

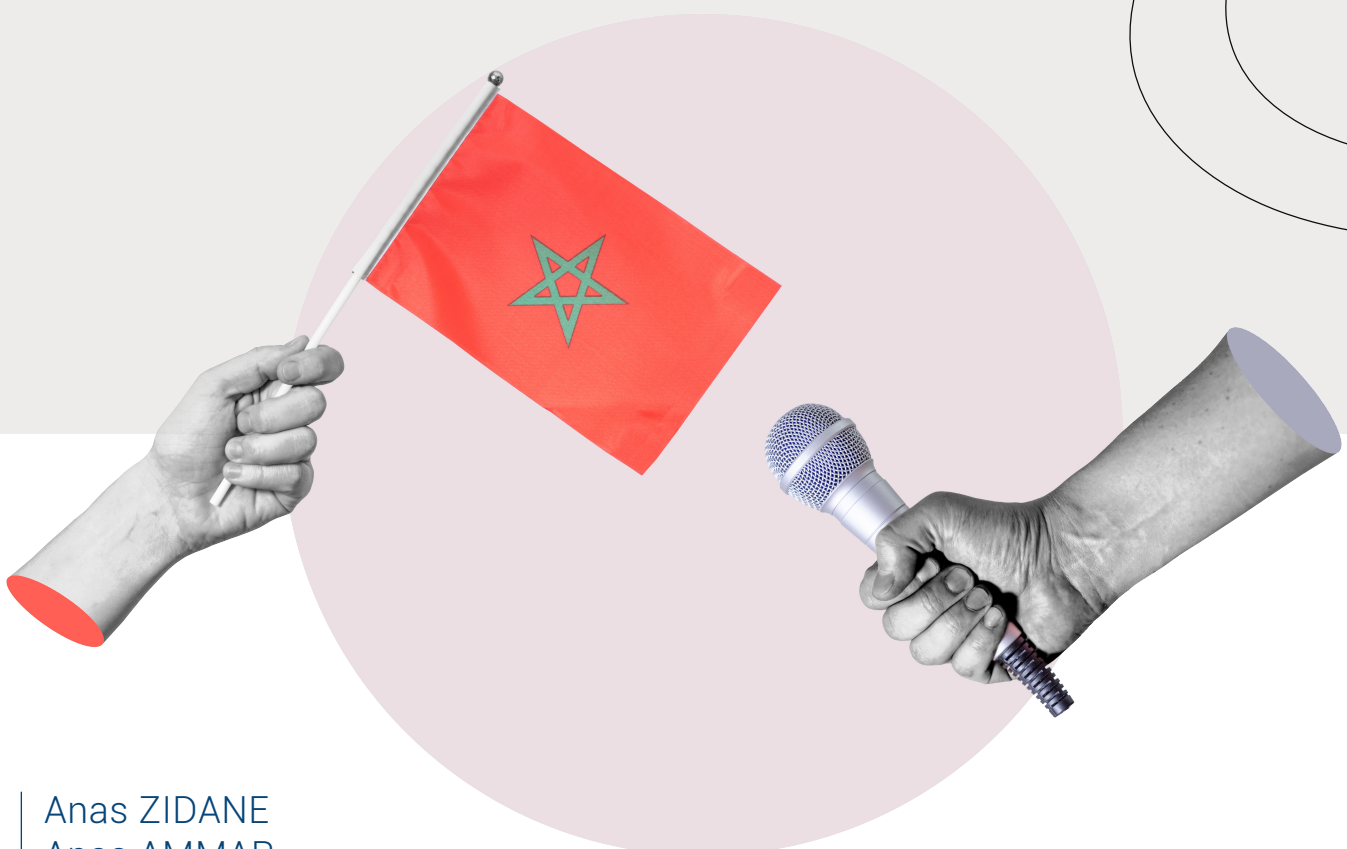


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Political ambitions vs. daily reality:

The persistent challenges of
the Moroccan government mid-term



Despite ambitious promises and optimistic speeches, the reality on the ground reveals serious shortcomings and aspects requiring particular attention to reach an optimal level in several key areas. It is time to confront the government with its responsibilities and highlight some significant obstacles.

