

Towards

SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

for marginalized groups to achieve
Sustainable Development goals in Egypt

Introduction:

The global agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals for the year 2030 focus on the principle of “leaving no one behind”, which reflects development in a comprehensive and inclusive sense, which means that sustainable development must include all groups and places without any discrimination⁽¹⁾. This requires a great effort, especially in large-sized countries in terms of population, area and geographical spread, in order to achieve development.

Egypt is paying increasing attention to the process of settling the Sustainable Development goals because of their impact on achieving inclusive and sustainable growth and balanced regional development, as they are among the most important pillars of the national sustainable development strategy, Egypt Vision’s 2030, and setting quantitative targets for each governorate to achieve in order to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals in Egypt. Within this framework, we are trying to shed light on the aspect related to supporting marginalized groups in an analytical way to identify all aspects related to these groups and how to employ development policies in order to empower them economically and socially.

First: What are the dimensions of marginalization and exclusion?

The United Nations defines social exclusion as “the situation of individuals who are unable to participate fully in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres. The dimensions of marginalization are linked to the phenomena of poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, and obstacles to social and political institutions. There are five dimensions to the “exclusion and marginalization” concepts; according to the framework developed by the United Nations Development Program in 2018⁽²⁾. Which are: discrimination, geography, governance system, social and economic situation, shocks such as wars and conflicts, and the framework defines these factors as follows: -

(1) ESCWA, Third Social Development Report (Leaving no one behind: Integrating marginalized groups in the Arab countries), 2019

(2) ESCWA, op



1. Discrimination; people who face prejudice, exclusion and abuse because of one or more aspects of their identity such as age, social class, gender and their status as indigenous or immigrant.
2. Geography; those who bear isolation or poor public services such as transportation, internet or other gaps in infrastructure because of their place of residence.
3. Governance; people who bear harm due to ineffective institutions and are affected by unfair laws and policies.
4. Socio-economic status; people whose economic and social situation deteriorates and they face deprivation in all its forms, such as lack of access to nutrition, educational attainment and competition in the labor market.
5. Shocks such as wars and conflicts; the people most vulnerable to setbacks due to the effects of climate change and natural hazards such as violence, conflict and economic stagnation.

Social protection as an alternative to marginalization; Social protection, or social security, is a human right and defined as “a set of policies and programs designed to reduce and prevent poverty”. Which includes the rights of children, families, maternity, unemployment, work injuries, sickness, aging and disability, as well as the health coverage. Social protection systems address all related areas through a combination of tax-financed schemes (social insurance) and benefits, including social assistance.

Social protection plays a major role in achieving sustainable development, social justice, and the human right to social security for all. Thus, social protection policies are vital components of national development strategies to reduce poverty and support inclusive and sustainable growth, by raising family incomes, enhancing productivity and human development, enhancing domestic demand, facilitating the structural transformation of the economy and promoting decent work.

The social protection's issue was present in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which stipulated the eradication of poverty in all its forms and everywhere. Within this framework, work is being done to design appropriate social protection systems for all, as the goals included issues of food security, dealing with hunger and working to improve health systems to ensure universal health coverage, in addition to working on achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, providing decent job opportunities, and adopting economic and social policies that achieve social equality. Poverty is one of the most prominent obstacles that affect and indirectly the increase of marginalized groups; material poverty is defined as the inability to provide the minimum basic needs of an individual or a family.



