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# Transformational Development In Decentralized Renewable Energy In Morocco

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## What we know

Renewable energy (RE) sources power transformational outcomes for community development projects from all sectors. To secure cross-cutting benefits, localized (or decentralized) RE initiatives need to embody the same essential feature of sustainable projects in general, which is that members of villages and neighborhoods first identify and then implement their own priorities for development and change.

Dialogue is the vital action that forges mutually empowering relationships doing measurable socioeconomic and environmental good for community-driven projects. Free and sincere discussion together with all interested and impacted groups is critically necessary for engaging all parties in multi-stakeholder action planning.

Morocco provides the freedom to achieve personal and collective development by integrating participatory approaches to advance education, health, and economic growth. In Morocco, civil society can flourish, people can gather, plant, and act together for the advancement of their community and municipality, and higher tiers—by program, charter, and constitution—must be committed to fulfilling this with all sectors.

Morocco has established policy frameworks for sustainable development in decentralization; RE; agriculture; multiculturalism; the family code; south-south unity; regionalism; and fair open markets. Moroccan public agencies understand the urgency for development, and are likely to be fairly contributive when they are properly informed of projects of interest as they begin.

Consider the case of a three-year decentralized RE program in the Marrakech-Safi region enabling fruit tree agriculture and clean drinking water systems, driven by a women's cooperative in the Youssoufia province and farming community members in the Al Haouz province. This development experience involves: 1) a multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) with national and regional representation from public and private sectors, 2) funding and facilitation by this program (High Atlas Foundation and Germanwatch), and 3) the emergence of lessons informing policy reform.

What occurred in regard to sustainable development, and how does that reveal strategies for replication, scalability, and policies for achieving participatory decentralized RE? The MSP elicits dialogue from different sectors because best decisions emerge from a collective point of view and direct interaction toward shared understanding and partnership.

## Morocco needs a new Ministry of Decentralization

The High Atlas Foundation (HAF) and Germanwatch (GW) played the essential role of third party assistance for coordinating shared planning and actions that achieve the three outcomes. The necessity of this function in itself provides a critical lesson. Capacity building with civil society organizations, and even the delineation of a distinct ministry, is vital to bring parties together for common action. The new ministry would be a powerful fulfiller of this need, or the Ministry of Environment, which already operates as a convenor among other ministries, can be formally bestowed the responsibility of building decentralized partnerships for sustainability.

Moroccan national decentralization and the enormity of such structuring across the collaboration in all directions will not just happen spontaneously. Projects need to be promoted by a vested institution who takes on that primary function. Decentralization—community control of development, and personal and group empowerment—is about cross-cutting action and follow-up, and people need to be trained and supported, including financially, to be the facilitators of Moroccan local and, ultimately, national sustainability.

In this program, the Covid-19 experience exacted new operational reconsiderations. The funding that would have gone to national and international MSP conferences to promote decentralized RE instead went toward community projects that manifest its reality for rural disadvantaged people. Practical sustainability lies in the beneficiaries' implementation, which is also what is really in the heart of the MSP members themselves. Importantly, most appropriate and supportive policies could not effectively be found without the experience and foresight provided by real application.

## RE replication thrives on human development

What did we learn from this experience that could inform our own efforts toward replication, and what have we gained in terms of our understanding of policy reform and renewal that would result in rural communities across the kingdom coming together and accomplishing their dreams through renewable power?

RE by nature will always be bound to the full landscape of human development. It inherently thrives on decentralized systems because of its constant need to adapt with local conditions. Thus, policies should reflect that it is the beneficiaries who are able to identify the particular qualities of the water-energy-food (WEF) nexus suited to the factors occurring in their specific community. In the interest of RE replication, supporting community management is the best assurance of integration possibilities.

If adaptive management rests on local, biozone-specific data collection (in regards to water, soil, air, and so forth), data analysis, and informed decision-making, the decentralized system that then manifests from the community discussions and collaboration is symbiotic with adaptive practices. The considerations of the forms of RE of a particular place are more readily identifiable utilizing adaptive-related measurements. Decentralization is built with the continued mounting of more and more community-based sustainable projects.

## Clean drinking water remains the priority

What has not changed in rural Morocco over decades is that clean drinking water remains the most commonly expressed priority. The implications of its lack of access are physically and socially destructive. It oppresses health, women and girls (who are tasked with retrieving water), and project prospects for basic quality of life. The damage of lack of clean drinking water upon children and families is incalculable. RE integrated with clean drinking systems allows children to grow healthy and girls to be freed from fetching water so they can attend school.

Many clean drinking water systems that a community fortunately has to meet their needs might still malfunction because of households' inability to pay for the energy for pumpage. RE-powered water delivery, by contrast, alleviates electricity and fossil fuel costs. Furthermore, with RE, village associations—including the ones in this program—still charge a fee (albeit a much more affordable one) for groundwater in proportion to the tonnage of water consumed by each household, which is enough to deter water waste.

## Communities must control their own development

Sustainability means that communities control their own process of analysis and means of evaluation of project priorities, action planning, and management. Their vision and review of personal and developmental life conditions allow for decisions that enhance the likelihood of enduring benefits, whether in RE or any social development direction they determine. Therefore, if we seek decentralized RE, we need to first effectively deliver personal and group empowerment workshops that encourage discovery and confidence, leading to participatory discussion about development. We need to begin with building personal visions and affirmations to persist and move forward concertedly.

When agricultural projects occur with farming villages without the Imagine women's empowerment and rights-based experience, household incomes and food security increases, but women's literacy and significant measurable women's and girls'-based benefits do not. The local women's cooperative in Youssoufia, Kounoze Lkdirate, went through the Imagine workshop and participatory planning process, ultimately leading to a clean drinking water system and solar-powered regional nursery. A [comparative study](#) shows that agricultural development preceded by empowerment training leads to benefits including increases in girls' participation in education and more robust cooperative development.

## Key Findings

Morocco is positioned to accelerate toward a sustainable development position with local communities at the center through key national initiatives. Not only has this fact enabled our relatively quick implementation, but it also has allowed us to consider and actually pursue strategies for scaling.

Decentralized RE requires commitment to funding beyond unexpected windfalls from uncontrollable external circumstances, such as shifts due to Covid-19 realities. To implement community projects, programs need to commit to funding where the people are and adapt to their project sustainability.

Skilled and proactive organizers make partner participation worthwhile with greater inclusion. Community initiatives not only galvanized the MSP, but are now making a profound life difference for more than 1,000 people. Applied experiences illuminate policy directions that promote replication, such as the necessity of a new agency or ministry committed to multisectoral collaboration at all levels for local sustainability.





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