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## 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)

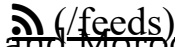
The six consecutive years of drought in Morocco have been excruciating. The impact on the price of basic food items, such as meat and olive oil, has been striking. In recent years, the rainy season's onset has been



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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.

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





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determination of their development objectives and  
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action plans and their commitment to their projects' 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



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systems, but also building the hundreds of thousands of 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 locally-prioritised 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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will powerfully entrench and scale its model, and in so doing inspire other countries on how people's participation can be the determinant feature that turns a devastating situation into one that is made transformationally better for time to come.

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