The Moroccan economy remains marked by insufficient growth and unequal wealth distribution. Unemployment rates, particularly among the youth, remain alarming, and social inequalities are widening¹. The economic policies implemented are limited in impact and fail to stimulate inclusive and sustainable development. Additionally, the recent increase in gas bottle prices has further strained household economies, rendering recent salary increases largely insufficient.

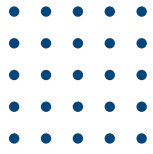


Next, the education sector is undergoing a deep crisis. Announced reforms are slow to show tangible results, and educational performance indicators stagnate at worrying levels. School infrastructure is inadequate, and educational programs are outdated, seriously hindering the convergence of private output and public returns. Furthermore, social dialogue with youth, especially those in the medical sectors and contract-recruited teachers, is virtually absent in some cases (in response to the strikes of Medicine and Pharmacy students). These groups express growing dissatisfaction with the precariousness of their working conditions and the lack of clear prospects.

The government has also faced considerable challenges, notably the war between Ukraine and

Russia and the earthquake that struck Morocco on September 8, 2023, affecting many villages in the High Atlas Mountains. Despite these challenges and others widespread worldwide that cannot serve as a shield to protect the government, it is crucial to recognize shortcomings and demonstrate good political spirit accompanied by appropriate measures.

This article proposes to share the current challenges frankly and constructively. It would be beneficial for the Moroccan government to consider bold measures to meet the legitimate expectations of the population. A profound transformation is essential to build a more promising future for Morocco to benefit everyone.



State of the economy and employment

At mid-term, the Moroccan economy finds itself in an alarming situation marked by the eradication of more than 180,000 jobs². This massive job destruction is the direct result of the lack of return on investments, which only produce seasonal and temporary jobs destined to disappear at the end of projects and construction sites. These ephemeral jobs do not contribute to sustainable growth and are often informal, further deepening inequalities and limiting the benefits for the real economy.

Unemployment reaches critical levels with an overall rate of 13,7%, an increase of 8 points compared to the previous period. Nationally, 1,645,000 people are unemployed, recording an increase of 96,000 unemployed individuals. This scourge is particularly pronounced in urban areas, where the unemployment rate reaches 17,6% compared to 6,8% in rural areas. Young people, graduates, and women are the hardest hit, revealing the labor market's inability to absorb this skilled workforce.

Geographic and regional distribution of unemployment

The geographic distribution of unemployment reveals a worrying concentration in five main regions: Casablanca-Settat, Fès-Meknès, Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, the Oriental, and the South. The Oriental and

Southern regions show the highest unemployment rates, while Marrakech-Safi, Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, and Drâa-Tafilalet have relatively lower rates.

Structural problems and economic transformations³

Traditional sectors like agriculture and textiles, historically robust, are undergoing a digital transformation requiring advanced skills in data management and agricultural technologies. Although this transformation offers opportunities

for skilled workers, it poses a reskilling challenge for those left behind. Regional disparities exacerbate this problem, with rural areas being severely disadvantaged compared to urban centers in terms of job opportunities.

Impact of economic and social policies

Examples of resource mismanagement are multiplying. For instance, the price of gas bottles will gradually increase to 50 dirhams in 2024⁴ (already applied for the first tranche), 60 dirhams in 2025, and 70 dirhams in 2026. These increases aim to finance the direct support program for disadvantaged families listed in the unified social register, a project still in its infancy.

This policy only increases the financial burden of the most vulnerable households, contradicting the goal of creating sustainable wealth and long-term added value.

Aziz Akhannouch, the head of government, acknowledged that the state budget could not simultaneously support direct social aid⁵ and the entire cost of the compensation system. This admission highlights the urgency of developing more robust⁶ and sustainable economic strategies to reduce unemployment and support⁷ vulnerable populations without further penalizing already disadvantaged or middle-class citizens.

