

Strengthening Governance and Administrative Reform in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

Morocco has made many achievements over the past two decades in an effort to anchor good governance and transparency. The Government is committed to consolidating and intensifying the efforts made to achieve a qualitative leap in terms of governance and transparency, which is commensurate with the challenges of the 2011 Constitution, which meets the expectations of the Moroccan citizen, which improves the return on the efforts made and which ensures a better distribution of the benefits of the country's development. This has been implemented during this mandate, through the deployment of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the strengthening of transparency, administrative deconcentration, the simplification of procedures as well as digitalization, which are powerful tools for both administrative reform and economic recovery.

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Introduction

Morocco has made many achievements over the past two decades in an effort to anchor good governance and transparency. The Government is committed to consolidating and intensifying the efforts made to achieve a qualitative leap in terms of governance and transparency, which is commensurate with the challenges of the 2011 Constitution, which meets the expectations of the Moroccan citizen, which improves the return on the efforts made and which ensures a better distribution of the benefits of the country's development. This has been implemented during this mandate, through the deployment of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the strengthening of transparency, administrative deconcentration, the simplification of procedures as well as digitalization, which are powerful tools for both administrative reform and economic recovery.

This research work documents several experiences, but its authors do not prescribe a single way of assessing governance and administrative reform. So what are commendable efforts to strengthen governance in Morocco?

The vision aims to put in place in the next five years the milestones of digital development, digital transformation, transparency, in Morocco in all sectors, integrating a sectoral and regional perspective and also participatory multi-stakeholder, centered on the user and his environment.

Theoretical Framework: Definition and Pillars of Good Governance
 An economic development strategy cannot be seen as a set of technical responses or a series of measures taken at a given moment. Advances in economics, lessons learned in Asia in the 1960s, Africa in the 1970s, Latin America in the 1990s, and the experience of transition countries in Eastern Europe, have dispelled

the illusions of economists in this area [1]. On the contrary, it is now widely accepted in the science and practice of development economics that what counts, what ultimately allows a country to emerge and succeed in its development strategy, is a process which allows both [2].

To bring out a national development agenda that is supported by a majority of the population;

- To create the conditions for a good level of dialogue between all the components of society, which are called upon to participate in this national development strategy - a key stage because any transformation implies, at least temporarily, losers and winners - enabling agreement on the modalities for implementing the national strategy decided upon;
- Clearly identify the expected costs and benefits of this strategy and ensure that any action remains consistent with the overall strategy;
- To implement the means (human, technical, institutional and financial) that will allow the execution of the said strategy;
- To coordinate the action of the various state agencies in the implementation of this strategy;
- Establish the necessary dispute resolution and arbitration mechanisms;
- Define the tools for evaluating public policies to measure the effectiveness of the measures put in place and, if necessary, to implement appropriate improvement mechanisms. In short, a national development strategy requires, first and foremost, the establishment of appropriate institutions and mechanisms of economic governance. Once this is done, it then becomes possible to define and execute a national development strategy. This view, which arose in particular after the disappointments experienced in Latin America in the 1990s following the implementation of orthodox economic reforms (better known as the Washington Consensus because they were promoted and supported by the international institutions based in the city of the same name), has since been the subject of empirical research and has given rise to

the so-called 'institutional' theory of development. This school of thought differs in particular from the other two major schools of thought in development economics (with regard to the underlying determinants of development). The so-called "geographical" school places geography at the forefront of the determinants of growth, as it defines such important factors as climate, natural resources, transport costs, diffusion of technology or growth. We refer to the work of Diamond, Sachs, Gallup and Melinger as examples of research work representative of this school. The "integrationist" school, on the other hand, focuses on integration into the world economy through trade and free trade. A country's openness to trade is therefore the main determinant of its economic trajectory. The work of Frankel and Romer and Sachs and Warner are examples of well-known research in this area. The advocates of the "institutionalist" school of thought, on the other hand, advocate the supremacy of institutions: countries that develop are those that put in place solid institutions that make it possible to protect property rights, build a state governed by the rule of law, resolve conflicts and coordinate public policy, among other things. These institutions are said to be the foundation of economic development. Following the work of Douglas North, proponents of this school of thought have sought to empirically validate the theory of the pre-eminence of institutions as an engine of growth in emerging countries by conducting comparative studies of growth in several emerging countries over long periods of time, This was done by regressing the growth rates of emerging countries on various indicators of institutional quality, while trying to solve the major endogeneity problem posed by institutions (are institutions prior to development or is it the other way around?). For examples of major works in this line, we refer to the work of Rodrik, Subramanian and Trebbi or Acemoglu, Robinson and Johnson. To the extent that a consensus can be found in development economics on central issues such as the underlying determinants of economic growth and development, it seems that the importance of institutions is now recognised by the majority of economists. Moreover, in the case of Morocco, the theory of institutions will be retained because the other two explanations seem difficult to support: the geography of Morocco as a Mediterranean country with two maritime façades excludes de facto the geographical argument. Finally, Morocco's economic openness, if not yet complete, remains nevertheless in the upper average of developing countries (in any case, the post-structural adjustment plan liberalisations have not shown any impact on growth due to a stronger integration into the world economy). There is a close correlation between governance and development, as well as an international consensus on the need to improve the overall level of governance as the ultimate end and principal means for sustainable development. It is worth referring first of all to the definition of good governance proposed by the United Nations, which summarises its components and main aspects as "a participatory approach to government and the management of public affairs, based on the mobilisation of political, economic and social actors, from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, with the aim of ensuring the sustainable well-being of all citizens". It should be noted that good governance is based on four pillars:

