

STRATEGY DOCUMENT AND FRAMEWORK OF ACTIVITIES 2016-2018



Arab NGO Network for Development

Networking for Human Sustainable Development

ANND STRATEGY DOCUMENT AND FRAMEWORK OF ACTIVITIES 2016-2018

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I. Introduction

The following strategy document is based on the output from various discussions among ANND members, particularly during the General Assembly of ANND held in Cairo in December, 2014. This document elaborates and updates the strategy adopted in Beirut (2012), which outlined our principles, goals and movements in response to the changes occurring in the Arab region after 2011. It outlines the framework within which ANND's work will be organized between 2016-2018 and defines the overall objectives for pursuit during the period. It will rally ANND members in the region around a clear vision, mission and overarching goal and guide ANND in making choices for how to best allocate the resources of the organization.

II. Background and Context

Since the early 1980s, economic development in the Arab region was conditioned upon an economic restructuring route. This route was predicated on the neo-liberal development agenda that included structural adjustment and stabilization programs, later on entrenched in the Washington Consensus.

As a result, the region has witnessed mediocre progress in development and in some sectors-like the manufacturing and other productive sectors- it has regressed. The specters of unequal opportunities and deep-rooted inequities have haunted people of the Arab region for a long time, and have constituted the core of socio-economic injustice. Indeed, the revolutions that some countries of the region have witnessed, and the instability that has reached crescendo in others, represent the peoples' rebuff to the gross socio-economic inequality perpetuated by unjust socio-economic policies of decades-old regimes.

After the downfall of a number of these oppressive regimes, democratic transition in the Arab world is still in trouble. Egypt has reverted to military rule, Syria has descended into civil war, and Yemen and Libya remain essentially failed states. Only Tunisia can claim to have successfully navigated the transition to democratic governance. Problems persist because the necessities for democracy to function smoothly are weak or non-existent.

Four years since the outbreak of the uprisings, the policy agenda still fails to confront the region's deep-rooted socioeconomic problems. There has been no major shift in the development model that has brought about such conditions. Governments of the Arab region remain keen on implementing IFI-engineered structural adjustment agendas which still prioritize neoliberal policies at the expense of an enhanced role of the government. Indeed, the "Deauville Partnership for Arab Countries in Transition" has been promoting "structural reforms", especially through the privatization of infrastructure and the opening up of Arab economies to trade and investment via public-private partnerships (PPPs) in basic sectors such as energy, water, agriculture and infrastructure.

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This contextual narrative makes perfectly clear a key message that the Network indicated in its strategic plan for the period 2012–2015: the need for a new development model that promotes and safeguards the right to development, economic and social rights, and justice.

ANND believes that the new development paradigm should call for a broad perspective on development that includes the human dimensions of development, such as human rights and equitable outcomes, as well as environmental considerations. ANND has been analyzing and assessing the different challenges to development experienced in various Arab countries, in order to contribute to the emergence of an essential new paradigm.

III. Who We Are and What We Do

Civil society acts as a funnel focusing the demands of people. Governments provide better results when negotiating with an organized and representative mouthpiece. Likewise, with coherent messages from civil society, individuals have less chance of being left behind. With this understanding, ANND was established to cultivate a guiding voice for cohesion in civil society in the Arab region.

We fill a vital space in the Arab region, where much work is still required for governments to fulfill a large part of their responsibilities. Since our formation in 1997, we have been working towards the enhancement of core values such as democracy, respect of human rights, and sustainable development. Striving for the achievement of these fundamental priorities has brought together nine national networks (consisting of over 250 diverse CSOs) and 23 NGOs under our umbrella, which spans 12 countries.

Based in Beirut, Lebanon, we focus on advocacy and lobbying for regional and national policy-making in three main areas: development, trade, and democracy. To elaborate, programs cover development policies, economic and trade liberalization policies and their social and economic implications, and social and economic reform agendas and the role of international and regional organizations. We undertake work in these areas in order to enhance peace and security in the region.

Although peace and security are our ultimate goals, our implemented programs seek to achieve a few more quantifiable objectives. These are to enhance civil society advocacy on social and economic policy-making processes, open channels of influence for civil society in the Arab region in policy-making processes, and enhancing the availability and production of indigenous resource and research materials related to the role of civil society in the Arab region.