³ Les choix que doit opérer le Maroc pour débrider sa croissance à l'horizon 2040 - Le Matin.ma

⁴ Augmentation des prix du gaz au Maroc – Actu-Maroc : Actualités, informations et news au Maroc

⁵ Aides sociales directes : Aziz Akhannouch révèle les détails de ce programme de "révolution sociale" - Médias24 (medias24.com)

⁶ PLF 2024: Aziz Akhannouch esquisse les priorités de son gouvernement - Le Desk

⁷ Aides sociales directes: bénéficiaires, budget, contributeurs, les détails d'un programme à 25 MMDH - Le Desk



Housing policy challenges and complexities⁸

The social aspect of the Moroccan government's policies, particularly in housing, reveals profound shortcomings and a bureaucratic approach disconnected from citizens' daily realities. Housing aid has been burdened with complex and restrictive technical dimensions. Eligibility criteria impose rigid and often humiliating procedures on households to prove their worthiness.

The housing aid program is not limited to building houses⁹, but also includes an attempt to restructure the land market to control speculation. This initiative, although noble, faces the harsh reality of entrenched interests and deeply rooted market practices often more resistant than reinforced concrete itself (informal real estate brokerage services, a black market for buying/selling properties, declining construction quality, etc.)¹⁰

A pressing demand for affordable housing?

The 'Daam Sakane' digital platform has garnered significant popularity¹¹, receiving 16,302 requests weekly, underscoring the pressing demand for affordable housing. However, existing policies encounter difficulties in achieving a balance between expanding supply and maintaining quality standards. Developers and authorities are urged to promptly address this

demand while ensuring sustainable living conditions. This housing initiative marks a pivotal stage in Morocco's urban evolution, navigating the intersection of contemporary aspirations and implementation challenges. The program's success depends on the recalibration of housing policies to inclusively cater to all eligible citizens.

⁸ Politique de l'habitat : Une nouvelle vision se profile à l'horizon – Aujourd'hui le Maroc (aujourd'hui.ma)

⁹ erudit.org/fr/revues/lsp/2010-n63-lsp3885/044145ar.pdf

¹⁰ Le secteur de l'habitat défie la crise : Bilan d'étape des différents dispositifs mis en place – Aujourd'hui le Maroc (aujourd'hui.ma)

¹¹ Aide au logement : près de 12.800 bénéficiaires au 3 juin 2024 - Médias24 (medias24.com)

Social dialogue: Between evolution and revolution of communication techniques¹²

The Moroccan government seems to oscillate between the evolution and revolution of appropriate communication techniques but remains distant from the reality experienced by young people. The responses provided by the executive often appear disconnected and difficult to accept for Moroccan youth. A glaring example of this disconnection is the persistent conflict with medical students¹³.

For three months, medical students at the Public University have been on strike protesting the government's decision to reduce their training duration to six years (instead of seven). This decision, perceived as hasty and unjustified in their view, has sparked a wave of demonstrations across the country. Despite the scale of the protest, the Minister of Higher Education responded with disarming simplicity: "No." ¹⁴ A response that illustrates the lack of constructive dialogue and consideration for students' concerns.

The inflexible executive¹⁵, maintains its position without making efforts to develop a closer bond with these young people, who are essential for the future of the Moroccan healthcare system. Medical students, through their training and

commitment, are destined to fill hospitals and support new investments in the medical field. Ignoring their demands and crucial role compromises the development of this vital sector.

The government announced that exams would be organized according to the fixed schedule without any adjustment in response to the strike. Creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension, the minister also declared that the government would be firm with "disruptive" students who attempt to intimidate their peers. He assured that the psychic and physical security of students wishing to continue their studies normally would be guaranteed. However, this stance risks widening the gap between the government and the youth.

Social dialogue is crucial to easing tensions and establishing a climate of trust. The government must evolve towards more empathetic and inclusive communication, recognizing the legitimate concerns of young people and seeking concerted solutions. Intransigence will only amplify the frustration and alienation felt by these future health professionals.

