

Mountain women in Morocco

Sustaining livelihoods in Aït Bazza community

fatima nassif



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Settat, February 2009
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Foreword

Women in Morocco have realized substantial achievements at different levels. With the reform of the family law and women's education and the increased number of women in parliament and ministerial positions, the status of women has improved. However not all of these achievements seem to have been equally attained by the female population in the country. There are still significant numbers of women whose daily struggles to secure drinking water, firewood, and basic food for themselves and their families are extremely energy intensive.

Despite the growing public interest in developing the rural areas of Morocco, especially in the mountains, a good many communities still lack roads which provide year round access, drinking water, and basic infrastructure. Women in such areas are called on to bear a triple burden – the exigencies of life in the harsh conditions of the mountains, the consequences of rural underdevelopment, and their gender.

In Morocco, building livelihoods in mountain communities is a continuous challenge. The existing literature and documentation on the struggles of mountain women for sustainable livelihoods amounts to descriptive snapshots elaborated by peace-corps volunteers, short stay foreign travelers, tourists, and a few anthropological and social studies carried out by foreign university students in particular mountain villages.

The urgent question is, 'How can we reach out to these communities and their women when we continue to know so little about them?' Mountain women in Morocco constitute one of the least studied social groups in the country. This book seeks to fill this knowledge gap and bring the plight of mountain women to the forefront of scientific debate. Let us hope that, through this effort of Dr. Nassif, this INRA contribution towards understanding the conditions experienced by these women marks the first step toward improving their situation.

Professor Mohamed Badraoui

INRA Director General



Preface

This work on mountain women, based on a case study of the women of Aït Bazza, provides new insights into the conditions faced by such women – their strengths and weaknesses, their capacities and vulnerabilities, and the multiple and substantial contributions they have made locally and nationally.

This work is a call for us to start questioning why the mountain women of Morocco have to silently live lives of such daily struggle and to find ways of improving their living conditions and their status within a rapidly changing society. Having been marginalized for a long time, the women in Aït Bazza, like their sisters in other mountain areas, are currently stigmatized by social exclusion, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of opportunities.

Deep disparities between urban and rural areas, between regions, between plains and mountains, between social groups, and between men and women, continue to plague Morocco. These disparities negatively affect the vulnerability of these areas and groups and, by the same token, jeopardize the country's prospects for sustainable development.

This book would not have been possible without the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the backstopping of ICARDA.

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