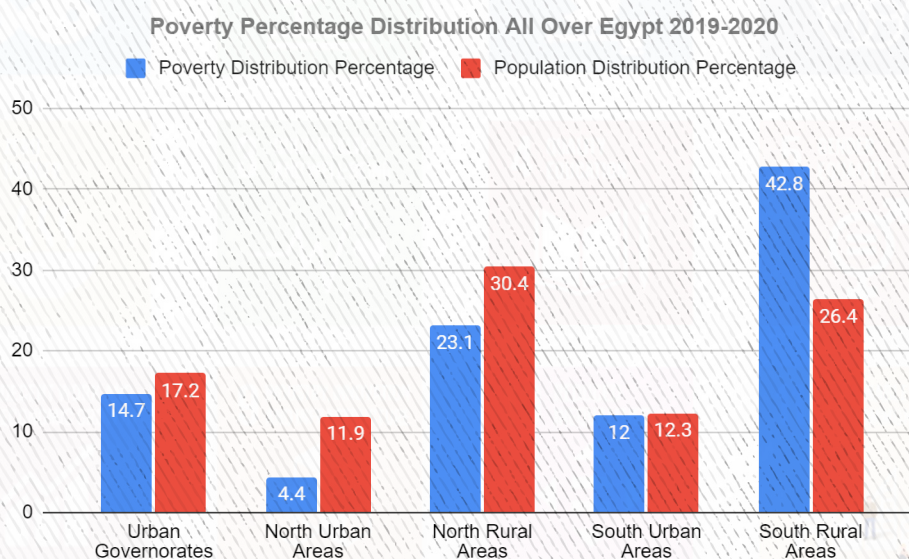
Second: - Inclusive growth and Sustainable Development goals in Egypt.

The inclusive growth combines high growth rates with the social dimension, which helps to accelerate the achievement of equitable distribution of opportunities in geographical regions, and thus helps to focus more accurately on marginalized groups. In case that policies and mechanisms are adopted to implement inclusive growth, this will strongly help in achieving equal opportunities for all to participate in the economy. The inclusive growth policies are represented in: -

1. Social safety nets to meet the needs of the losing parties and provide them with a degree of safety.
2. Adopting policies that expand the provision of finance to the poor and the middle class, in order to help them reap the fruits of foreign capital flows.
3. Adopting policies that enhance access to education and health care for all strata of society, in order to achieve more equality of opportunity.

Despite Egypt's high growth rates, it doesn't necessarily reflect the reduction of poverty rates and the targeting of marginalized groups, this can be noticed, by identifying the extent of poverty concentration in Egypt through Figure (1), where about 43% of the total poor who are unable to meet their basic needs of food and non-food live in the rural areas of Upper Egypt, where about 26.4% of the population lives there⁽³⁾. That's why, there is a necessity of distributing the fruits of growth in a fair manner so as to ensure the participation of all segments of society in the development efforts.

Figure No. (1)



Source: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics

(3) Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, Income, Expenditure and Consumption Survey, 2019/2020

Third: Activate social protection programs in Egypt.

The period from 2014 to 2021 has witnessed a significant development in the protection programs provided, in parallel with Egypt's adoption of an economic reform program in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund. This program aims to reduce the budget deficit, reform energy subsidies, increase the employment rate, enhance labor force participation (women and youth) and enhance social protection measures.

The implemented economic reform program's results were positively reflected on the Egyptian economic growth rate, as growth accelerated to 5.3% during the first three quarters of 2017/2018, beside that, inflation (after the short-term rise after the 33% float in July 2017) was contained at 11.4% in May 2018, and total international reserves reached \$43 billion at the end of May 2018⁽⁴⁾. However, the spread of the Corona pandemic, and then the Russian-Ukrainian war, caused a shock to the Egyptian economy, which depends on imports, especially food, with the complexity of the global economic scene and the exit of hot money after the US Federal Reserve raised the interest rate, which created a financing gap beside the required repayment of the external debt installments. All these procedures require the continuation of social protection programs in Egypt, the most important of which can be identified as follows:

1. Cash support, as the first database on poor families in Egypt was developed that includes 9.3 million families and includes 31 million citizens. The number of beneficiaries of cash support programs increased from about 6.4 million individuals to reach 14.1 million individuals in 2021, with an increase of about 120%⁽⁵⁾.
2. Work to achieve equal educational opportunities, as about 5.5 million students in various educational stages (primary, preparatory, secondary) were exempted from paying school fees and incurring the cost of school education for more than 1.5 million students who are unable and do not receive monetary support, with a total of 5.8 million school students⁽⁶⁾.
3. Work to achieve equality in health opportunities. The comprehensive health insurance law came to deal with the problems and obstacles faced by the Egyptian health system, foremost of which is working to achieve inclusion and improve the quality of health services provided.

