

Beat: Entertainment

## USAID DISTANCE EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PREPARE MOROCCO'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

FOR VIRTUAL LEARNING OVER COVID-19

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**USPA NEWS** - USAID investments in education programming prepares countries to adopt flexible and resilient learning systems. Coronavirus is shutting down schools and affecting learning opportunities for over 1.5 billion children and youth around the globe. The global pandemic has stunned education systems worldwide: How do we ensure the continuity of our children's academic education? Is virtual learning the solution? In Morocco, a Ministry of Education cadre of experts that benefited from previous USAID-funded distance learning activities responded, "Yes!" While Morocco's school buildings are closed, one million students have already accessed the Ministry's online learning platform and lessons broadcast nationally on TV, opening the door to continued learning for millions more of Moroccan youth.

The USAID-funded projects Advancing Learning and Employability for a Better Future (ALEF), 2004-2009, and Improving Training for Quality Advancement in National Education (ITQANE), 2009-2014, trained national education experts on innovative, quality learning tools. These professionals were later prepared to respond to the country's urgent call to embark on a large-scale production of online courses once the coronavirus disrupted Morocco's education system. Both projects collaborated with the National Center for Pedagogic Innovation and Experimentation (CNIPE) at the Ministry of National Education (MOE) to design digital learning courses, create an online learning platform Collab.ma, and adapt the national curriculum content to multimedia education.

Mr. Abdellatif Fergoug, the e-learning project manager exclaimed, "The MOE CNIPE center has taken full ownership of this platform and has committed to ensuring its continued operation and growth. It still continues to operate with an ever-expanding offering of online products. I have witnessed so many international cooperative activities. None was as fully sustainable and nationally implemented upon the activity's completion as these USAID-funded projects!"

The expertise that the ministry acquired in the field of distance education has prepared them to work around the clock and quickly produce content that is being broadcast through the national education portal: <http://tice.men.gov.ma/> and the national TV channel 4. USAID has seen similar results from the e-learning activity under the ITQANE program. The virtual courses that were developed through on-site training sessions and web-based team interactions were all integrated into the learning portal Collab.ma, which has been developed by the Ministry to become what is now its distance education system platform. By the end of the ITQANE program, twenty six MOE distance learning education experts were empowered to lead the design of future e-learning products in Morocco.

These experts and thousands more of the beneficiaries of USAID-funded e-learning training activities have been working hard to produce e-courses in record time, making Morocco a leader in the region by shifting quickly to online learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I was proud to witness the Collab tutors' leadership and dedication as they tried to respond to the country's imperative call of providing digital educational content for Moroccan students through the ministry distance education portal," he said. This pandemic has highlighted the importance of expanding e-learning opportunities, to ensure that no student is left behind academically, especially disadvantaged students and rural populations. "In Morocco," concluded Mr. Fergoug, "I am sure that the key influencers and policymakers have never been so aware of this fact as now!"

USAID continues investing in e-learning and is working hand-in-hand with MOE towards building their self-reliance in digital learning by developing an online program for teachers' professional development under its current Reading for Success National Program for Reading (2017-2022). E-learning is also one of the main priorities in the new USAID-funded Higher Education Partnership for Morocco (HEP-M), 2019-2024 activity, which plans to develop blended learning solutions for teacher training. Source : U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

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