

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine:

098/120606

Spotlight interview with Mohamed MDAGHR (AOB - Netherlands)

"The Moroccan community in Europe is an essential ally in the fight against child labour in Morocco"

Brussels, 12 June 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): How can the Moroccan communities who have been living in Europe for many years contribute to the fight against school non-attendance among children in Morocco? Mohamed Mdaghri, general coordinator of the project for the Dutch Teachers' Union, Aob, uses information, awareness raising, media campaigns and lobbying to show Moroccan immigrants how they can influence their families in Morocco.

How do you manage to influence Moroccan policy on child labour and education from Europe?

In Morocco, the project is hinged around four main areas: the school, the family, lobbying and capacity building.

We soon became aware of the importance of the Morocco community living in Europe as an essential ally in the campaign, the aims of which are very ambitious. It should be recalled that we are aiming for a primary school completion rate of 85 per cent and the total eradication of child labour. We are focusing on raising awareness among families so that they enrol and keep their children in school.

The involvement of the Moroccan community abroad could prove effective in achieving this. That's why the main focus of our work in Europe is lobbying.

One of the first steps taken in the Netherlands is a strategy to place this issue on the political agenda of diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Morocco, through our respective embassies.

Our aim is to press the Moroccan government to allocate more funds for the education sector.

To achieve this, we have brought together all the Moroccans who are in a position to influence public opinion in the Netherlands, such as sports personalities, artists and doctors. We are raising their awareness about our fight so that in their messages and actions they can relay our determination to fight against school non-attendance among children in Morocco.

Their message must be heard. It is essential that the Moroccan families living in Europe have a positive impact on the education of the children in their families in Morocco.

This pressure exerted from abroad could change the attitude of the Moroccan authorities and encourage it to put money back into education.

What activities are being carried out as part of your lobbying?

The focus is on information and awareness raising initiatives. As I mentioned, we are working with the most prominent Moroccans living in Holland. But we are also in contact with Moroccan associations and community centres. We are also working with the youth, as they relay the information back to their families and friends in Morocco. As a teachers' union, the Aob is carrying out initiatives in schools to raise pupils' awareness about the situation of other children around the world.

Our campaign is also gaining media coverage, to ensure wide-spread dissemination.

Finally, the campaign is extending to other countries in Europe. We are embarking on lobbying work in France and Belgium. Ideally, we would like to extend our lobbying to the whole of Europe, wherever there is a Moroccan community.

What are the future prospects of the pilot project in Morocco?

After analysing the results of the pilot phase, we would like to extend the initiative to other schools in Fez. Later, the aim is of course to extend the project to other regions of the country. Two rural areas (Azrou-Ifrane and Tafilalet-Dara) and two urban areas (Essaouira and Marrakech) have already been identified.

Interview by Pierre Martinot.

Also read the Spotlight Interview with Majda Fahchouch, the national coordinator of the pilot project launched in Fez, Morocco, to fight against child labour and school non-attendance, a joint initiative of the Dutch trade union AOb and the Moroccan teachers' union, SNE.

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991224574&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories.

<http://www.icftu.org> The ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions. <http://www.global-unions.org>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018