

# Towards Participatory Rural Investment and Development Strategies in the Arab World

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## Summary

The paper argues that in most of the Arab countries, the majority of the rural poor are excluded from the economic development and progress in their countries. The paper further asserts that for the inclusion of the rural poor in development, there is need for the design and implementation for participatory rural investment and development strategies in the Arab World. Such a strategy is an integrative vision for bringing diverse policy initiatives in a logical structure that adopts a longer-term perception of the sector's development. To this end, the paper provides a conceptual framework on the nature, scope and functioning of the strategies, and presents an overview of key investment and rural development perception in the Arab countries. On the basis of the analysis, the paper highlights a number of lessons of experience and proposes a set of recommendations for the formulation and implementation of the strategies within a global context. The recommendations focus on such aspects as: inclusion of the poor in development, country specificity, participatory approaches and decentralization, investment challenges, growth models, agricultural policies, adaptation and transfer of technology (e.g., the outstanding efforts of AAAID on zero tillage), micro finance and gender issues, human resource development, natural resource management, rural poverty, environmental protection and conservation of the natural resource base.

**Keywords:** Investment; Rural development; Inclusion; Exclusion.

## Introduction

The vast majority of the poor in the Arab World, over 70 percent, live in the rural areas. They are the rural poor (UNDP, 1997). They depend on agriculture and other non-farm activities for their livelihoods. The rural poor usually live in areas where fertile land is scarce, agricultural productivity is very low, natural disasters, floods and droughts are frequent and natural resource degradation is quite common. Their access to basic human needs, such as primary education, basic health care, potable water sanitation, essential infrastructure, sufficient nutritious food, is very limited. The rural poor also face such problems as low life expectancy, high infant mortality and high illiteracy rates, especially for the female poor. The poor therefore, have been excluded from whatever economic progress that has been achieved in their countries.

For the inclusion of the rural poor in development a participatory rural development approach is needed. Only if the capacity of the poor to participate in rural growth is substantially improved so that they can participate in decisions that influence their own and their children's future, will rural poverty be reduced, wages for unskilled labor increased, rural income improved, and access to essential human needs and social services enhanced.

Rural development aims at the simultaneous achievement of highly interrelated objectives. These objectives include reducing rural poverty and hunger, raising a widely shared and labor intensive economic growth, generating employment increasing food production, investing in human development, enhancing the access of the rural poor to natural resources, basic infrastructure, social services, and halting the degradation and promoting the conservation of the natural resource base.

## A Conceptual Framework for Participatory Rural Investment and Development Strategies in the Arab World (AW)

A rural investment and developmental strategy is an integrative vision that brings diverse policy initiatives in a logical structure that adopts a longer-term perception of the sector's development. To this end, the paper presents a conceptual framework for such a strategy in the AW. The framework highlights the key policies for rural development including: investment mobilization—both public and private, liberalization policies for efficient markets, liberalization of domestic and international agricultural trade, institutional reform, availability and access to the natural resource base (water, land, credit); sustainability in natural resource management; and investing in social services (education, health, basic infrastructure). Labor-intensive rural growth leads to stimulating higher demand for labor, generating further rural employment, reducing and/or reversing the rural-urban migration process, reducing rural poverty, increasing rural income, and thus contributing positively to the overall rural development objectives (Bishay, 1994).

A main source of investment in the social services in the AW comes from social transfers, cultural and Islamic values and principles, especially zakat and sadakat. Although these sources are difficult to quantify, they represent a major factor for poverty reduction, and in certain cases eradication, in many Arab countries. Investment in social sectors and social safety nets provides further enhancement to the access of the poor to the social sectors, particularly the elderly, disabled and children who are usually excluded from development and growth. This has been the case following the structural adjustment policies in many countries of the AW to overcome the social cost of adjustment.

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Although this approach may seem complex, it is pragmatic and operational as long as it is kept highly participatory and continues to be based on human resource development as the fundamental principle.

