

Catalysts of Recovery: A Case Study on Moroccan Women's Business Associations and Post-Pandemic Industrial Policy (2010–2024)

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Abstract

This case study examines the role of women's business associations (WBAs) as critical agents in shaping Morocco's post-pandemic industrial policy landscape from 2020 to 2024. It addresses the research problem of how these female-led civil society organisations navigated a period of profound economic disruption to influence national recovery strategies, a domain traditionally dominated by established, male-centric networks. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research is grounded in a single, revelatory case study design. It analyses official policy documents and public advocacy campaigns, and draws on 24 semi-structured interviews with WBA leaders and government officials. This triangulated data, covering the period from 2010 to 2024, was examined using thematic analysis to trace advocacy strategies and policy outcomes. The findings reveal that Moroccan WBAs, building upon organisational capacities strengthened in the preceding decade, successfully transitioned from traditional support roles to proactive policy entrepreneurship. They leveraged grassroots networks to provide real-time data on gendered economic impacts, which informed the design of more inclusive industrial support measures. Crucially, they advocated for and secured the integration of gender-sensitive criteria within key frameworks, notably the 2021–2023 Industrial Recovery Plan. The study concludes that these associations acted as indispensable catalysts, ensuring post-pandemic industrial policy recognised women-led enterprises as vital to national economic resilience. It demonstrates a model for effective feminist engagement with industrial policy, highlighting how organised collectives can institutionalise gender considerations within macroeconomic planning for a more equitable recovery.

Keywords: *Women's Business Associations, Industrial Policy, Post-Pandemic Recovery, North Africa, Case Study Methodology, Gender and Development, Economic Resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The role of organised civil society, particularly women's business associations (WBAs), in shaping economic policy in North Africa remains an under-examined facet of post-pandemic

recovery. While the COVID-19 crisis catalysed state-led industrial policy reforms across the region, the specific mechanisms through which gender-informed private sector advocacy influences these processes are poorly understood ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#); [Mixsell, 2024](#)). Existing literature on Moroccan and Tunisian political economy frequently addresses state-business relations or broad governance reforms but often overlooks the gendered dimension of policy formulation ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Anderson, 2025](#)). For instance, studies on Morocco's strategic autonomy and foreign investment frameworks detail state priorities without analysing how domestic constituencies, such as WBAs, negotiate these agendas ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#)). Similarly, research on Tunisia's post-revolution landscape examines civil society's political role but seldom its structured economic advocacy ([Djerbi, 2024](#); [Holgado, 2024](#)).

This gap is significant. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated pre-existing gendered economic vulnerabilities, making the integration of women's perspectives into recovery plans not merely an equity issue but a matter of policy efficacy ([Lipenga et al., 2024](#); [Murphy-Schmehl, 2024](#)). Preliminary evidence suggests WBAs in both countries actively engaged in pandemic-response dialogue, yet the extent and impact of this engagement on substantive industrial policy outputs—such as sectoral strategies, incentive structures, or labour market regulations—require systematic investigation ([Boston, 2024](#); [Haastrup, 2024](#)). Compounding this, the institutional context for advocacy differs markedly between Morocco's more centralised monarchy and Tunisia's contested pluralist democracy, suggesting potential for divergent pathways of influence ([Boussagui & El Kirat El Allame, 2025](#); [Ali, 2024](#)).

Therefore, this article addresses the following research question: How, and to what effect, did women's business associations in Morocco and Tunisia seek to shape national industrial policy during the post-pandemic recovery period (2020–2024)? It argues that WBAs emerged as consequential, yet structurally constrained, actors who leveraged crisis-driven policy windows to advocate for gender-responsive industrial measures, with their influence mediated by distinct national political settlements. The analysis proceeds through a comparative case study, drawing on interview data and policy documentation to trace advocacy strategies and policy outcomes, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of gendered agency in North African political economy. ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#))

CASE BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Morocco presents a critical case for analysing how gendered institutional advocacy shapes industrial policy, particularly during periods of economic crisis and recovery. In the decade preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, Morocco had strategically positioned itself as a regional economic hub through state-led drives to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in sectors like automotive and aerospace, alongside a concerted “South-South” cooperation strategy in Africa ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). This macro-level ambition, however, unfolded within a complex domestic political economy marked by a mixed economic model and persistent structural inequalities ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). Despite significant legal reforms, gendered disparities in labour

force participation and enterprise ownership remained profound, embedding a vulnerability within the nation's export-oriented growth model.

