The Arab Weekly (2)

Overcoming severe water scarcity: A Moroccan vision

Every essential national framework is in place to encourage people at the local level to adapt and to show their resiliency.

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A farmer installs a drip system on a potato field in Berrechid, Morocco's historically wheat-rich province situated some 40 kilometres southeast of Casablanca, February 7, 2024. (AFP)

The six consecutive years of drought in Morocco have been excruciating. The impact on the price of basic food items, such as meat and olive oil, has been striking. In recent years, the rainy season's onset has been



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Suggested By Editor



(<u>/bringing-local</u> <u>local-sustainable-</u> <u>sustainable-</u> <u>development-scale</u>) <u>development-scale</u>)

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At the same time, human ingenuity and Moroccan national frameworks for sustainability can reduce the heavy burden of the drought. Morocco is poised to see this struggle through, and how it does can illuminate a pathway to help other nations endure through their own severe water scarcity.

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Every essential national framework is in place to encourage people at the local level to adapt and to show their resiliency. In fact, the severity of the drought requiring adaptation could further operationalise Morocco's already established charters, policies, and programs for people's participation in natural resource management.

Indeed, local communities applying Morocco's pairing of sustainable development with participatory democratic procedures to address the water crisis could significantly fulfill its national goal of establishing decentralised administrations. After all, the more that sub-national (private-public) partners work together to implement community-identified initiatives, the more that decentralised management systems take practical form.

Morocco's national investments in desalinisation and other large-scale projects that increase and strategically disperse its water supply for regional balance are, by established global standards, exceptional. These © 2015-2021 The Arab Weekly. All rights reserved. T&Grave Sisolainter & Isandoutsolainser) the bout of pourtifs tractiter of m/arabweekly)

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enabling the national level to assist in a level to

In this regard, led by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco is well on its way to achieving its goals in an incredibly challenging situation by integrating these initiatives with renewable energy and the nationallyrecognised urgency.

However, community management of local opportunities and new and restored water infrastructure remain elusive, and the critical widespread rural mobilisation is not catalysed to the extent necessary for greater success.

A sustainable development process that results in locally identified and implemented water systems advancing conservation yet enabling higher production, which is in fact Morocco's approach, looks like this: in rural places where water scarcity is most seriously acute, women and men gather in different places (as is done traditionally) to examine as individuals and as a group their experienced difficulties in life related to social relationships, work and money outlooks, and health, education, and livelihood opportunities.

By first introspectively looking at their inner hurdles, strengths, and discovery processes determining their future and projects they want most of all, this experience in rural places commonly leads individuals

to issues of water for drinking and irrigation combined © 2015-2021 The Arab Weekly. All rights reserved. **f** (<u>https://www.facebook.com/ArabWeekly/</u>) T&GraithDisotationer(Meandadiscledelin)er AbAupb <u>Kichputson/twitter.com/arabweekly</u>) **Three Arra bes Weetking** determination of their development <u>Internet strategy</u> ojects' action plans and their commitment <u>their (pr</u>) ojects' maintenance and long-term durability is the primary factor of sustainability.

In Morocco, this process is not only found in the nation's municipal charter, which requires long- and short-term plans to be developed by its local council members alongside the jurisdiction's residents, but is also the central premise of the funding arm of the Moroccan government's National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD). Further, the feature of decentralised administration of development has a home in the nation's Constitution, and women being a driving force is codified in the country's progressively evolving family code (Moudouwana).

This relentless drought, that too shall pass, requires for us in Morocco to add the maximal possible level of investment into the already established Moroccan strategies to community sustainability. This means that we need to train thousands of agricultural extensionists and guardians of the nation's forests, thousands of university students and rural school teachers, thousands of members of municipal councils and civil society, and community and religious leaders in the methods for facilitating interactive participatory dialogue and activities for personal group empowerment and planning of local priority initiatives.

This is especially true of those initiatives that involve © 2015-2021 The Arab Weekly. All rights reserved. **f** (<u>https://www.facebook.com/ArabWeekly/</u>) T&GranteDischaiment/to-and-dischaimerxinAboutib

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systems, but also building the hund<u>ings of phaysangle.e6m/104308611012</u> terraces and planting hundreds of millions of endemic varieties of trees that will capture water, enable more gradual flow, without losing Morocco's precious water to runoff (yes, trees conserve water!).

Finance for local community associations and cooperatives for all matters concerning local management of water and its efficient utility should be directed not just from the Ministry of Agriculture, but prioritised by budgets across ministries whenever possible and most especially from the NIHD. Since water infrastructure is by far the costliest locallyprioritised project, NIHD should reduce its 25 percent finance matching requirement from community beneficiaries and co-create project proposals with local groups (since rural illiteracy rates are of national concern), making the NIHD funding accessible to those who seek it.

Essentially, the combination of Morocco's public frameworks to advance sustainable development, all integrating people's participation and management, requires facilitators to catalyse and assist the design and implementation of water infrastructure and projects. The procurements necessary for their completion would be enabled by the support and reform of Morocco's funding mechanisms.

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transformationally better for time to come.



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