### **Economic Growth and Rural Development**

In almost all countries of the AW, economic growth has been explicitly conceived as the engine for rural development and poverty eradication. Countries, however, have appreciated that the pattern of growth matters, they aim at labor-intensive, widely shared and sustainable growth. In Morocco, economic growth is advocated as the most crucial factor for further reducing poverty. It is also crucial for providing the financing for basic social services to improve the living standards of the poor. In Algeria, it has been strongly emphasized that sustainable labor-intensive growth is a prerequisite for rural development and poverty alleviation. It was further emphasized that a primary imperative for any poverty alleviation strategy should be employment creation through broad-based economic growth, ensuring that the benefits of growth are distributed across all income groups (World Bank, 1997b and 1998a & c). In Egypt, the Government has renewed its commitment to according highest priority to economic development and expressed its deep commitment to growth oriented and market efficiency policies. A major challenge facing the policy makers in Egypt is to solve the increasing unemployment problem (World Bank, 1997 a). In Yemen, the poverty reduction strategy has three components: (i) policies which encourage broad-based economic growth, (ii) increased provision of social services, and (iii) development of the non-governmental sector, (World Bank, 1996 and 1998b). In Jordan, growth has been advocated as the main instrument for poverty eradication. The Government of Jordan associates the increase in poverty with economic contraction. It is further postulated that unless annual real growth exceeds three percent, poverty cannot be decreased without continuing income redistribution and, if growth falls below three percent, poverty will deepen (Hashenite Kingdom of Jordan, 1992 and World Bank, 1997b).

### **Policies for Economic Growth: Stabilization, Structural and Sector Adjustment Programs**

During the past two decades many countries in the AW have introduced stabilization programs and/or structural and sector adjustment programs, the latter mostly for the agricultural sector, usually with financial support from the IMF, the World Bank and other multilateral or bilateral organizations. These programs called for difficult adjustment processes, particularly at their earlier stages of application. Structural adjustment programs mainly focus on economic policy liberalization, meaning strengthening the role of the market and the forces of supply and demand in guiding the functioning of the economic system (Bishay, 1992).

In the medium- to longer-term, these measures should increase farmer incomes, stimulate economic growth, improve the balance of payments, strengthen the role of the market,

improve competitiveness and enhance institutional reform in the country. In the short-term, and if precautionary measures are not introduced, the adjustment programs, however, could have a negative impact on the poor, especially the rural poor who are usually net consumers. Their food would become more expensive, their already meager chance for employment could be eroded, their access to the already low social services could be further reduced, and as they are net consumers, the increase in output prices (that provides incentives to producers) does not help them much. These problems have been popularly labeled in the literature on economic reform as the social cost of adjustment .

By now structural adjustment reforms are deeply rooted and successfully implemented in a number of countries in the AW (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan). The domestic and international competitiveness of the economies of these countries has substantially improved. Agricultural productivity and farmers incomes have generally increased; and institutional reforms have led to increasing their efficiency. The role of the private sector and NGOs has been substantially enhanced.

In many countries of the AW, heavy universal food subsidies, and other consumer goods subsidies and input subsidies had been widespread prior to the introduction of the reform programs (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Syria). The elimination or reduction of these subsidies in some countries of the region has caused certain socio-economic problems, particularly for the poor (including unrest and riots, e.g., Egypt, 1977). However, many countries in the region that have successfully introduced structural adjustment have adopted a number of measures to overcome the social cost of adjustment and enjoy the growth stimulation process. These measures include, inter alia: (a) the cut in the national budget expenditure on the social sectors have been less than what was expected under the reform program (Morocco, Egypt, Algeria); (b) social safety nets to assist the poor and vulnerable were established and became operational (Egypt, Morocco, Jordan); (c) private social transactions, particularly Zakat and Sadakat have helped reduce poverty; and (d) for the non-oil exporting countries in the region, remittances from their migrants to the oil-exporting countries have further contributed to poverty reduction (Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Sudan). On the other hand, some other countries in the region are still at an earlier stage of the adjustment program or had serious disruption to the program's implementation and are facing the challenge of addressing the social cost of adjustment (Yemen, Algeria, Sudan).

### **Population Growth, Rural-Urban Migration, Intra-Regional Labor Mobility and Rural Employment**

High population growth in the AW has led to a large and young age population structure; and, thus, an increase in the dependency ratio. This, in turn, has placed a heavy burden on the economies of countries in the region. In Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, high population growth

has contributed to poverty. Demographic pressure and limited water and land availability have led to vast migration into large cities where rural migrants settle with virtually no employment possibilities or access to social services. Rural-urban migration within the AW has faced the paradox of migrating from rural poverty to de facto urban poverty. But the motive for internal migration has been the expected, not the actual, urban incomes and employment opportunities (UNDP, 1997).