- Integrity as à system of rules and values framing the responsibility to safeguard public resources and assets and ensure their efficient use;

- Transparency, essential to ensure public Access to accurate and up-to-date information with the possibility of dissemination;

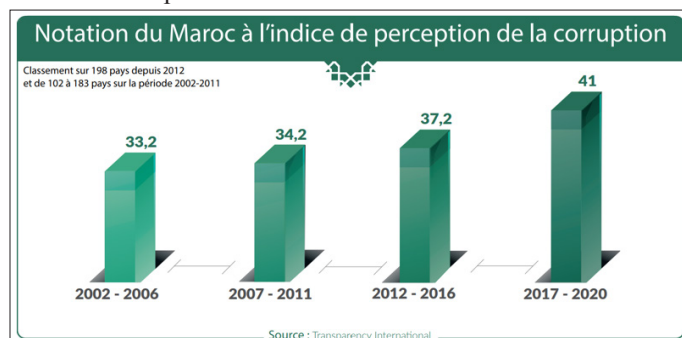
- Inclusive Ness as à collective commîtes to ensure Broad participation of all actors in society in the preparation and implementation of public policies;

- Accountability and reporting to ensure optimal management of material and human resources and to link achievements to objectives.

Strengthening Governance: Commendable Efforts Implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy

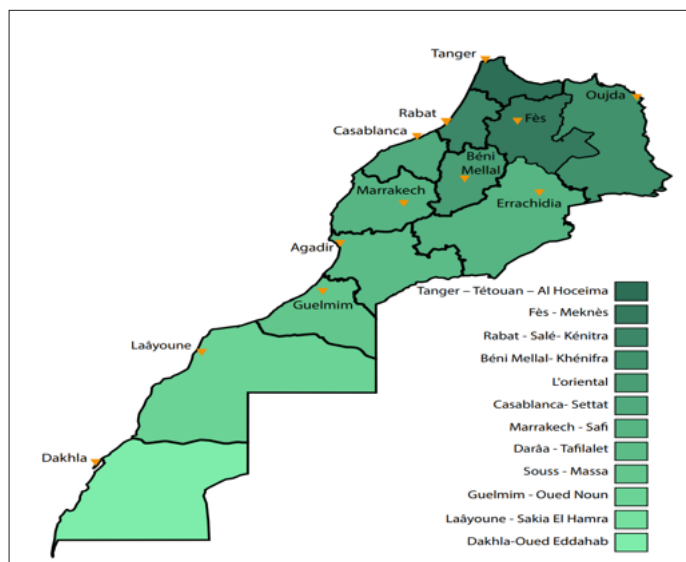
The fight against corruption is a national and collective undertaking. Indeed, its achievement depends on the involvement of all stakeholders and on the conscious and responsible commitment of citizens. During the last decade, the Kingdom has undertaken wide-ranging reforms to fight corruption, which have made it possible to meet some of the expectations of citizens and to make significant progress. The independence of the judiciary from the executive, the activation of the Competition Council, the start of the simplification and digitalisation of the administration, as well as the implementation of the first National Strategy for the Fight against Corruption, are strong markers.

Thus, the Government initiated in 2017 the implementation of this strategy, which includes 59 projects concerning several departments, and then activated its governance and monitoring mechanisms, including the national commission, headed by the Head of Government, while ensuring the involvement of civil society. This coincided with the official launch of the National Authority for Probity, Prevention and the Fight against Corruption and the extension of its prerogatives. In addition to the importance of the challenges that remain in the fight against corruption, it is worth noting the positive evolution, albeit slow and insufficient, but continuous, of Morocco's average rating in the Corruption Perception Index, which rose from 33.2 over the period 2002-2006 to 41 over the period 2017-2020.