In order to do so, we commit to vital norms: the international convention on human rights, freedom, respect of the individual, respect of diversity, equality of resource division, the

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protection of cultural heritage in the region, the implementation of the developmental priorities of local societies, and justice, including gender justice and justice for people with disabilities. Our vision for the Arab region is an environment of democratic, active and effective civil societies. We strive to take a leadership role in this vision and bring about tangible change in policy. In this conception, all individuals are free, prosperous and represented. That end, we will never abandon.

IV. Strategic Objectives

ANND contributes to strengthening the efforts of civil society organizations in the field of advocacy for social and economic rights. It also contributes to promoting channels of access for civil society organizations to influence public policies at the national, regional and international levels. In this context, the new strategy for 2016-2018 aims mainly to shift from supporting CSOs in analyzing social and economic policies and providing recommendations, towards supporting a more vibrant social dialogue between different stakeholders (including NGOs, academia, trade unions, political parties). The purpose of such dialogue is to identify additional elements of the alternative development model and reach agreements to work together on policies and activities. This necessitates adding new work approaches, such as organizing multi-stakeholder dialogues and engaging different stakeholders in policy processes. These approaches are to build on the current work approaches that have contributed to the success of ANND in enhancing networking among CSOs in the region and propelling their voice into different policy making processes, all informed by a serious and distinguished policy analysis.

V. Thematic Focus Areas for the Intervention of ANND

ANND focuses in its work on enhancing the debate on alternative development models by examining economic and social policies at the national, regional and international levels and linking them to human security, the right to development, and social justice. From experience, ANND has identified the main policy areas that greatly impact development choices in the region: macroeconomic policies, redistribution policies, and the roles of the developmental actors. ANND has targeted its intervention within these areas in order to best contribute to shaping a development paradigm to which it aspires.

Macroeconomic policies:

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Trade and investment policies: Whether bilateral, regional or multilateral, trade and investment policies place Arab countries under considerable pressure to liberalize their economies and open up their markets. This entails amending their national policy regimes to meet with liberalization commitments. Moreover, these agreements often set conditions requiring the liberalization of strategic sectors such as water, energy, education and health care, as well as transportation and postal services –basic sectors and services that should be made available for public access. ANND recognizes liberalizing these sectors irrespective of the level of development and the national development needs of Arab countries continues to adversely impact their development paths, by diminishing the government’s policy space in achieving the right to food, health, and labor.

Financial policies: ANND will work towards promoting a supportive and development-oriented financial system. The desired financial system should ensure that current financial policies pertaining to austerity measures, aid, debt and taxation do not overcrowd orientation to the real economy. It should contribute meaningfully to the realization of economic and social rights, as well as integrate the right to "policy space" in all financial agreements between countries. “Policy space” gives room for developing countries to formulate policies that support economic recovery and enhance the realization of human rights.

Redistribution policies:

Taxation system: The taxation system lies at the heart of the social contract and constitutes a powerful instrument to reduce inequalities¹. Taxation provides a financial asset that supports the state treasury, and allows the implementation of projects and public services that benefit citizens. Ideally, citizens should be contributing to government expenditures, each according to his/her relative ability, and in return, under the auspices of the government, enjoy benefits and protection that a percentage of the income provides. Taxation mechanisms in the Arab region continue to operate in an insufficient and unjust manner, benefiting corporations and elites at the expense of the general population.

Social protection policies: States are legally obliged to establish social protection systems as enshrined in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, social protection schemes in Arab countries remain fragmented, underdeveloped and insufficiently-funded. Moreover, a governmental inability to compel the private sector to follow local laws regarding minimum wage or social schemes is a common deficiency in social policies in the Arab region.

Informal economy: The spread of the informal sector is the result of decades of non-developmental and non-rights-based approaches. Arab governments have failed to provide decent job opportunities or improve labor environments, which has led to sizeable portions of societies to move to the informal sector. A large part of the workforce in Arab countries lacks incentives to participate in the formal system of production. Informality has permeated into

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/g20/meetings/saint-petersburg/g20-leaders-summit-growth-and-global-economy.htm>

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certain social groups, striking in particular the most fragile people. According to the World Bank, women make up nearly 60% of informal sector workers and their work remain widely undervalued, because of gender pay gaps, which are wider in the Arab region. Their activities are also clustered into a small amount of sectors considered to be culturally appropriate. Youth, being widely unemployed (25% of unemployment in the Arab countries in 2012 – according to the ILO), drift towards the informal economy and share a fierce situation of discrimination with migrants and illegal workers. Such marginalization of women, youth, migrants and illegal workers highlights how informality is exaggerating existing inequality patterns within the global economic structure.

