

# Female Empowerment Can Drive Development in Morocco

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By **Molly Case** -  
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Despite Morocco's international reputation as a reformist country, Moroccan women continue to face significant obstacles. Their social, economic, and political participation is either downplayed or denied altogether.

Progressive revisions of the Moudawana Family Code (2004) and amendments to the Moroccan constitution (2011) have aided in the national promotion of liberty and equality, but the persisting, yawning gender gap in Morocco is the result of longstanding cultural norms and a resistance to change.

In this context, female empowerment could be the vital ingredient to achieving a more inclusive, open, and prosperous society – with, of course, a heightened focus on supporting the overall development of Morocco.

## Female Economic Participation

Female economic participation in Morocco ranks among the [lowest in the world](#). Indeed, as of 2016, Morocco lies in the bottom [20 percent](#) of female participation in the labor force, and there has been very little progress over the past two decades to improve this position.

Such statistics demonstrate Morocco's failure to tap into one of its most valuable assets, subsequently slowing economic growth, diversification, and overall productivity.

As such, gender inequality is not solely a social issue, but an economic one too. Countries with existent gender gaps are [losing \\$160 trillion in wealth](#) because of the variances in lifetime earnings between men and women.

Granting Moroccan women greater economic power and ownership enables them to have sufficient control in accessing economic resources/markets.

With such control comes the ability to manage their own time and income in order to make meaningful and beneficial decisions for themselves, their households, and their communities. Ultimately, women's economic empowerment could have far-reaching positive consequences that benefit the country at large.

## Access to Education

Increasing access to education is a critical prerequisite for empowering the female population. This is because educated girls and women are able to pursue more meaningful work opportunities in higher productivity sectors. These jobs tend to be more secure and offer greater benefits to the individual and society as a whole.

In fact, [UNICEF](#) states that “one percentage point increase in female education raises the average level of GDP by 0.37 percentage points”. The ramifications of a basic education go beyond the economic domain, however.

Increasing access to educational opportunities and finance for women can contribute to [reduced fertility rates](#), [increased labor force participation](#), reduced infant and maternal mortality rate, and overall healthier families.

This is generally because increased employment opportunities and better knowledge about contraception prompt women to have smaller families and to begin child-bearing at a later age. Fewer children in a household results in more abundant resources and attention, subsequently improving the chances that an infant will survive. There is also evidence that educated women tend to [marry later](#) and on better terms.

## Social and Political Transformation

The social transformation that accompanies economically empowered women is unbounded and inter-generational. Women are more likely to spend money on things that support their children and household, therefore benefiting their families and improving the chances of their children to achieve health and prosperity.

In a household where the mother is educated, children, and specifically girls, are more likely to [attend school and benefit from improved nutrition](#). Furthermore, educated women are able to take on [leadership roles](#) and support positive development outcomes for the country or society at large.

This consequently speeds up the reduction in gender inequality as having more women in leadership roles translates to policies that will promote improvements to the livelihoods of Moroccan women and girls.

Educated women are more likely to engage in [civic participation](#), attend political meetings, and participate in social and political transformation in their area. Active participation in political and economic conversations also [expands women's agency and choice](#), amplifying their voices and increasing their ability to influence society and challenge established norms that limit women's rights and hinder female accomplishment.

Gender equality is not only a basic human right; but it is also fundamental for achieving a peaceful, prosperous Morocco. Empowering Moroccan women to live safe and productive lives allows them to reach their full potential and is the key to much larger economic growth, political stability, and social transformation.

By empowering Moroccan women through policies that facilitate greater access to financial and educational opportunities, the country will experience sustainable economic benefits, social development, and community growth.

[The High Atlas Foundation's IMAGINE Workshops](#) that are part of its [Farmer-to-Farmer Program](#) (funded by USAID) are working to make this vision a reality. The foundation does this by facilitating a personal growth process and

assisting women, especially those from remote, marginalized communities, in finding their voices and achieving their goals.

In doing so, IMAGINE participants are strengthened as rights holders and better able to advocate for and act on their needs and goals. It is grassroots movements such as this one that will ultimately have a significant impact on the economic standing and human development ranking of low-income countries in the near future.

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