In the AW, intra-regional labor mobility, mostly from non-oil to oil-exporting countries, had a significant impact on agricultural and rural development of both countries of origin and destination. At its peak in 1985, the number of migrant workers in the oil-exporting countries in the region exceeded 5 million. Around 3.5 million came from countries within the region, while the remainder came from other countries. Around 2 million of the 3.5 million came from rural areas. Since the number of rural workers who had actually migrated was estimated to be three times larger than that reported in 1985, about 6 million workers from rural areas of the region may have migrated over the past 15 years. The number of rural dependents left behind is still larger (FAO, 1990).

Intra-regional labor mobility has had a profound impact on agricultural development in the region, in particular on farm labor markets, agricultural income and investment. One widely observed impact has been the tightening of farm labor markets leading to increases in farm wages. Remittances have raised rural living standards and, to a somewhat lesser extent, have contributed to rural capital formation. Although returning migrants have brought savings and new skills acquired abroad, they have also added to the difficulties of creating employment opportunities for the new entrants to the labor force.

Although it is sometimes argued that the poor cannot afford the luxury of being unemployed, in many countries in the AW, rural unemployment seems to have been correlated with poverty. In Algeria, unemployment is higher among the poor population, of working age, than among the non-poor, in both rural and urban areas. In 1995, the unemployment rate among the poor was 44 percent in urban areas and 35 percent in rural areas, compared to 29 and 24 percent for the non-poor in the two areas, respectively. Generating employment opportunities in the rural areas would reduce poverty and relieve migration to urban areas (World Bank, 1998a & c and 1997b).

In Morocco, for example, rural-urban migration has been the main cause of the growth of the urban labor force, at rates above the employment expansion and in turn leading to further unemployment. Rural-urban minimum wage differential is another factor for increasing rural-urban migration, in Morocco the latter is double the former. Several countries in the region, for enhancing rural employment, have advocated wage flexibility

and reducing such gaps.

## Availability and Access to the Natural Resource Base in the AW

### Water

Water is the scarcest factor of production in the region. Annual water availability in the region fell to about 854 m<sup>3</sup> per capita in 1996, with Egypt 47, Algeria 843, Jordan 158, Libya 156, Mauritania 171, Syria 483, Tunisia 385, Yemen 260 cubic meters per capita. According to an ESCWA study, eight countries in the region have water withdrawals in excess of their renewable supplies. In many countries in the region, over-extraction of groundwater has led to significant salt intrusion problem. With the exception of Sudan and Egypt, the water resource base in the region is either stagnant or shrinking.

The overriding challenge facing countries of the region is, therefore, to increase the efficiency of water use in agriculture - the highest user. To this end, many countries in the region have developed and introduced, with the assistance of international community, particularly WB, national water strategies with a view to maximize the utilization of appropriate technological innovations for water extraction and allocation, optimize the estimation and implementation of sound water charges, ensure adequate and timely operations and maintenance of water infrastructures. Water charges and cost recovery, however, remains an outstanding issue in most of the Arab Countries.

### LAND

Although the overall land distribution structure in the AW is not as skewed as, for example, in the Latin America region, limited access to land in the AW and land fragmentation, due to the heritage rules, are binding constraints to agricultural and rural development, and hence contribute to rural poverty. Improving the access of the rural poor to land, therefore, remains a key policy issue. Land reform legislation exists in many countries of the region, but its implementation has been fraught with political difficulties at national and local levels. The process of settlement of land disputes has been slow and mostly uses favorable to potential beneficiaries. There is further scope for land redistribution for the benefit of small and marginal farmers and the landless within the framework of existing land reform legislation that is less sensitive politically than radical land reforms. A beginning can be made by regularizing land titling and land registration to ensure security of private ownership (FAO, 1993 and Norton, 1991).

Land tenure reform as compared to land reform is less problematic. Particular attention must, however, be paid to implementing legislation that allows the tenant to get a fair share, e.g. 50 percent of the output with exclusive rights to the second crop. Another land-related issue is pastoral tenure. The problems of the pastoral sector stem not only from climatic processes but also land-use habits. Pasture development and improved land use systems are the keys to raising the living conditions of poor nomadic pastoralists. Thus while land tenure and the access of the rural poor to land in

the AW is a politically sensitive and socially and economically intriguing issue, there is need to open this file in the AW.