The roles of developmental actors:

A strengthened *developmental role of the state* is essential for addressing development, human rights and democracy challenges in the Arab world. Arab countries are in need of public sector reform that goes beyond addressing bureaucracy and corruption. They require measures towards promoting workable and efficient state institutions, as well as policies and regulations responsible for advancing inclusive development, safeguarding human rights, and importantly cultivating an efficient private sector.

The current post-2015 development agenda acknowledges the *role of the private sector* in the implementation of sustainable development goals and encourages and promotes PPPs. For the Arab region, the participation of the private sector has served as a driver for closing infrastructure gaps and creating economic growth. Yet, wealth has largely been concentrated to elites, rather than the general population, rendering the IFI-backed trickle-down effect of growth concept obsolete. Private sector participation in development in the Arab region has incorporated a large number of PPPs operating in basic sectors such as energy and water, provisions that are basic rights of citizens. While such partnerships can bring about efficiency, without insightful regulation and accountability they can, on the other hand, generate higher prices, rendering basic services unaffordable for a wide spectrum of social segments in a region that is already plagued by staggering poverty levels.

ANND believes that the process and practice of democratization in the region requires revision of prevailing approaches to economic and social policies and wider policy-making, in conjunction with reforms of the political systems and through strengthening *the role of civil society*. ANND acknowledges that a major challenge facing CSOs in the region is the “shrinking space” for their engagement in policy areas. Accordingly, a main strategic objective of ANND is to provide CSOs with tools and channels for advocacy. This includes efforts to analyze the legal framework and identify the main legal challenges, complimented by supporting campaigns conducted on the national level. ANND also believes that realizing an effective civil society in Arab countries necessitates doubling efforts to alleviate external challenges. Moreover, this requires strategies that aim at developing capacities of CSOs, in order to prepare them for better engagement in decision-making processes.

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VI. The Processes We Engage in and Global Objectives

The post-2015 agenda

ANND aims at advancing dialogue among CSOs, private sector representatives, political parties, academics, and trade unions on the post-2015 development agenda. It aims to contribute to the effective and accountable implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the region, through building the capacities of different stakeholders and enabling their participation in an inclusive social dialogue at different policy making levels. By providing a platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange between different development actors (CSOs, governments, media, political parties, trade unions and the private sector), they will have a chance to be proactive regarding socio-economic policies within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

The World Trade Organization (WTO)

On the global level, the multilateral trading system has failed to address and fulfill its own core principles of ensuring that developing countries secure a fair share of the growth and benefits of international trade commensurate with their economic development needs. Furthermore, the framework of the WTO is still yet to address implementation challenges facing developing countries, imbalances and asymmetries in agreements, and the non-operational and non-binding nature of the provisions on special and differential treatment. Accordingly, ANND recognizes that there is a need to follow WTO negotiations and accessions involving Arab countries and is keen to approach the topic from a development perspective and linked to the status of human rights.

The development effectiveness process:

This process aims to pursue and advocate for a transformative agenda for development informed by a human rights-based approach. A major part of this is to protect and deepen policy gains made in Paris, Accra and Busan, and reverse any of the harmful provisions that continue to guide those three agendas. This process enables advocacy for effectiveness in development cooperation policy and practice, incorporating the accountability of all development actors. It involves continuous work to improve CSOs effectiveness and efforts for the realization of an enabling environment for civil society as independent development actors in their own right. ANND has been engaged in the aid effectiveness process since the second High Level Forum held in Paris (2005). ANND has coordinated the regional efforts for the CSOs Platform for Development Effectiveness since 2012.

Business and human rights:

In 2008, the United Nations (UN) endorsed the ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework’ for business and human rights. The framework recognized the responsibility of business enterprises to respect human rights wherever they operate and whatever their size and industry.

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This framework became operational in 2011 when the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In this regard, during its 26th session, the Human Rights Council adopted an important resolution named “Elaboration of an International Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights”. The resolution provides for the establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental working group that is mandated with elaborating an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. ANND believes that carefully following this process is an essential step towards holding private sector engagement in development accountable.

