

# Women feeling safe at work



Focus on the social and health protection of women working in the cleaning sector in Morocco

## CONTEXT

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This mission to research best practices to improve the social and medical protection of young women in the urban cleaning sector in Rabat and Tangier is part of a broader project to promote youth employment focused not on the market economy but on young people and the community. It is an innovative perspective that takes people into account and offers them suitable perspectives for decent and quality jobs.

The project in question is entitled "Youth Participation and Employment (YPE)". It is implemented by Oxfam Ibis and its partners in 4 countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan for the duration between 2017 and 2022. In Morocco, it targets the cleaning sector in two urban areas: Rabat and Tangier with 250 young women who will be strengthened so that they feel secure in their jobs.

With a view to capitalizing on existing actions, the project used the E-Motive exchange and learning programme to know, model and disseminate best practices in terms of protection and safety useful for women working in the cleaning sector.

## Steps in the process

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A **scoping time** took place between the members of the team in charge of the implementation of the learning process, through which the following points were specified:

- ✓ Shared vision around mission objectives
- ✓ Methodological approach
- ✓ Scope and criteria for identifying practices
- ✓ Approval of the Mission's schedule and work plan
- ✓ Contacts to contact

Following this exchange, it was agreed to seek the best practices for the protection of women in Morocco beyond the cleaning sector, a sector that shows very few initiatives to support women except those of trade unions.

Other sectors such as agriculture and textiles include practices that promote the rights of working women and that may be applicable to the cleaning sector. The common points are the fight against sexual and gender-based violence including sexual harassment, advocacy for women's social and medical coverage, etc.

The identification of practices was initiated by a **wide dissemination of a call for information** on social networks and by email addressed to civil society organizations working in the following themes:

- ✓ Fight against gender-based violence.
- ✓ Employability.
- ✓ Trade unions.
- ✓ Human rights.

The research phase made it possible to identify a dozen good practices whose acts were **interviewed** around the following points:

- ✓ Approaches to the social protection of working women
- ✓ Innovative aspects
- ✓ Impact on young women
- ✓ Working with companies in the sector
- ✓ Partnerships and networks
- ✓ Auto-organization of women
- ✓ Link to the cleaning sector

Following these interviews, the learning process implementation team met to discuss and choose 7 best practices to dissect and then worked together around 3 best practices that seemed to them the most relevant, namely:

1. Project "Haddek temma" (Stop there! ) of feminist self-defense of the Feminist Action Group in Morocco.
2. Trade union of the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT), section of the province of Guercif.
3. Association Union de l'Action Féministe, Tangier section.

These three best practices show a real interest in empowering women through diversified approaches and in areas of intervention outside the central axis of Casablanca/Rabat.

After this identification, the organizing team conducted interviews with the three preparatory structures for a 3-day exchange and learning session that took place at Oxfam's headquarters in Rabat with the participation of a group that studied the strengths and challenges of these practices and the recommendations and courses of action for their application to the cleaning sector.



## 3 best practices for protecting women:

## Objective

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Study new models based on field experiences aimed at improving awareness, supervision, actions and recommendations, to combat sexual harassment and strengthen social and medical protection in practices and policies dedicated to improving women's working conditions in the cleaning sector. Then submit these practices to a working group (E-Motive) to model them.

## Composition of the E-Motive learning group

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Name	Organization	Position	Gender	Location
Izgar Belrhali	Feminist Action Group Morocco (GAFM)	Program Manager	Non binary	Marrakech
Najlae Ait Oubna	Feminist Action Group Morocco (GAFM)	Member	Female	Salty
Hakima Cherkani	Union of Feminist Action (UAF) – Tangier	Member of the Bureau	Female	Tangier
Rhimou Hajoub	Union of Feminist Action (UAF) – Tangier	Project Manager	Female	Tangier
Mohamed El Bahije	Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT) – Guercif	Provincial Delegate	Male	Guercif
Zhor Mrika	Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT) – Guercif	Worker	Female	Guercif
Jawad ElKhani	Moroccan Forum for Democracy and Rights – FMDD	Journalist	Male	Kenitra
Imane El Ouantadi	Moroccan Forum for Democracy and Rights – FMDD	Member	Female	Kenitra
Aïda Kheireddine	-	Consultant	Female	Rabat
Kamilia Raouyane	Oxfam	Point focal Genre	Female	Rabat
Khalid Dekiki	Oxfam	Point focal RSE	Male	Rabat
Hind Nejbah	Oxfam	Project Coordinator	Female	Rabat
Error with El Kham	Oxfam	Program Coordinator	Female	Rabat
Sami Saidana	Oxfam	Facilitator Oxfam Tunisia	Male	Tunisia (remotely)
Carin Boersma	Oxfam	Facilitator Oxfam Novib	female	Netherlands (remotely )



PHOTO OF THE PARTICIPANTS

## Key learnings

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- Create physical spaces where women can meet, exchange around their experiences, strengthen themselves and create solidarity between them so that they take the lead in advocacy around their rights and so that they are not targets of intervention without power of action.
- Accompanying women in the creation of cooperatives, this form of self-employment can be a solution to circumvent the recruitment of temporary agencies that take a profit margin to the detriment of women's wages.
- Support existing experiences and practices in protecting the rights of women civil society workers by strengthening synergies between them and supporting them to mobilize resources for the response rather than creating new structures.
- Find a win-win strategy with companies in the cleaning sector so that they integrate respect for the working conditions of women workers rather than considering them as targets to denounce because it does not make it possible to assert the rights of working women in the long term.
- A focus is needed on mobilizing the media to change stereotypes around women cleaners because they suffer from a lot of stigma and invisibility while their work is essential in all sectors in Morocco as elsewhere.