### CREDIT

The poor are asset-deprived. They possess no collateral. Their access to capital is, therefore, denied. As a result, the rural poor resort to the informal credit market whenever available; in spite of the significant risks it carries; high interest rates, socially prescribed forms of exclusion. In certain Arab countries, kinship and other social networks provide the opportunity for raising productive capital (Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt). Though the supply of such credit is certainly below the demand, this is an important source of credit for the rural poor. Furthermore, short-term credit has been linked to timely availability of production inputs needed by small farmers especially in remote areas. In these cases, access to credit has helped small farmers and reduced their poverty through enabling them to invest in storage and improve their access to the market (Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Egypt). Rural credit market in most countries of the AW is gender-biased. In Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen, women are usually excluded from the formal credit market; they largely depend on limited informal credit arrangements among themselves (Faris & Khan, 1993; Ahmed & Bouis, 1998; World Bank, 1996 and 1997a & b).

### Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Rural poverty should be conceived as both a cause and an effect of pressure on the natural resource base and degradation of the environment. The rural poor are frequently exposed to the dangers of erosion and the loss of an already meager productive base; but poverty also accelerates erosion and desertification. The poor lack capital to invest even in the traditional methods of water and soil conservation.

Potential sources for a sustainable process of agricultural and rural development in Egypt (Faris & Khan, 1993), that are also valid in many Arab countries, include:

- improved management of irrigation water by adopting appropriate price and non-price measures; e.g., formation of water-user organizations, pricing of water or cost recovery, regulation of water quality, and investment for increasing the efficiency of water-use;
- increased yield levels through diffusion of improved technologies and cultural practices supported by a well-focused and integrated research and extension system;
- improved agricultural administration, shifting the role of the government from controlling the agricultural sector to providing an appropriate institutional, legal and regulatory, framework, an enabling macro-economic environment, and infrastructure support for farmers. These will help

to conserve scarce resources and increase efficiency, reduce the cost of production, and improve crop rotations and product mix for higher returns and environmental protection.

- decentralized authority and encouraging farmers to organize and participate in key decision making processes that influence their lives, and enhance the role of the private sector in this process.

### Investing in the Social Sectors: Human Resource Development

A major challenge facing many countries in the AW is to improve social indicators and enlarge the access of the entire population to basic social services. To meet this challenge, it is essential to increase public investment allocation to social sectors for the poor, induce the better-off toward privately provided services, and changes the pricing policies of social services: charging less for services used by the poor and more for those used by the better-off (Norton, 1991).

Increasing investment and resource reallocation for education, training and literacy for human resource development of the poor is essential to enhance their inclusion and participation in the economic mainstream. To this end, many countries in the AW are aiming at the achievement of the following priorities: ensuring universal access to primary education for both females and males, increasing access to education for the rural poor, improving the quality of education and vocational training to better prepare graduates for labor market opportunities (Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen).

For improving health care for the poor, most countries of the AW face the challenge of expanding and more equitably providing such services as health care, preventive and rapid curative interventions such as immunization, oral dehydration therapy and elementary health education especially to the poor within tight financial constraint. To this end, countries of the region are focusing on the following priorities: providing quality basic public health services to the poor including (the usually excluded) rural poor, reversing the bias against poorer regions and between rural and urban areas, introducing mechanisms for price discrimination as a measure for targeting health care subsidies to the poor and involving the private sector more in the provision of health services particularly to the better-off where cost recovery would be enhanced and thereby releasing public resources for further investing in basic health care for the poor (World Bank, 1994).

Countries of the AW have varying schemes for the provision of basic physical infrastructure; safe water, electricity and housing to the poor. Major issues that face most countries include targeting these services to the poor particularly in the rural and remote areas, while introducing cost recovery system for the better-off, involving the private sector and civil society (NGOs) in a complementary approach with the public sector. Some countries in the region (Morocco, Egypt) have advocated progressive sys-

tem for cost recovery, especially for electricity and water (World Bank, 1997a and Bishay, 1994).