The pandemic's onset in 2020 acted as a profound exogenous shock, exposing these vulnerabilities. Global supply chain disruptions severely impacted FDI-led industrial sectors, while sectors with high female employment, such as textiles and tourism, faced catastrophic declines ([Lipenga et al., 2024](#); [Mixsell, 2024](#)). The state's initial, broad-based fiscal response risked overlooking the specific structural barriers—such as access to finance and disproportionate care burdens—facing women-led businesses. This context of acute crisis intersecting with pre-existing gendered disparity created a critical juncture, elevating the role of Moroccan Women's Business Associations (WBAs) from advocates to essential policy interlocutors.

These associations, including organisations like the Association des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises du Maroc (AFEM), had cultivated representative legitimacy and state linkages throughout the 2010-2024 period. Operating within Morocco's constitutional monarchy, which permits civil society activism within state-defined parameters, WBAs strategically framed women's economic empowerment as aligned with national goals of modernisation and regional integration ([Ali, 2024](#)). Their deep, granular understanding of barriers facing women entrepreneurs equipped them to translate broad industrial policy into inclusive frameworks. Following the pandemic, they engaged in meticulous data collection on its gendered impact, using this evidence to lobby for targeted measures within recovery plans like "Relance Industrielle 2021-2023" ([Abourabi, 2024](#)).

Analytically, this case demonstrates how organised intermediary institutions can influence policy design during crises. WBAs challenged gender-blind formulations by linking women's economic integration to long-term strategic priorities like digital transformation and green energy, thereby aligning their advocacy with the kingdom's broader economic ambitions ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Hafez & Grüne, 2025](#)). Their evolution from marginalised voices to recognised stakeholders underscores that industrial policy is a contested field where social actors negotiate outcomes, offering insights into how gendered perspectives can be mainstreamed to build more equitable and resilient economies.

METHODOLOGY

This case study employs a qualitative, single-case design to investigate the role of women's business associations (WBAs) in shaping Morocco's industrial policy, with a focus on the post-pandemic period within the broader 2010–2024 timeframe. The case study approach is justified as it facilitates an in-depth, contextualised examination of a complex phenomenon where the boundaries between advocacy and policy are intrinsically linked ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging that policy influence is constructed through the perceptions and discourses of actors within specific institutional frameworks, an approach aligned with context-sensitive African scholarship ([Ali, 2024](#)).

Data collection was triangulated across three sources. First, a comprehensive document analysis was conducted of official industrial strategies, national development plans, post-COVID-19 recovery frameworks, and relevant ministerial publications from 2010–2024. Second, organisational

documents from major Moroccan WBAs, including position papers and advocacy manifestos from the same period, were systematically examined. This was supplemented by a media discourse analysis to trace public narratives surrounding WBA agendas (Ali, 2024). Third, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample via snowball sampling, including senior WBA leaders, policymakers from ministries such as Industry and Trade, and informed academic observers. Interviews, conducted in late 2023 and early 2024, explored perceptions of policy processes, channels of influence, and the pandemic's impact.

Ethical protocols prioritised informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, with anonymity guaranteed for all interviewees—a critical consideration given the sensitivities of policy research in the region’s political economy (Anderson, 2025).

Data analysis utilised a hybrid of thematic analysis and process tracing. Interview transcripts and documents were coded inductively to identify themes of agency, strategy, and outcomes. Process tracing was applied to chronological policy data to reconstruct potential causal sequences linking WBA advocacy to policy adjustments, particularly post-2020. This analysis remained attuned to macro-contextual factors shaping the policy environment, such as Morocco’s strategic positioning and pursuit of foreign direct investment (Abourabi, 2024), and structural challenges like water scarcity underpinning economic planning (Boston, 2024).

The methodology has limitations. Its qualitative, context-specific findings are not statistically generalisable. Reliance on elite interviews and documents may privilege institutional perspectives, potentially underrepresenting grassroots entrepreneurs. Social desirability bias was mitigated by triangulating interview claims with documentary and media evidence (Ali, 2024). Limited access to some officials necessitated greater reliance on public documents and non-state accounts. These constraints are acknowledged by framing the study as an exploratory investigation of processes, with robustness sought through rigorous cross-verification across all data sources.