## Best practices

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### Projet « Hadek Temma » (stop there!)

Quotes from Izgar: "We will find the keys to our emancipation from our daily souffrance caused by the different forms of violence. In this way we will strengthen, we will fight and we will develop."



*Self-defence workshop for young women*

- **Key elements of practice**

It is a self-defense program made by a survivor of violence, who draws from the experience of violence the strategies of self-defense;

The course does not require physical skills in combat, it is based on a simple methodology and adapted to different people regardless of their physique.

Self-defense in the "Hadek Temma" project is considered in its broader sense of collective empowerment, creating a safe space for participants to break the silence about the violence they are experiencing, understand that it is not their fault, remove the idea of shame and create solidarity and support groups so that they can implement collective strategies in the face of situations or only they cannot react.

- **Challenges and opportunities**

The practice of feminist self-defense is often reduced to combat sport requiring a favorable physical condition. To remedy this, GAFM participates in different physical and virtual spaces to popularize information around the program which is on the contrary accessible to all categories of women with a double objective of empowerment and strengthening solidarity between them.

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## CDT- Section de Guercif

*Zhor, working woman: "I am very delighted because I found people who feel our suffering, I did not imagine that we would one day study our situation and try to understand it"*



*Women working in the clean-up at the provincial hospital of Guercif preparing for a sit-in to claim their rights  
(Photo from a public statement by the CDT Guercif)*

- **Key elements of practice**

The union encourages working women to organize to defend their rights. They are subject to the Labour Code and remedies in the event of a violation of their rights by their employers.



The union has mobilized to support women workers who have suffered unfair dismissal, supporting them through press releases to the media, letters to the competent authorities and calling on them to monitor standards for compliance with the labor code, sit-ins, etc.

This union has been very visible in the media with its considerable support for the workers of the cleaning sector in the health services of the province of Guercif, it can be an example of an ally that supports the struggles of the workers of this sector until they obtain gains.

- **Challenges & prospects**

Challenges include raising awareness about the importance of union work and encouraging women to claim their rights. A challenge is also to broaden the basis of solidarity by involving associations and journalists in advocating for women workers' rights.

- Contact: Mohamed El Bahije, Provincial Representative of the CDT, Guercif section, Email: melbahije1@gmail.com / Zhor Mrika, President of the trade union office of the cleaning sector within the CDT of the province of Guercif, Tel/whatsapp. +212628753765

## Union of Feminist Action – Tanger Section

- **Key elements of practice**

The association works on the promotion of women's social, economic, and legal rights through supporting them in the development of their empowerment according to a holistic approach combining training of women, training of business executives, awareness of public opinion, etc.

The association has developed a participatory protocol to combat sexual harassment at work in the garment sector with companies in the sector, labour delegation, general confederation of Moroccan enterprises, associations and regional human rights commission.

The association has also trained women working in cleaning in the hotel sector and has accompanied them to create cooperatives so that they can directly obtain job markets in the hotel industry, get out of the grip of temporary employment companies, and organize their own time to be able to be more present in their private lives and with their families and children.

- **Challenges and opportunities**

Among the challenges is the need to further develop access to private sector companies, as most companies are reluctant to work with civil society organizations around women's rights. The association is limited in terms of resources to further impact companies.

Among the perspectives mentioned, the development of partnerships with other structures working around the rights of women workers to maximize the impact of the mobilization of companies. Other proposals are the strengthening of the self-employment of women workers through the creation of cooperatives, which remain an alternative to the operation of temporary agencies.

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## Appendix: Proposed Actions

Target group	Courses of action
<b>Working women</b>	Strengthening women's capacities through training on their rights
	Collaboration between workers and associations fighting against violence to train them in self-defense.
	Support for women in strengthening their leadership and integrating decision-making centers
	Creating spaces for entertainment and learning activities to help working women make friendships away from the work environment
	Strengthening women in organizational mechanisms to develop their positions and achievements
	Raise women's awareness of trivialized violence and the strategies to be put in place to establish their limits
<b>Media</b>	Creation of a network of committed journalists who can relay cases of violation of women workers' rights to mobilize public opinion
	Raising public awareness of the challenges faced by women workers through the media
	Influence public opinion to change stereotypes around cleaners and value the role of this category through the media
	Elaboration of a moratorium on women's rights to be relayed in the media
<b>Advocacy and Networking</b>	Strengthening networking to foster advocacy
	Proposal for collaboration between the structures around their experiences during the learning session to end the violence
	Create networks between associations, trade unions and the media to advocate on the rights of women workers in the cleaning sector
	Advocacy for women's participation in the political, trade union and associative spheres