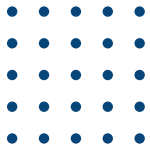
¹² https://telquel.ma/instant-t/2024/03/27/dialogue-social-laugmentation-generale-des-salaires-priorite-pour-moukharik_1863635/

¹³ Le gouvernement répond aux étudiants en médecine: «aucune concession» sur la durée de formation de 6 ans | le360.ma⁷

¹⁴ https://fr.le360.ma/politique/le-gouvernement-repond-aux-etudiants-en-medecine-aucune-concession-sur-la-duree-de-formation-de-6_YL45AJNVG5E2TPM7ZR7VXAA3GE

¹⁵ Crise des étudiants en médecine: les sanctions compliquent la situation | le360.ma

¹⁶ https://fr.le360.ma/societe/greve-des-etudiants-en-medecine-le-gouvernement-hausse-le-ton_MRNEKYVZKFDPPVB3YXUVYHDG3AY/



Absence of targeted evaluations: A lack of result-oriented culture

One of the major problems of the Moroccan government lies in the absence of targeted evaluations and the propagation of a culture primarily focused on immediate results¹⁷, without questioning or the ability to admit mistakes. This rigid approach prevents the innovation and modernization necessary in several key sectors such as agriculture, water, and housing.

To truly progress, the government must invest in research and innovation. Modernizing practices in essential areas requires not only resources but also a willingness to pilot innovative projects on a small scale before deploying them on a large scale. This approach allows policies to be adapted based on lessons learned, minimizing the risks of large-scale errors and maximizing the positive impact of initiatives.



Conclusion

A mid-term marked by challenges and opportunities for reform

At mid-term, the Moroccan government finds itself at a critical juncture, facing significant economic and social challenges that require urgent and effective responses. The evaluation of current performances reveals substantial gaps and highlights areas where improvements are indispensable to meet citizens' expectations and ensure sustainable and inclusive development.

It is imperative for the government to work closely with all stakeholders beyond the executive's primacy. Consulting specialized bodies and experts such as Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM) is crucial to develop economic policies and gain well-informed and effective monetary insights. BAM, with its deep expertise, has never ceased to provide valuable perspectives that will help align government policies

with the country's economic realities. For the Moroccan government to succeed in turning these challenges into opportunities, it must adopt a more inclusive, flexible approach based on continuous evaluation. Sustainable development and improving citizens' quality of life require close collaboration with all stakeholders, transparent communication, and a willingness to adapt and innovate. By working together, listening to the voices of young people, experts, and citizens, Morocco can hope for a more prosperous and equitable future.

About the Authors

Anas is a young researcher currently in the second year of a Master's in Economics and Public Policy Evaluation at FSJES Agdal, Rabat. He began his academic journey with a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Hassan 1st University in Settat. Anas is actively involved in various associative initiatives and events focused on project management and participatory democracy.



Anas ZIDANE

He has a strong interest in social and political issues, firmly believing in the necessity of transparent communication between citizens and policymakers to build widespread public trust and promote active democratic participation. He advocates for citizens' ability to understand state policies and create a genuine social contract.

Anas is a student researcher in a Master's program titled "Political and Institutional Performance," a competent project manager, and a positive change agent. With a determination to work for community well-being, he has tackled complex challenges within various foundations, producing in-depth analyses on technological and societal issues.



Anas AMMAR

As a Project Coordinator, he has successfully led community development initiatives. Outside of his professional work, Anas is a strong advocate for citizen participation and civic education, actively engaging in workshops and seminars to strengthen democracy and promote a culture of social responsibility.

⁷ Marché du travail | Site institutionnel du Haut-Commissariat au Plan du Royaume du Maroc (hcp.ma)

⁸ La situation du marché du travail au premier trimestre de 2024 (hcp.ma)

⁹ Taux de chômage au Maroc 2023 | Statista