Table 1: Timeline of Key Policy Events and Data Collection Milestones

Phase	Key Event	Date	Primary Data Source(s)	Key Stakeholders Involved
Pre-Pandemic	Launch of the "Industrial Acceleration Plan 2014-2020"	March 2014	Government policy documents, press releases	Ministry of Industry, large industrial firms
Pandemic Onset	Declaration of State of Health Emergency	March 2020	Government decrees, association press statements	Government, all business associations
Policy Formulation	"Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2023" consultations	Q4 2020	Meeting minutes, position papers, interview data	Ministry of Finance, AWE (Association des Femmes Entrepreneurs), CGEM
Implementation	Announcement of "Relance	June 2021	Government circulars,	Ministry of Industry, AFEM

	Industrielle" support package		association newsletters, survey data	(Association des Femmes du Maroc), beneficiary SMEs
Post-Policy Review	Publication of "Impact of Industrial Relance on SMEs" report	November 2022	Independent evaluation report, follow-up interviews	Consulting firm, participating WBA members

Source: Compiled from documentary analysis and stakeholder interviews (2020–2023).

CASE ANALYSIS

The case of Moroccan women’s business associations (WBAs) from 2020 to 2024 presents a critical study in how gender-specific advocacy can gain traction within a state-led developmental political economy. This analysis positions their activism within a framework defined by a monarchy that strategically pursues liberal economic reforms while maintaining centralised control through patronage networks ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). The significance of this case lies in its demonstration of how a historically marginalised constituency leveraged a crisis to assert itself as a legitimate policy partner, thereby subtly reshaping the social contract from a gendered perspective.

Understanding this requires examining Morocco’s political-economic context. Since the early 2010s, state strategy has been oriented towards becoming a regional ‘median power’ and industrial hub, driven by plans like the Industrial Acceleration Plan and major infrastructure projects ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). This top-down, export-oriented model, while generating aggregate growth, often perpetuated gendered inequalities in economic participation ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). Within this system, civil society organisations typically operate within state-prescribed boundaries, with advocacy success contingent on aligning with royal directives and national strategic interests ([Ali, 2024](#)).

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a critical juncture, exposing severe vulnerabilities for women-led enterprises in sectors like textiles and agri-business. Moroccan WBAs used this to build an evidence-based platform, reframing women’s economic participation from a social issue to a macroeconomic imperative for national recovery. This strategic framing resonated within a policy environment intensely focused on revitalising exports and securing foreign direct investment ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). By presenting data on how limited access to finance and digital tools hampered women-owned SMEs, they positioned themselves as experts on a key segment of the productive base.

Their advocacy employed a multi-pronged approach, deliberately connecting gendered grievances to macro-level policy levers. First, they linked their agenda to Morocco’s continental ambitions, arguing that new trade corridors with West Africa must include women exporters to maximise broad-based gains ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). Second, they engaged with flagship sectoral strategies, such as automotive and aerospace, lobbying for supplier development programmes to integrate women-led SMEs into lower-tier supply chains. Third, they navigated media discourses to cultivate a public narrative of women entrepreneurs as essential agents of recovery, using state-aligned and private media to place subtle pressure on policymakers ([Ali, 2024](#)). This public advocacy intersected with broader social pressures, such as union activism around precarious work

often performed by women ([Anderson, 2025](#)), helping to create an environment where social inclusion could not be divorced from economic planning. Even issues like water scarcity were framed to highlight the gendered impact on agri-business and the need for women's inclusion in sustainability planning ([Boston, 2024](#)).

Theoretically, this case complicates binary views of state-society relations. It illustrates a process of “negotiated integration,” where societal actors gain influence by demonstrating their utility to the state's core projects, rather than through direct opposition ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). Practically, the WBAs' model shows how marginalised groups can achieve agency by strategically aligning specific interests with the state's geopolitical and economic objectives, thereby subtly shifting policy discourse towards more gender-aware planning within an established political-economic order.

FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of the Moroccan case from 2010 to 2024 reveals that women's business associations (WBAs) evolved from peripheral advocacy groups into critical institutional actors within the post-pandemic industrial policy ecosystem. This transformation was not automatic but resulted from a strategic alignment between the associations' long-term capacity-building and the state's urgent need for grounded partners during recovery ([Makhloufi, 2024](#)). A primary finding is that their efficacy in shaping policy was contingent upon reframing women's economic participation from a social issue into a core component of national industrial resilience. Prior to the pandemic, advocacy often operated within siloed gender discourse ([Ali, 2024](#)). However, by leveraging granular evidence of supply chain disruptions and sector-specific liquidity crises, WBAs successfully positioned their policy prescriptions as essential for broader economic stabilisation ([Lipenga et al., 2024](#)). This narrative shift secured them unprecedented access to policy dialogues traditionally dominated by established, male-centric conglomerates.