(4) Ministry of Social Solidarity, achievements of the Ministry of Social Solidarity 2014-2021

(5) Ministry of Social Solidarity, aforementioned reference

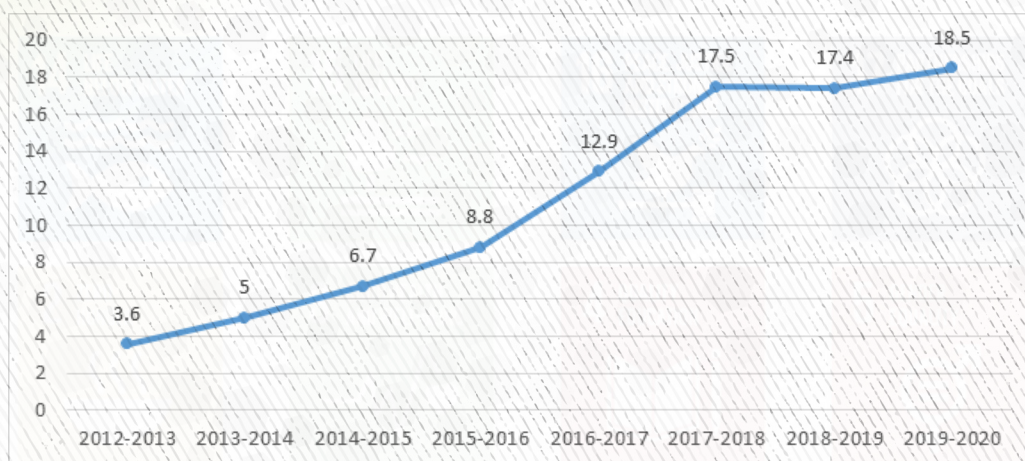
(6) The previous reference



The Ministry of Social Solidarity has been keen to empower the target groups and achieve inclusion for all groups. Cash support has developed significantly in recent years, and this is evident from the following figure: -

Figure No. (2)

Cash support (Takaful w Karama program & Social Solidarity Pension) in one billion Egyptian pounds



Egyptian Ministry of Finance, final account report, different years

The Takaful and Karama Program is considered one of the most important social protection programs that Egypt has pursued in parallel with the economic reform program in order to invest more in human capital and protect the poorest groups, Egypt has launched the Solidarity and Dignity Program in all 27 Egyptian governorates, where 3.1 million families, or about 11.1 million people, 75% of whom are women, have been enrolled since the launch of the program in 2015 until 2020. More than 67% of its cash allocations are directed to areas most in need of development. The program aims to enhance women's decision-making capacity, enhance human capital in the health and education fields, and integrate the target audience into productive activities⁽⁷⁾. Two years after the launch of the Takaful and Karama program, the International Food Policy Research Institute conducted an independent evaluation study to measure the performance of the Takaful and Karama program, and the results were as follows:

(7) World Bank, Takaful & Karama: A Social Safety Net Project Enhancing Egyptian Women Empowerment and Human Capital, <https://cutt.us/3hP0z>, 2020

- 45% of the Takaful and Karama program beneficiaries are from the poorest quintile, and 22% are from the second poorest quintile.
- The Takaful and Karama Program reduced poverty rates for those below the poverty line, (\$1.9) per person per day by 11%.

It is expected that the total number of those eligible for cash support will reach about 4 million families during the next fiscal year, and the number of those entitled is currently about 3.8 million beneficiary families, equivalent to 14 million beneficiaries, of whom about 400,000 families receive social solidarity pension and the rest about 3.4 million families receive solidarity & dignity (Takaful w Karama)⁽⁸⁾.

There is also a plan to expand assistance to Takaful and Karama families to obtain job opportunities, to work on their exit from the aid and support circle to independence and production, in order to integrate social development and economic development, through the Forsa program, which is a complement to conditional cash transfer programs to support the neediest groups by creating suitable job opportunities.

