l’enfance*”, is not always a positive sign for a project. It may indeed bring about too great a separation between different parts of the project or even between different actors working on that part of the project but using different approaches, such as the case of service centres for single mothers.
- The issue of children's rights, with special reference to children born out of wedlock, is intrinsically bound to the question of gender equality. If we really want to make profound changes to the social and cultural fabric and combat the phenomenon of child abandonment, we must eradicate the stigma suffered by women, adopting a holistic approach that can involve all stakeholders, such as fathers, healthcare professionals in hospitals, police forces, the law courts, and so on.
- The problem of child abandonment cannot be solved simply by ensuring that the child is not abandoned at birth (or immediately thereafter), it is necessary to create a caring environment around the mother, who needs to be helped at least in the early stages of the child's growth by means of continuous *follow-up* activity, including forms of psychological, legal and material help at times of special need, as well as help with social integration, doing as much as possible to eradicate the reasons that contributed to her marginalisation and social exclusion.

## 6.3 Best practices

The results of the evaluation can be used to single out some best practices for the planning and rollout of future interventions in the same sector as that in which the project “*Tous autour de l’enfance*” was undertaken. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the best practices identified relate more to the behaviour and approach of individual organisations, rather than to the intervention as a whole. Specifically:

- The approach adopted by the service centre of Tangier run by Moroccan NGO 100% Mamans, which had in actual fact been operational for several years before the start of the project, showed that if the difficulties faced by single mothers are handled in a global manner, without just providing help during the period of childbirth and immediately thereafter, but continuing to help the mother over time, then lasting and deep change can be effected in the social fabric. The social stigma attached to single mothers and the phenomenon of child abandonment can only hope to be fought through such changes. It should be stressed on this point that the *modus operandi* of the service centre run by the organisation 100% Mamans showed great potential in terms of its impact and effectiveness, as it involved fathers, healthcare workers (doctors and nurses), hospitals, police forces, law courts, families, etc., namely all the actors that are crucial to combating the problem of child abandonment, by acting on the causes and not on the effects. Also worth stressing is the fact that assisted single mothers have kept in touch with the service centre and the organisation it is managed by, as they are viewed as protagonists and not just welfare beneficiaries. They have been known to animate radio broadcasts on these issues, thus coming out of the shadows and leaving behind the idea of motherhood as a private, individual matter, and choosing to go public with a phenomenon that affects the whole of society, not just a few individuals.
- The presence of volunteers working at the SAFIR service centre also deserves a few words, and should be seen as an effective form of action, being a contribution to the process of improving the socialisation and social integration of disabled children, and also encouraging the involvement of the local neighbourhood through the mobilisation of young volunteers. This practice may be a useful instrument, naturally used as an auxiliary tool to medical and rehabilitation measures, and in a spirit of social responsibility may help the families of disabled children who would otherwise be left to their own devices in facing up to their own difficult situation and that of their children. Efforts to socialise disabled children cannot be borne solely by their families, who are often in a perilous financial position, nor, in more fortunate cases, by school.
- Irrespective of the still-unresolved problems and contradictions that emerged regarding the adoption of single-theme paradigms, the dynamics created through the new Platform should be welcomed due to the chance it gives to generate synergies between single organisations, which are sometimes small-sized and operating at a very local level, and to offer a visibility that would otherwise not be possible without the means and resources held by larger organisations – which are often direct emanations of European NGOs. The chance to have an impact on society through *lobbying* and public awareness-building campaigns, which can only be done effectively through federative action, is crucial when attempting to effect changes to the deepest aspects of society. This is especially true when efforts are being made to tackle and steer the questions of child abandonment and women's empowerment.

## 7 Recommendations

### 7.1 General recommendations

Based on the results of the evaluation and with a view to future interventions concerning the same topics tackled by the project “*Tous autour de l'enfance*”, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Setting up a coordination among donors in order to prevent a non-productive overlapping of funding provided for the same actions performed by the same organisations over the same period of time. Promote, within donors, the establishment of a thematic group (as is the case for other sectors and themes) in order to formulate a common strategy, in agreement with government authorities, in relation to the phenomena of abandoned children in Morocco.

2. Providing for an adequate duration of the projects to ensure greater and above all lasting effectiveness over time. In particular, projects such as the one evaluated that deals with complex social processes and examines the deeper dimensions of a territory's society and culture cannot hope to bring about appreciable effects in such a short time frame, i.e. 2 years.
3. Avoiding interventions aimed at the same time at a plurality of vulnerable categories, each having different problems, which cannot be treated with a single approach and with pre-established solutions as in the case of single mothers, abandoned children, deinstitutionalised minors and disabled children.
4. Limiting the number of actors who implement the related actions in order to facilitate the adoption of coherent and shared approaches and methods of intervention.
5. Providing an exit strategy to prevent feelings of abandonment and frustration from the weaker categories of beneficiaries; in particular, the absence of an adequate strategy of disengagement can produce real regression processes of the improvements obtained, as, in the project evaluated, in the case of disabled children / teenagers.
6. Planning for external monitoring and interim evaluation actions in order to be able to make adjustments in response to objective context-related difficulties and to share a vision about the problems faced and possible solutions.
7. Making the measure the impact possible, establishing baselines, i.e. the initial situation in the context in which the project is rolled out, using statistical data and measurable indicators.
8. Improving communication, with special reference to the visibility of the Italian development cooperation.
9. Providing for efficient archiving where collecting and classifying data and information not simply for recording activities and results but also for knowing the social traits of beneficiaries. This point is particularly relevant when recording unexpected results and the trends and processes generated by the project.
10. Improving the reporting system: information is often approximate, and data given are unclear and not easy to interpret.

## 7.2 Specific recommendations

1. Providing interventions for the full involvement of families of disabled children through a holistic and pluridisciplinary approach also offering varied social protection schemes, so that the family is not left alone to face up to the difficulties and problems arising from the condition of their child.
2. Acting not only on the effects, but also on the causes concerning the phenomenon of child abandonment. These causes are connected with the social stigma and process of social marginalisation and exclusion that mothers undergo, and more generally with the issue of gender equality and women's *empowerment*.
3. Providing for a follow-up after the intervention of the service centres for single mothers, ensuring support from all points of view (psychological, financial, legal, institutional, career guidance, etc.), regardless of the decision taken by the mother about her child, and actually even more so in those cases in which the mother decides not to abandon her child.