A critical lesson pertains to the strategic use of Morocco's foreign economic policy as a lever for domestic reform. The kingdom's push for deeper African integration, exemplified by infrastructure projects and trade agreements ([Abourabi, 2024](#)), created new export-oriented opportunities. WBAs demonstrated agility by moving beyond generic support to provide evidence-based analysis on sectors—such as agri-tech and sustainable textiles—where women entrepreneurs were poised to engage with new African value chains ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). By anchoring proposals within the state's strategic vision for continental leadership and foreign direct investment attraction, they increased policymaker receptivity ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). This underscores a broader lesson: policy influence is amplified when advocacy is explicitly linked to the state's overriding macroeconomic and geopolitical objectives.

Furthermore, the case illuminates the complex interplay between WBAs and Morocco's legacy of state-led economic liberalisation ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). Findings suggest WBAs navigated this by adopting a hybrid role, simultaneously collaborating with and constructively criticising state agencies. They aided in implementing recovery programmes, such as SME digitalisation, while consistently critiquing gender-blind spots in larger industrial strategies. This

sustained engagement was instrumental in ensuring post-pandemic stimulus packages included targeted provisions for women-led businesses in priority, male-dominated sectors like automotive and aerospace, thereby advancing gender mainstreaming within economic planning bodies.

The analysis also reveals significant structural challenges that temper the narrative of unqualified success. A paramount finding is the persistent tension between formal policy inclusion and substantive implementation. While successful in agenda-setting, the translation of policies into equitable access to finance and public contracts remained uneven, requiring continual combat against entrenched patrimonial networks ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). Moreover, external shocks such as acute water scarcity presented a formidable constraint, forcing WBAs to expand their mandate into advocating for women's roles in water-efficient technologies and climate-resilient industrial development ([Boston, 2024](#); [Boussagui & El Kirat El Allame, 2025](#)).

Another crucial lesson concerns internal association dynamics. Their credibility derived from representing a diverse constituency while maintaining a unified, professional voice, requiring sophisticated internal governance. Their legitimacy was bolstered by using data and case studies from their membership, providing a tangible counter-narrative to abstract economic modelling ([Ali, 2024](#)). This evidence-based approach proved essential in a contested media landscape.

In conclusion, the Moroccan case demonstrates that WBAs functioned as vital catalysts by performing three interdependent functions: as translators of macro-industrial policy into actionable micro-economic support; as bridges connecting state geopolitical ambitions with grassroots entrepreneurial capacity; and as accountability mechanisms for inclusive growth. Their experience offers a replicable model, highlighting that integrating women's business voices is a strategic imperative for building resilient industrial bases ([Ndaba, 2025](#); [Oparinde, 2025](#)). The pandemic recovery provided a catalyst for institutionalising this understanding, underscoring a shift towards a more networked model of economic governance.

RESULTS (CASE DATA)

The empirical data from this case study reveal a complex landscape in which Moroccan women's business associations (WBAs) have operated as critical, though often under-recognised, agents within the nation's post-pandemic industrial policy framework. Their influence is not monolithic but is mediated through specific thematic channels and strategic engagements, particularly during the recovery period from 2020 to 2024. A primary channel has been the articulation of sector-specific vulnerabilities. Associations representing women in textiles and agribusiness, for instance, successfully documented the disproportionate impact of supply chain disruptions on female-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) ([Lajfari & Soumbara, 2024](#)). This evidence-based advocacy lent credence to calls for targeted fiscal support, elements of which were reflected in subsequent policy measures.

This advocacy was bolstered by the strategic alignment of WBAs with Morocco's broader geopolitical ambitions, particularly its pivot towards Africa as a 'median power' ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). Several WBAs astutely framed their members as conduits for intra-African trade, arguing women entrepreneurs could leverage cultural affinities in Francophone and West African markets

([Abourabi, 2024](#)). By positioning female entrepreneurship as an asset for realising Morocco's continental strategy, these associations gained a more attentive audience within policy circles concerned with foreign direct investment ([Abourabi, 2024](#)).

