

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

By

Ziad Abdel Samad

Arab NGO Network for Development

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights in article 25

“Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 23.3

- Introduction
- Civil society understanding of social protection
- Social Protection in the Arab Region
- Type of CSO engagement in the region
- Civil society engagement in Social Protection
- Challenges and opportunities facing CSO in the Arab Region
- Conclusion: Questions for Further Discussion

Civil Society Understanding of Social Protection

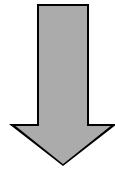
- One of the **main components of comprehensive integrated social policy**
- Definition: Set of programs aimed at empowering the poor by securing them with required skills and voices to achieve their freedom from want and from fear and to provide them with their rights to live in dignity
- Addresses **high risk and vulnerable groups**
- Efficient social protection should be based on a **clear vision** and a **comprehensive agenda** that takes into consideration **the long term objectives rather than only addressing the immediate needs.**

Social Protection in the Arab Region

- HDI show that the Arab Region is among the worst in the world in terms of broad human development achievement
- high rate of poverty
- high percentage of illiterate people (women, youth and children),
- gender discrimination,
- lack of freedom
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of good governance
- GLOBAL CRISIS

Social Protection in the Arab Region

shift from welfare state to the reduced role of the public sector in conformity with **SAPS** and implementation of **FTAS** + **structural constraints of public administration**



public sector is not available to respond all needs & challenges + **incomplete social protection strategies** + **CSOs and other stakeholders** are invited to **complement** the role of the states and **to contribute to the formulation and implementation** of the most relevant social policies

Case Study: Social Protection Schemes In Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Jordan

- Incomplete protection against major social risks.
- Unequal treatment of individuals
- Limited coverage of the concerned population
- Low level of real benefits: For most workers of the region, pensions promise 70% to 80% of final work salaries, but actual benefits are significantly lower. This is because of the lack of formal indexation mechanisms, national inflation rates and governmental discretionary adjustments.
- Relatively costly and inefficient administration
- No financial sustainability

Type of CSO Engagement in the Region

CSOs are structures that don't belong to the state or to the market. CSOs tend to monitor the states' and the markets' powers aiming at protecting the society from their tendencies to control

Roles and Functions of CSOs

- Service Provider
- Agents for Development
- Advocacy campaigns and monitoring public policies and business sector - Agents for policy change

The nature and the role of CSOs depend a lot on their organizational and structural aspects. It is also highly dependent on their values and vision.

Civil Society Engagement in Social Protection

CSOs as service providers have the flexibility and ability for wide outreach to in-need communities, and poor and vulnerable groups. This includes the social sector, such as health and education, and the economic sector, such as job creation and the prevention of exploitation of the most vulnerable labor force including the informal sector.

CSOs have an important role in empowering targeted communities and groups. Such empowerment can happen by implementing capacity building and awareness raising programs. These programs contribute to the adoption of comprehensive and sustainable programs and projects. Empowerment aims at developing the capacity but also has as an objective of elaborating the shared vision and strategic planning.

Civil Society Engagement in Social Protection

CSOs are dedicated advocates and lobbyists seeking to include social protection in the agenda of the government and other stakeholders, and to advocate for the legal protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

CSOs also have to create effective watchdogs, in order to be able to monitor public policies and their implementation.

In all their roles, CSO represent the interests of the general public who is in fact their principle constituency.

Challenges & Opportunities facing CSO in the Arab region

Challenges of multiple dimensions
External and Internal

External:

related to the general political conditions,
the absence of democracy
the limited space for free association
prevalence of conflicts and wars
highly centralized power
the low level of development
lack of the necessary tools, communications
and infrastructure
the classical understanding of security
economic growth as the first target to achieve
the lack of the notion of human rights as a
leading concept for social policies

Internal:

related to capacities and available resources
structural and organizational weaknesses
visionary weaknesses

Challenges & Opportunities facing CSO in the Arab region

Opportunities

- reports on human development: require governments to give more attention to the social sectors
- Redefinition of development
- Millennium Declaration: push the agenda for social development to be one of the global and national priorities
- Global financial and economic crisis :The gravity of the crisis has confirmed the serious need to implement precautionary measures to face the potential challenges of the crisis
- Global and regional initiatives :EMP, Broader Middle East Initiative for the Partnership for Future, League of Arab States

Conclusion

The discussion on social protection in a rights based approach

Clear statements and formulation of social protection

Participatory channels and mechanisms at the **national** level for the development of policies and monitoring

Discussion and at the **regional** level

Gender equity

Lack of Freedom

Global debate on human rights

Participation in **global** forum

THANK YOU