### Towards Participatory Rural Investment and Development Strategies in the AW: Lessons of Experience and Recommendation

The following are some basic recommendations for the formulation and implementation of such strategies:

- **Inclusion of the Poor:** For the inclusion of the rural poor in development, a participatory rural development strategy that aims at achieving sustainable, widely-shared, employment generating economic growth is needed in each country.
- **Country Specific, Participatory Approach, and Decentralization:** Such strategies must be country specific: they should aim at achieving. The objectives of the people and aspirations and address their challenges and constraints. In addition, active participation, and an effective decentralized process should be adopted to ensure national ownership and an optimal spatial model for development.
- **Investment:** A major challenge facing many countries in the AW is to improve social indicators and enlarge the access of the entire population to basic social services. To meet this challenge, it is essential to increase public investment allocation to social sectors for the poor, induce the better-off toward privately provided services, and changes the pricing policies of social services; charging less for services used by the poor and more for those used by the better-off.
- **Growth Models:** In almost all countries of the AW, economic growth has been explicitly conceived as the engine for rural development and poverty eradication. It is important, however, to appreciate that the pattern of growth matters. It is recommended that in most Arab countries, growth models should aim at labor intensive, widely shared and sustainable growth.
- **Agricultural Policies:** During the past two decades many countries in the AW have introduced stabilization programs and/or structural and sector adjustment programs (the latter mostly for the agricultural sector), usually with financial support from the IMF, the World Bank and other multilateral or bilateral organizations. By now structural adjustment reforms are deeply rooted and successfully implemented in a number of countries in the AW. The domestic and international competitiveness of the economies of these countries have substantially improved. Agricultural productivity and farmer income have generally increased; and institutional reforms have led to increasing their efficiency. The role of the private sector and NGOs has been substantially enhanced. The elimination or reduction of food subsidies in some countries of the region however has caused certain socio-economic problems, particularly for the poor. But many countries have adopted a number of

measures to overcome the social cost of adjustment and enjoy the growth stimulation process. Other countries are still at an earlier stage of the adjustment program (or had serious disruption to the program s implementation) and are facing the challenge of addressing the social cost of adjustment. It is, thus, recommended that Arab countries design and adopt agricultural policies that simultaneously aim at growth, equity and sustainability (for analysis of such methodologies (Bishay, *et. al*, 1991 and 1994).

- **Adaptation, Adoption and Transfer of Appropriate Technology:** It is recommended to promote research and extension programs, particularly in marginal areas as essential factors for the success of the strategy. An excellent example is the adoption of the innovative and successful agricultural research by the AAAID on zero tillage, particularly for dry areas in the Arab countries.
- **Micro-finance and Gender Issues:** It is recommended to design and introduce mini-enterprise activities utilizing necessary micro-finance. Such activities vary in accordance with the technological and socio-economic conditions in concerned countries. These activities are also appropriate for targeting women and rural youth.
- **Human Resource Development:** High population growth in the AW has led to a large and young age population structure; and, thus, an increase in the dependency ratio, placing a heavy burden on the economies of countries in the region. This has led to vast migration into large cities where rural migrants settle with virtually no employment possibilities or access to social services. Intra-regional labor mobility, mostly from non-oil to oil-exporting countries, had a significant impact on agricultural and rural development of both countries of origin and destination. Thus, Arab countries should design and incorporate human resource development programs that aim at achieving appropriate rates of growth and strengthened technological skills (e.g., see the UNDP Human Development Report in the Arab World). Enhancing the technological skills particularly for the youth in the Arab countries is particularly important in relation to the evolving globalization and outsourcing activities where world competitiveness is brought home (for further reading, see Thomas Friedman new book, 2005 on the subject entitled: The World is Flat).
- **Natural Resources and Water Scarcity:** Wide variations in natural resource endowments, economic and population growth, and basic structure of the economies characterize countries in the AW. Water is the scarcest factor of production in the region. It is also recommended to address such outstanding issues in most Arab countries on: water charges and cost recovery.
- **Land:** Although the overall land distribution structure

in the region is not highly skewed, limited access to land and land fragmentation are binding constraints to agricultural and rural development, and hence contribute to rural poverty in the region. Therefore it is recommended to open the file of land reform and land policies in the Arab countries.