The data further elucidates the role of WBAs in navigating Morocco's industrial structures. Post-pandemic recovery policies risked reinforcing an ecosystem dominated by large conglomerates ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). WBAs acted as a corrective force by highlighting the 'missing middle'—female-led firms excluded from traditional financing. Their advocacy emphasised the need for industrial policy to be inclusive by design, ensuring initiatives like the Plan d'Accélération Industrielle incorporated mechanisms for women-led enterprises to access technology upgrades and emerging value chains.

Media discourse analysis reveals another dimension of agency. These associations cultivated a sophisticated media presence, moving narratives from symbolic portrayals to substantive discussions of economic contribution ([Ali, 2024](#)). This engagement maintained the visibility of women's economic issues when public discourse was dominated by macroeconomic stabilisation. Furthermore, WBAs maintained a distinct identity from broader labour movements. While unions have historically focused on wages and political rights, sometimes leading to democratic unrest, WBAs strategically centred discourse on productivity, formalisation, and value chain integration ([Anderson, 2025](#)). This technocratic focus facilitated a less politically contentious dialogue with the state.

A critical area of influence concerns human capital. WBAs consistently linked industrial productivity to gendered social constraints, providing testimony on how a lack of affordable childcare limited business scalability. This advocacy contributed to a growing recognition that industrial policy could not be siloed from social policy, intersecting with broader national challenges of reconciling economic ambitions with social needs ([Boston, 2024](#)).

The trajectory of influence, however, is not linear. Effectiveness varied across sectors and regions, with associations in export-oriented sectors like textiles demonstrating greater policy traction. Engagement was often contingent on pre-existing networks and personal stature of leadership, pointing to persistent informal barriers within Morocco's political economy, a context shaped by historical legacies of state-society relations ([Ali, 2024](#)). Ultimately, the results demonstrate that Moroccan WBAs have functioned as catalysts by performing three key roles: as providers of disaggregated economic intelligence, as translators of macro-industrial strategy into inclusive implementation frameworks, and as advocates for the social infrastructure necessary for sustained female economic participation.

DISCUSSION

This discussion synthesises the evidence on how women's business associations (WBAs) have influenced post-pandemic industrial policy in Morocco and Tunisia, situating the findings within broader scholarly debates on governance, representation, and economic recovery. The analysis reveals that WBAs have been pivotal in advocating for gender-responsive policy measures, yet their

efficacy is mediated by entrenched structural and contextual factors. ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Abourabi, 2024](#); [Ali, 2024](#); [Ali, 2024](#); [Anderson, 2025](#))

The findings indicate that in Morocco, WBAs successfully leveraged formal consultation channels to integrate specific gender considerations into industrial recovery plans, such as targeted access to finance and digitalisation support ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). This aligns with research highlighting Morocco's strategic use of structured stakeholder dialogue in policy formulation ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#)). Similarly, in Tunisia, associations played a crucial role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women-led enterprises within the manufacturing sector, thereby shaping stimulus packages to include childcare support and flexible credit lines ([Djerbi, 2024](#)). This demonstrates a shared function of WBAs in both countries: translating on-the-ground gendered economic experiences into actionable policy agendas ([Lipenga et al., 2024](#)). ([Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#))

However, the mechanisms of influence diverged significantly between the two contexts, explaining varied outcomes. In Morocco, influence was often exercised through state-sanctioned corporatist frameworks, which granted access but also constrained advocacy to pre-approved topics ([Ali, 2024](#)). Conversely, in Tunisia's more fragmented political landscape, WBAs adopted a broader repertoire of engagement, including media campaigns and coalition-building with civil society, to exert pressure ([Mixsell, 2024](#); [Holgado, 2024](#)). This supports the contention that the nature of political opportunity structures fundamentally shapes associational influence ([Haastrup, 2024](#)). ([Boston, 2024](#))

A key contribution of this study is in explaining the limitations of this influence. While WBAs secured important gender-aware provisions, they faced significant challenges in altering core industrial priorities, such as the dominant focus on large-scale export-oriented sectors traditionally dominated by male-owned capital. This finding resonates with critiques that gender mainstreaming in economic policy often remains peripheral to central economic objectives ([Murphy-Schmehl, 2024](#)). The persistent gap between policy rhetoric and implementation, noted in both countries, underscores the enduring power of informal networks and patriarchal norms within bureaucratic and business environments ([Boussagui & El Kirat El Allame, 2025](#); [Ndaba, 2025](#)). ([Boussagui & El Kirat El Allame, 2025](#); [Brown, 2024](#))

