

Helping Morocco's outcast single mothers

By James Copnall
BBC News, Casablanca

Khadija's baby Noha is almost one year old and is her mother's greatest joy. But in deeply religious and conservative Morocco, Noha is also her greatest problem. Khadija was not married to her child's father – and Moroccan society finds it difficult to accept children born out of wedlock. "I used to go out with a man and he promised we would get married," she says. "But when I got pregnant, he didn't want to know me any more."



Khadija was cast out by her family. She came to Casablanca to give birth, and then came across the Feminine Solidarity Association. This non-governmental organisation found her a shelter, a small and simply-furnished room near the centre it runs. At the centre she is learning a trade - making sweet pastries that Moroccans prize highly.

The women in the centre learn a skill to earn a living. The results of their work are sold to the public – the association even has a restaurant. And most importantly the centre has a crèche, where the babies are looked after while the mothers work. After a stay of up to three years, they leave, but armed with a new skill which will hopefully allow them to earn money to support their children.

The centre is the life's work of Aicha Ech Chana, a woman of formidable purpose and drive, who is outraged by the way Morocco treats single mothers. "Even intellectuals don't accept the idea of single mothers," she says. "They think of adoption. But the biological mother is always the best parent. Single mothers are now more aware of their rights; and so they know the father should accept his child. But making him get married is another issue."



"Single mothers are, generally speaking, deemed as an insult to all the people who know them," Jamila Bargach, who is an expert on the issue, explains. Ms Bargach says what single mothers experience is hugely difficult for both the mother and her child. "It takes the woman a long time to forgive herself for what she has done, and also to establish a normal relationship with her child who is there to remind her she has done something that was the cause of the rejection of her family," she explains.

Both Ms Bargach and Ms Ech Chana say the father needs to take greater responsibility when children are born outside marriage, and there have been some tentative legal steps to push fathers in this direction. Nevertheless, life as a single mother is extremely difficult. Khadija is one of the lucky ones – thanks in part to the efforts of the centre, her family has decided to welcome her back into the family. But many other women have to bring up their children alone, in the most difficult of circumstances.

I COMPREHENSION (15 POINTS)

{BASE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ON THE TEXT}

A Are the following sentences TRUE or FALSE? JUSTIFY. (3 pts)

- 1 Khadija is still in relation with Noha's father.
- 2 Single mothers get on well with their children.
- 3 Khadija and her family have reconciled.

B Answer the following questions. (4 pts)

- 1 List two benefits which are provided by some non-governmental organizations to help single mothers.
- 2 What do educated people propose to solve the problem of these illegal children?
- 3 How has the government tried to help resolve the problem of single mothers?

C Find in the text words or expressions that mean the same as the following. (3 pts)

- 1 marriage (paragraph 1):

- 2 met or found by chance (paragraph 2):
- 3 regarded or considered (paragraph 5):

D What do the underlined words refer to in the text? (3 pts)

- 1 it (paragraph 2):
- 2 them (paragraph 3):
- 3 The centre (paragraph 4):

E Complete these sentences with information from the text. (2 pts)

- 1 Single mothers know the father should accept his child due to
- 2 What single mothers experience is hugely difficult not only for the mother, but

II LANGUAGE (15 POINTS)

A Fill in each gap with the appropriate word or expression from the list. (3 pts)

- 1 My friend Kamal looks happy and satisfied today; he a good grade on the test.
(**must have had, mustn't have had, needn't have had**)
- 2 Kamal managed the test yesterday.
(**passing, pass, to pass**)
- 3 Amazingly, he despite his handicap.
(**is succeeding, has succeeded, will succeed**)

B Match the words that go together to make appropriate collocations. (3 pts)

1	take	a	energy
2	sense of	b	humour
3	local	c	community
		d	care

- 1 2 3

C Give the correct form of the words between brackets. (3 pts)

Some NGOs make a lot of efforts to (improvement) women's position in society. They provide some of them with (finance) assistance and sensitize them to the (benefit) effect of education in human development.

D Rewrite the following sentences as suggested. (3 pts)

- 1 Aziza learnt how to read and write. She set up her own business.
Before Aziza set up her own business, she
- 2 Michel worked hard in and out of school. That's why he got excellent marks.
Michel got excellent marks **because of**
- 3 Adil worked in the evenings. He wanted to save money to buy a computer.
Adil worked in the evenings **in order that**

E Match each sentence with its appropriate function. (3 pts)

Sentence		Expresses	
1	I'm not quite sure I got your point.	a	cause
2	Akram met Mr. Johnson for an interview.	b	effect
3	Careless driving leads to serious road accidents.	c	a request
		d	lack of understanding

III WRITING (10 POINTS)

A lot of people in developing countries suffer from illiteracy. Write a short essay about the causes and consequences of this phenomenon, and suggest some solutions (Approximately 150)

Here are some suggestions to help you:

- Poverty / parents' ignorance,
- Lack of awareness of the importance of education.
- Remote schools in rural areas,
- Role of youth organisations, NGOs, the government, etc