- **Credit:** The access of the rural-poor to capital is, very limited. As a result, they resort to the informal credit market whenever available; in spite of the significant risks it carries (high interest rates, socially prescribed forms of exclusion). Rural credit market in most countries of the AW is gender-biased; women are usually excluded from the formal credit market. Accessible and equitable credit market, including micro-finance, is therefore recommended in most countries of the AW.
- **Rural Poverty, Environmental Protection and Conservation of the Natural Resource Base:** Rural poverty should be conceived as both a cause and an effect of pressure on the natural resource base and degradation of the environment. It is, therefore recommended to adopt sustainable processes for agricultural and rural development in most of the Arab countries. These include: improved management of irrigation water; increased yield-levels; improved agricultural administration; decentralized authority and encouraged farmers to organize and participate in key decision making processes that influence their lives. Internalization of externalities, through appropriate economic indicators, is also a recommended approach for environmental protection and conservation of the natural resource base (Bishay, 1994).

### Some Concluding Remarks

To conclude, it is important to appreciate that in earlier decades (the 1950s and 1960s), the agricultural sector was often viewed as the passive partner in the development process (e.g. the Lewis model for development). It was widely believed that industrialization, particularly urban development of the modern sectors, was a vital strategy for development. The leading manufacturing sectors would pull along with them the backward agricultural sector. Industry would provide a source for alternative employment for the rural population, generate a growing demand for food and agricultural production, and supply the agricultural sector with the industrial inputs. The agricultural sector would provide industry with the needed surplus labor and cheap raw material (Norton, 1991).

Accordingly, the bulk of investments in developing economies were recommended to be directed towards the industrial sector. Key agricultural policy prescriptions that followed from this perception discriminated against agriculture and were biased towards the industrial sector. For instance, heavy/universal food subsidies that were partly funded through controlled low (lower than world market prices) farm-gate prices was such a policy that

aimed at reducing urban/industrial wages. This policy was widely used in many Arab countries (e.g. Egypt, Morocco). This popular policy measure aimed at encouraging the above strategy of transferring labor and agricultural surplus to industrial sectors, and led to turning the terms of trade against agriculture. But, it is indicated that the trouble with this approach was that the backward agricultural goose would be starved before it could lay the golden egg. Recently, therefore, it became increasingly evident that the functions which industrial, agricultural and rural sectors must perform in the process of economic growth are interdependent (Bishay, 1974). This is the integrative approach that has been adopted in the paper.

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## نحو استراتيجيات الاستثمار والتنمية الريفية التشاركية في العالم العربي

فهيم بيشاري<sup>1</sup>

### الخلاصة

يرى المقال أن معظم فقراء الريف في غالبية الدول العربية قد (أُستثنوا) من مسيرة التنمية والتقدم في أوطانهم. ويرى المقال أيضاً أنه حتى يُمكن (إدراج) فقراء الريف في هذه المسيرة، فإنه يلزم تصميم ووضع وتنفيذ الاستراتيجيات الملائمة للاستثمار والتنمية الريفية التشاركية في العالم العربي. ويُعرف المقال استراتيجية الاستثمار والتنمية الريفية بأنها (رؤية متكاملة يُمكن من خلالها تجميع وتنسيق مبادرات سياسات الاستثمار الزراعي والتنمية الريفية في إطارٍ منطقي يعمل على تحقيق الأهداف التنموية للقطاع الزراعي بعيد المدى). ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، يقدم المقال الإطار النظري عن ماهية وطبيعة استراتيجيات التنمية، كما يعرض لعدد من تجارب الدول العربية في مجالات الاستثمار والتنمية الريفية. وبُناءً على هذا التحليل يتوصل المقال إلى عددٍ من الدروس المُستفادة والتوصيات الأساسية لوضع وتنفيذ استراتيجيات الاستثمار والتنمية الريفية التشاركية في الوطن العربي وفي إطار مُعطيات العولمة الحالية على المُستوى العالمي. وتُركز التوصيات على المحاور التالية: إدراج الفقراء في مسيرة التنمية والتقدم، خصوصية الدول العربية، النماذج التشاركية، اللامركزية، تحديات الاستثمار، نماذج النمو الاقتصادي، السياسات الزراعية، تطويع ونقل التكنولوجيا الملائمة (مثال: الجهود الرائعة للهيئة العربية للاستثمار والإنماء الزراعي في تكنولوجيا الزراعة بدون حرث)، التمويل القزمي، دور المرأة في التنمية الريفية، تطوير العنصر البشري، إدارة الموارد الطبيعية، الفقر الريفي وحماية البيئة وصيانة الموارد الطبيعية.

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