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Civil society perspectives on renewable energy policy making in Morocco

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This document summarizes the outcomes of a working group exercise discussing the perspectives of civil society representatives on renewable energy policy making in Morocco. The working group took place during the "Conférence sur Les Changements Climatiques au Maroc" which was organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation on the February 10th, 2015 in Rabat. Participants were mainly Moroccan NGO representatives, but also representatives of governmental institutions, the industry and academia. Germanwatch facilitated this working group and hereby provides the developed results.

Among the forerunners in renewable energy policy-making, the kingdom of Morocco clearly emerges as a standout, whose leadership shines beyond the Arab region. With ambitious targets, strong governmental policies and the patronage of King Mohammed VI, the country's national Solar Plan of deploying a total of 6000 MW wind, solar and hydro by 2020 represents a game changer towards a low-carbon future. Yet, with the transition to a new energy pathway coinciding with the efforts of transitioning to more democratic structures in Morocco, it is important to ensure that investments in new energy infrastructures contribute to society needs and aspirations. In this context the engagement of civil society becomes a prerequisite for the sustainable and successful implementation of renewable energies and measures of energy efficiency in Morocco. Civil society actors (NGOs) are key agents in the transformation to a post-fossil society. They can influence policy-making and shape the awareness of the general public. However, civil society groups and the broad public in Morocco are currently only rarely working on renewable energy and thus have been little involved in the elaboration of the energy transformation so far.

Against this background the Working Group II aimed to address this gap by developing first answers to three questions:

- 1) The impacts of solar power - What are the local perspectives of large-scale solar power projects in Morocco?
- 2) The national level: The role of civil society - What would civil society need to have a say in the implementation of renewable energies in Morocco?
- 3) The civil society action - What could civil society bring to the table to develop and implement the deployment of renewable energy?

1. The impacts of solar power - What are the local perspectives of large-scale solar power projects in Morocco?

Based on the experiences of the participants with the country's first stand-alone Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) plant in Ouarzazate (Noor I), this group discussed the local dimension of utility-scale CSP plants along four main issues:

- **Water**: The high uncertainties concerning the potential effects of the operational water withdrawal to fulfill CSP plants' water requirements could be addressed by altering the cooling technology of CSP plants from wet- to dry-cooling in order to prevent the further water scarcity in affected communities (for the case of Noor, this has already been addressed by applying dry-cooling systems to the project phases II-III).
 - *Recommendation: MASEN should limit the water footprint of CSP technology by considering dry-cooling as the only cooling-technology for the CSP deployment in the arid regions of Morocco.*
- **Expectations**: The lack of sufficient information and resulting misperceptions associated with the socio-economic outcomes of CSP can lead to unreasonable expectations among the local population, e.g., in regards to jobs and economic revenues, and, thus, should be addressed by improved stakeholder engagement and transparent communication.
 - *Recommendation: MASEN and local authorities should adopt a more transparent approach to inform about CSP projects, and empower civil society organizations to get engaged and facilitate the communication and community engagement process at the local level.*
- **Skills**: The mismatch between the labor requirements to work at utility-scale CSP projects and the existing competencies and skills of the local workforce could be addressed by better aligning vocational training and university programs with the demand of project developers.
 - *Recommendation: The Government of Morocco, and especially the Ministry for Education, should develop a strategy to match the CSP labor requirements with the curricula development of educational institutions - for university and vocational training.*
- **Regional marginalization**: Because CSP projects alone cannot lift rural areas in Southern Morocco out of poverty and socio-economic isolation, additional measures are needed to foster sustainable development in the Southern parts of Morocco.
 - *Recommendation: The Government of Morocco should develop a Development Plan and a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to enhance socio-economic development in the rural parts of Southern Morocco and build resilience towards environmental degradation.*

2. The national level: The role of civil society - What would civil society need to have a say in the implementation of renewable energies in Morocco?

With the aim to increase the involvement of civil society actors in the renewable energy policy-making in Morocco, this group discussed their needs to achieve this goal along four main issues:

- Formalized civil society engagement: The lack of civil society participation and engagement in renewable energy policy making should be addressed by a political commitment to a respectful treatment of NGO submissions and the recognition of civil society opinions.
 - *Recommendation: The Government of Morocco should develop a formalized institutional structure for civil society participation and engagement in renewable energy policy making*
- Information: The awareness and trust among civil society on the beneficial interplay between renewable energy, the environment and economic opportunities should be addressed by more scientific research and an easily accessible information database.
 - *Recommendation: Knowledge-generating institutions like MASEN, IRESEN and ADEREE should provide understandable, yet appealing information to civil society actors to stimulate the public debate on the benefits of renewable energy - especially for households and the youth.*
- Feed-in tariff: In order to make decentralized renewable energy applications more attractive for households, economic incentives should be provided through, for example, a legally fixed feed-in tariff.
 - *Recommendation: The Government of Morocco should consider the adoption of a feed-in tariff scheme in order to accelerate investments in renewable energy and allow public economic participation in the energy transition.*
- Media coverage: Media coverage on renewable energy should be increased to raise awareness among the population, e.g. through videos or social marketing.
 - *Recommendation: Pilot projects or best-practices on the application of renewable energy should be marketed more broadly by journalists and receive more media coverage.*

3. The civil society action - What could civil society bring to the table to develop and implement the deployment of renewable energy?

Based on the experiences of the participants with public outreach measures to raise awareness on environmental issues as well with political engagement, this group discussed the role of civil society action within the national roll-out of renewable energies along four main issues.

- Civil society action: The lack of information about the socio-economic implications of the national Solar Plan as well as about means for civil society engagement in the siting and technology choices of projects should be addressed by increased civil society actions and exchange.
 - *Recommendation: Civil society organisations should get actively engaged as agents of change in the renewable energy policy-making and communication process and formulate their demands, e.g., call for action and policy papers.*
- Local needs: Needs and aspirations of local communities affected by utility-scale renewable energy projects (solar, wind and hydro), should be taken into account in the project development in order to address locally specific circumstances, e.g., subsistence agriculture or water storage.
 - *Recommendation: Prior to the development of renewable energy projects the local needs and aspirations should be identified by local civil society organizations and affected communities, so to develop the national Solar Plan in partnership with MASEN and to the best of local citizens.*
- Mediation: Potential conflicts arising from the deployment of utility-scale renewable energy projects (solar, wind and hydro) should be addressed through mediation provided by civil society organizations and the exchange between project regions (e.g., Ouarzazate-Tata).
 - *Recommendation: Civil society organizations should build-up mediation capacities and exchange experiences in order to advocate for an equitable match between society needs and national energy objectives within the national Solar Plan.*
- Micro-credits: In order to increase the application of decentralized renewable energy applications, the availability of micro-credits should be more transparent and access to them easier.
 - *Recommendation: Civil society organizations should increase awareness raising on the opportunities of decentralized renewable energy applications and urge the Government of Morocco to improve the availability and accessibility of micro-credits for those.*