

MOROCCO

Challenges of Inclusiveness and Participation

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As one of the 22 countries that volunteered to be reviewed at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July 2016, Morocco presented a concise report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These brief comments on the report endeavor to assess the ability of the Moroccan Government to meet its commitments towards its citizens and the international community.

Morocco's Report to the HLPF contains two main sections: one is devoted to contextualizing the Agenda 2030 while the other highlights the requirements to be met in order to effectively implement it.

Contextualizing the Agenda 2030

The preparatory process for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Morocco started in 2013 with various consultations around the Post-2015 Agenda.

In May 2016, a National Consultation aimed to identify national priorities regarding the SDGs and how to contextualize them took place in Rabat. Participants from various backgrounds took part in this consultation: representatives of governmental bodies and local authorities, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and UN staff. In addition, one day (5 May 2016) was devoted to civil society organizations and local governments. The consultation focused on four main issues: People, Planet, Peace and Partnerships.

According to the Morocco report, this consultation highlighted the fact that some SDGs have already been

taken into account through sectorial strategies.

Requirements to be met if Morocco is to effectively implement Agenda 2030

Morocco's Report to the HLPF focuses on the following requirements:

- The need to strengthen the national ownership process through the involvement of all stakeholders (government, citizens, civil society organizations and the private sector) and the territorialization of public policies related to SDGs.
- The alignment of SDGs with national priorities
- The mastering of coordination of public policy through the promotion of convergence and coordination mechanisms among public bodies.
- The upgrading of the statistical information system in order to adjust to UN requirements regarding the implementation and follow up of Agenda 2030
- Financing for the 2030 Agenda: given official development assistance (ODA) limits, financing should rely more on the private sector and public-private partnerships.

In addition, Morocco's Report specifies that an evaluation of SDG implementation will be undertaken every two years followed by periodical follow-up reports.

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Morocco's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

Opportunities and challenges

While during the last few years Morocco has adopted some public policies that might help it meet the 2030 Agenda's main objectives, many challenges have to be confronted in order to ensure to a proper and effective implementation of the global sustainable development agenda.

Opportunities

Morocco has shown a clear political will to tackle issues of environmental sustainability and climate change. For example, a National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development (NCESD) was developed through a participatory approach that involved all components of Moroccan society at both national and territorial level, and was adopted by the National Council for the Environment in 2011.

For the Charter to be operational, Framework Law No 99-12 was adopted in the first quarter of 2014. In addition, a National Energy Strategy was set up in order to reach 44 percent of installed electrical power from renewable sources by 2020.

Furthermore, Morocco is hosting COP22 next November to come up with implementation plans for the Paris Agreement on climate change. This major event will help awareness raising about environmental sustainability among the Moroccan population and can positively impact the willingness of Moroccan officials to live up to their commitments regarding the 2030 Agenda.

At civil society level, an increasing interest in environmental issues is noticeable as many associations and non-governmental organizations have been set up during the last few months.

Challenges

Public policy shortcomings

Morocco's Report to the HLPF does not contain any roadmap regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which means that the country is still in the

planning phase. The problem is that if no action is taken in the first 1000 days of the implementation period of the SDGs, which began in January 2016, then governments risk leaving people behind and failing to achieve certain goals altogether.

Another challenge that may hamper Morocco's efforts to achieve the SDGs is the government's persistence in carrying out neoliberal policies (privatization of public services such as education and health for example, austerity and public spending cuts) as part of its commitments to the International Monetary Fund.

Similarly, monitoring and evaluating the action plans set out for delivery of the 2030 Agenda is crucial in achieving successes. Unfortunately, this practice is still uncommon in Morocco given the pervasiveness of conventional controls and auditing. Thus Morocco is expected to increase the use and utilization of evaluation so that it becomes a systematic approach within public institutions if it is to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda.

Furthermore, public policy convergence and coherence is largely contingent upon the existence of a powerful and holistic vision, a strategic policy framework and a strong leadership commitment. However, these key success factors are badly needed at present in the Moroccan institutional architecture.

Finally, issues such as democratic governance, fighting corruption and inequalities, and employment do not seem to be at the top of Morocco's agenda as no mention of them is included in the report to the HLPF. Moreover, the failure to mobilize sufficient resources, especially domestic ones, might also impede the implementation of the 2030 Agenda if it is not more seriously taken into account.

Challenges of inclusiveness and participation

The Moroccan experience shows that while the 2030 Agenda, negotiated by Member States, lays out goals and targets at the global level, the challenge lies in translating these into the national context, with a strategy designed to achieve local priorities. Although the global agenda may help start the process, indicating the kind of legislation and policy initiatives that are

needed, as well as the necessary resource mobilization, it can also make its appropriation by national and local actors more difficult.

As a matter of fact, only a hundred of participants from civil society took part in the national consultation, which lasted no more than one day. Given the number of CSOs in Morocco (about 90,000), the consultation process is far from being inclusive and participatory. In addition, CSOs are considered as mere stakeholders with a consultative role and whose inputs are not included in the recommendations and reports.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that Moroccan civil society is still fragmented: for example, no national civil society platform on the SDGs has been set up so far. Moreover, many CSOs lack the expertise they need to engage with and challenge the Moroccan government. This problem is compounded by the lack of resources and difficulty to accessing information.

Finally, the civic space is constrained by the political power: as a recent report from the Heinrich Böll Foundation put it: “the number and form of restrictions experienced by activists and journalists are growing. What is more, attempts of silencing critical voices have not only increased in number, but they are becoming more radical and violent. For instance multiple associations experience a non-prolongation of their legal authorization, such as several regional branches of the Moroccan Human Rights Association (AMDH)... the intimidation of individual activists is an often chosen authoritarian strategy to warn and tranquilize others.”²

In conclusion, given the numerous limitations regarding public policies and the lack of a real and inclusive process, it seems unlikely that Morocco will be able to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda.

² S. Fares, A. Hoffman and D Rischewski, “Morocco: Democracy still a dream?” Henrich Böll Stiftung, 19 February, 2016.