Hayah Karima initiative⁽⁹⁾ is one of the most important initiatives undertaken by the state to increase support for marginalized groups, as it aims to alleviate the burdens of citizens in the neediest communities in rural areas and urban slums. The initiative depends on the implementation of a set of service and development activities that will ensure a “Hayah Karima” - dignified life- for this category and improve their living conditions. According to the data of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the targeted villages have been divided into several stages: -

1. The first phase of the initiative: It includes villages with poverty rates of 70% or more: the villages most in need and need urgent interventions.
2. The second phase of the initiative: Villages with poverty rates from 50% to 70%: poor villages that need intervention, but it is less difficult than the first group.
3. The third phase of the initiative: Villages with poverty rates below 50%: Less challenges to overcome poverty.

(8) 3.1 million families of “Takaful and Karama” beneficiaries received a Meeza card
<https://cutt.us/cFKi7>

(9) Hayah Karima Initiative website <https://cutt.us/qhxJE>



The main axes of the Egyptian Rural Development Program “Hayah Karima” are: -

- **Proper housing.** This axis includes raising the efficiency of homes, building roofs, building housing complexes in the villages most in need, and extending water, sewage, gas, and electricity connections inside homes.
- **Infrastructure,** which includes micro-projects and activating the productive cooperatives’ role in villages.
- **Medical services** represented in the construction of hospitals and health units, equipping them with equipment and operating them with medical staff. Launching medical convoys and providing health services through prosthetic devices “head-phones, glasses, wheelchairs...etc.”
- **Educational services** to build, raise the efficiency of schools and nurseries and equip them, provide educational cadres, and establish literacy classes.
- **Economic empowerment** through training and employment through medium, small and micro enterprises, industrial and craft complexes, and providing job opportunities.
- **Social interventions and human development.** This axis includes social interventions that include building and rehabilitating the human being, and targeting the family, children, women, people of determination, the elderly and awareness initiatives, providing food baskets and distributing them subsidized, marrying orphans, including preparing marital homes and holding collective weddings, and developing childhood by establishing home nurseries to rationalize mothers’ time in the production role and children’s clothing.
- **Environmental interventions,** such as collecting garbage and discussing ways to recycle it...etc.

Fourth: - Marginalized groups and the path towards sustainable development.

There are still great burdens and obstacles in the way of achieving just sustainable development and settling its goals, most notably the issue of marginalized groups who suffer from exclusion and lack of economic empowerment or feeling the fruits of development. Therefore, economic policies should focus on achieving social justice and inclusive growth to address the causes and consequences of discrimination; by adopting policies based on justice, equality and equal opportunities in education, health and employment; in addition to developing institutionally social protection systems to provide sustainable protection for the most marginalized groups, in order to accelerate steps towards achieving sustainable development. Such policies should address all discriminatory aspects such as:

- Working on empowering women economically and socially and promoting the spirit of entrepreneurship among women.
- Reducing child labor as it poses health risks and exposure to disability.



- Working on developing laws and regulations and addressing them in order to achieve equal opportunities, both at the educational and health levels, as well as employment and educational opportunities.
- Achieving balanced development for all that reach the most marginalized places, and here we can refer to the importance of the Egyptian Rural Development Program, which pushes towards achieving balanced regional development, and for urban areas not to monopolize development efforts alone.
- Promoting decent work and providing increased support to medium, small and micro enterprises, due to their role in spreading development in the most marginalized places.
- Building and developing capacities and increasing the effectiveness of institutions to implement these policies and face the challenges of the knowledge economy. The global economy is no longer traditional, but rather has become more developed and relies on information and communication technology.
- Building a strong information infrastructure on marginalized groups to help target these groups more accurately, in addition to implementing decentralization and increasing job opportunities in marginalized places, the need to shed light on the media and increase awareness of this issue locally and to identify global efforts in order to benefit from it in the economic empowerment of all categories.

Finally, despite its attempts to achieve rural development and empower marginalized groups, Egypt still requires more efforts, especially under the high poverty rate, especially in rural areas, in addition to urban areas monopolizing the bulk of development efforts, on the other hand, the population increase and structural problems in the structure of the economy destroy any development efforts.