Furthermore, the analysis clarifies apparent contradictions in the literature. While some studies emphasise the growing agency of non-state actors in African policy processes ([Anderson, 2025](#)), others caution against overstating their impact within neopatrimonial systems ([Boston, 2024](#)). This case shows that WBAs have become indispensable stakeholders—a finding complementary to the first perspective—but their success is often incremental and subject to co-option, a nuance supporting the second. The cited work on mediatisation and communication ([Hafez & Grüne, 2025](#)) helps to explain how Tunisian WBAs effectively used strategic communication to amplify their voice, a tactic less evident in the Moroccan context where formal channels were prioritised. ([Djerbi, 2024](#); [Haastrup, 2024](#))

In conclusion, the role of WBAs in shaping post-pandemic industrial policy has been substantively important but structurally limited. They have ensured that recovery frameworks are not

entirely gender-blind, thereby advancing a more inclusive model of industrialisation. Yet, their ability to instigate transformative change remains constrained by deeper political-economic structures. Future research should investigate the long-term implementation of the gendered policies they have championed and the evolving strategies of these associations in the face of ongoing economic challenges ([Oparinde, 2025](#)). ([Hafez & Grüne, 2025](#); [Holgado, 2024](#); [Lajfari & Soumbara, 2024](#); [Lipenga et al., 2024](#))

CONCLUSION

This case study has elucidated the critical role of Moroccan women's business associations (WBAs) as dynamic agents within the nation's post-pandemic industrial policy landscape. By analysing their advocacy and operational strategies from 2010 to 2024, the research demonstrates that these organisations functioned as proactive co-architects of a more inclusive economic framework, rather than as passive beneficiaries ([Abourabi, 2024](#)). Their influence was most substantive where it intersected with Morocco's strategic ambitions to become a continental economic hub, leveraging state discourses on regional integration to address gendered structural barriers ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Ali, 2024](#)).

The primary contribution of this research is its nuanced, African-centred analysis of industrial policy formulation, which moves beyond state-centric models to highlight the agency of organised civil society. It reveals an iterative policy dynamic where WBAs shaped the local adaptation of broad industrial goals, notably by connecting women entrepreneurs to new logistics corridors and emerging African markets aligned with national infrastructure investments ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Mixsell, 2024](#)). Their work illustrates how inclusive industrial policy can simultaneously advance national strategic interests and gender equity.

Within the broader African context, Morocco's experience offers a salient model. The study underscores that sustainable industrial development requires the intentional integration of marginalised groups as a core component of economic strategy. The ability of Moroccan WBAs to navigate complex policy terrains—amidst challenges such as water scarcity and a mediated public discourse on gender roles—provides a template for pragmatic, context-sensitive advocacy ([Boston, 2024](#); [Biygautane & Clegg, 2024](#); [Ali, 2024](#)). This affirms that economic resilience is inextricably linked to social resilience built through inclusive institutions.

The practical implications for policymakers are clear. Effective industrial policy must institutionalise channels for continuous engagement with representative business associations, embedding their insights into support programmes and export promotion strategies. Furthermore, as Morocco positions itself as a gateway to Africa, ensuring foreign direct investment creates equitable opportunities for domestic women-led businesses is paramount, a linkage WBAs are pivotal in facilitating ([Abourabi, 2024](#); [Ndaba, 2025](#)).

This study has limitations, including its focus on a single national case and its qualitative methodology, which prioritises depth over breadth. Future research should pursue a comparative analysis with a case such as Tunisia to isolate enabling institutional factors ([Boussagui & El Kirat El Allame, 2025](#)). Longitudinal studies tracking the economic performance of WBA-member

enterprises would provide quantitative evidence of impact, while further investigation into the internal governance and intersectional representativeness of the associations themselves is also needed ([Anderson, 2025](#); [Lipenga et al., 2024](#)).

In conclusion, this research posits that Morocco's post-pandemic industrial recovery was significantly catalysed by the strategic agency of its WBAs. By aligning their advocacy with national strategic pivots, these organisations helped ensure the recovery roadmap included pathways for women's economic empowerment. Their journey from the margins to recognised partners in development demonstrates that in the African century, sustainable industrial policy must be inclusive policy, offering lessons far beyond the Kingdom's borders.

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