The Adoption of the Deconcentration Charter and Its Effective Implementation

Since the first days of its mandate, the Government has mobilised all its forces to relaunch this structuring project, which had been suspended for several years, during which time more than a dozen Royal Speeches stressed the need to adopt the deconcentration charter and to implement this fundamental reform to improve public services.



The Government has thus mobilised to draw up and adopt the decree on the administrative deconcentration charter. Indeed, this reform constitutes a revolution in the administrative structure aimed at bringing administrations closer to citizens, better distributing roles between them and facilitating the implementation of public policies. Effective deconcentration has thus begun in all the departments concerned, through the development and approval of their administrative deconcentration master plan. The implementation of the reform has begun with the simplification of several administrative procedures. In the medium and long term, the reform aims to give the deconcentrated services a large degree of autonomy and substantial financial and human resources to improve the quality of public services.

Modernising the Administration and Improving its Services

As part of the consolidation of efforts to improve the quality and performance of public services, the Government has adopted the Public Services Charter, which aims to include all actors operating in the public services in a system of principles and procedures of good governance, both in the performance of their administrative tasks and in their relations with users. In addition, the administrative reception has been improved and several public services have been modernised, such as the procedures for obtaining certified copies and birth certificates. Also, the procedures for obtaining town planning authorisations have been facilitated through the portal (www.rokhas.ma), in parallel with the implementation, for the first time in Morocco, of a unified system for managing complaints, claims and suggestions from users through the adoption of a specific decree and the launch of the portal (www.cikhaya.ma). It should be noted, however, that this reform is far from being a simple reform of public policies, but a reform that requires the participation of the whole of Moroccan society and a long-term project at the heart of the new development paradigm.

Strengthening Transparency and Implementing Participatory Democracy

As part of the strengthening of transparency and the right of access to information, the law on the right of access to information was adopted. For the deployment of this project, a dedicated commission has been set up to monitor its implementation. In addition, 1,148 officials in charge of information management in the administrations have been appointed, a practical guide for

citizens has been prepared, a unified information request form has been adopted, and the portal (www.chafafiya.ma) has been launched. The Government also set up the institutional framework for the implementation of the right to petition to allow citizens to express their positions and contribute to public policies. In this context, the first national petition was submitted and received concrete commitments as a response from the Government.

Simplification of Administrative Procedures

The Government has attached great importance to the simplification of administrative procedures. Thus, after many years of waiting, the Government has completed the institutional framework by adopting Act No. 19-55 on the simplification of administrative procedures and the effective launch of its implementation, with a view to strengthening the bond of trust between administrations and users and the framework for the operation of public services through precise, transparent and simplified procedures at the service of citizens.

To this end, the national portal of administrative procedures currently being launched should constitute, for the first time in Morocco, a unified base for approved administrative procedures, outside of which no procedure could be requested from a user.

Accelerating the digital transformation

The Government has recently adopted a roadmap entitled: “General Guidelines for the Development of Digital in Morocco by 2025”, as part of a desire to accelerate the digital transformation in order to meet the new socio-economic challenges facing our country. The expected objectives of this new vision are to establish an efficient and effective digital administration by offering secure services with high added value, oriented towards users and more globally to promote modernisation, transparency and public performance, in addition to improving the business climate [3-8].

Conclusion

The vision aims to put in place in the next five years the milestones of a digital development of Morocco of tomorrow in all sectors, by integrating a sectoral and regional perspective and also participatory multi-stakeholder, centered on the user and his environment, including : The transformation of the administration, with a view to implementing the interoperability device and the dematerialisation and redesign of core processes; Facilitating access to communication with the citizen; Improving the quality of public services and services rendered to citizens and businesses and encouraging interactions with the public administration; Improving the productivity and competitiveness of the Moroccan economy by contributing to the development of technological sectors; Mobilising digital technology for a more inclusive and egalitarian society by reducing the digital divide, training a new generation of 50.000 young employable talents and the development of specific initiatives in sectors such as Education, Health, Agriculture and Handicrafts; The positioning of Morocco as a Digital & Technological Hub of reference at the African level; Improving access to information, social benefits, health care services and education for the less privileged population or in remote rural areas; Reducing social and socio-economic inequalities by democratising access to the Internet and making technology a vector for development, particularly in rural areas. The creation of the Digital Development Agency and its official launch by the Government now provide an adequate institutional framework for the implementation of these commitments.

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