

Egypt in Transition: Challenges and Opportunities

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The challenge of Egypt's transition is to both arrive at a consensus on national priorities as well as ensure the speed with which reforms are legislated and implemented. The legacy of five decades of heavy centralization and bias in favor of Egypt's middle class is a huge chasm between the haves and the have-nots. Deprivation concerns geographic and rural/urban disparities, gender discrimination in the poorer segments of society, and the total deterioration in both content and substance of the system of social services. The source of failure is clearly reflected in the distorted structure of budget allocation.

Youth have now proved to be Egypt's agents of change, as aspired to in Egypt's Human Development Report of 2010. Their January 2011 revolution has put Egypt back on track for social justice, with their demands for freedom, dignity, and social inclusion. This presentation identifies various policy and programmatic interventions that can be envisaged under a best case scenario, with a focus on agriculture and rural development, which has long been neglected. Solutions include the use of science and technology to raise agricultural productivity in a greener economy context. In parallel, the strategy would enhance cluster development along the agricultural value chain and promote entrepreneurship and off-farm employment via commercial and social franchising.