The extra-territorial role of the State:

In an initiative to address complex cross-border human rights challenges, leading specialists in international law and human rights convened on 28 September, 2011, in Maastricht, The Netherlands, and adopted a set of guidelines on extraterritorial obligations (ETOs). These guidelines have been termed “the Maastricht Principles” on Extraterritorial Obligations of States, which UN human rights experts have continuously encouraged governments worldwide to take into account. ETOs promote a state’s governmental responsibility and jurisdiction with regards to monitoring and holding TNCs accountable for operations in other states outside their own borders

The League of Arab States, its institutions and the regional process of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit:

ANND has endeavored to follow-up on the efforts initiated in the first summit, hosted in Kuwait in 2009. The summit was held to follow up work on enhancing alternative policies for development and the regional development project, as well as to strengthen the work with the Union of Arab Parliamentarians as a framework to promote cooperation with parliamentarians at the regional level. Within this context, a goal for ANND has been to improve civil society actions at the regional level in relation to this track and to link the track to the process of reforming the League of Arab States.

The Arab Watch Report on Social and Economic rights: This entails the completion of consecutive reports, published every two years, with an extensive list of aims. These include:

- Improving the effectiveness of work of CSOs in monitoring the implications of public policies, particularly in regards to economic and social development.
- Enhancing discussion within CSOs and other social frameworks (trade unions, the private sector) in formulating alternative views about general policy-making.
- Putting economic and social rights at the center of the current reformist national debate.

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- Enhancing research efforts on public policy, based on knowledge resources stemming from the national reality.
- Integrating field work with research work on public policy by building relationships between CSOs, researchers, and academics. Operating under the assertion that this effort depends on the added value of the coalition work employing varied talents, including those hired by organizations with grassroots vocation and others with research related work.

Monitoring, lobbying and advocacy with regard to foreign policy of the United States (US), the European Union (EU) and the policy of international financial institutions towards the Arab region:

ANND follows up the impacts of foreign policies of both the US and the EU in the area of Arab national policy-making. This follow up is made particularly with regard to the impacts of aid policies from the US and EU as well as the impacts of economic relations, including trade and investment agreements, on the evolution of economic policy in the countries of the region. To pursue work in this area it is imperative to establish a position that will specifically follow up on the evolutions of these policies and facilitate communication with concerned parties.

The Universal Periodic Review: The completion of work on the mechanism of Universal Periodic Review, as well as the possibility to work on the specialized committees and special rapporteurs involved in a number of economic and social rights is an important process for monitoring the situation of Human Rights in the Arab States. The added value of ANND approach in this process the support of national coalitions to support the preparation of the report. To increase the impact of this work, it is imperative to follow up on outcomes and recommendations of the process through joint advocacy action at different levels and facilitate communication with concerned parties around policy areas at stake.

VII. How Do We Work?

ANND Guiding Principles:

1. Endearing to promote the vitality of civil society to enhance the values of democracy, respect of human rights, justice and sustainable development.

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2. Emphasizing democratic ownership by representing all people through a non-discriminatory and human rights-based approach. Recognizing the need for diverse justice, including gender justice and justice for people with disabilities.
3. Striving to best represent member CSOs and NGOs and to provide exemplary leadership advice. Opening channels of influence for members on the national, regional and global levels.
4. Remaining receptive and responsive to feedback, particularly from citizens, member organizations, and networks that ANND is part of.
5. Ensuring informed decision-making grounded in sound knowledge and professional research.
6. Focusing on the dissemination of actionable recommendations and information.
7. Ensuring accountability; displaying honesty and transparency in all relationships and activities. Accordingly, seeking and accepting funding with integrity.
8. Committing to effectiveness and efficiency, with attention to improving practices, performance, sustainability and services.
9. For the ANND team and all those it works with, cultivating esprit de corps and fostering an enriched, productive environment.
10. Operating with on-going management of environmental impacts to a high standard in sustainability practices.

Work Approaches:

1. *Monitoring:* ANND monitors economic and social rights based on the obligations of the Arab countries according to the International Convention on Economic and Social Rights and other international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This monitoring function has been an integral part of the prevailing ANND structure and its networking and capacity-building activities. The regional Arab Watch Report on Social and Economic Rights, which is the result of this monitoring process, serves to guide the scope and direction of future monitoring activities. The report completes the monitoring work undertaken within the UN frameworks and policies related to Euro-Arab relations, along with other areas under the Network's interest. The main lessons learned related to this function is the need to build on previous work and try to incorporate a comparative analysis between Arab countries on one side and between previous status in the same country on the other side. Also, it is important to note the emergence of a

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major new tool for monitoring economic and social policies and rights, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. *Advocacy*: An important part of ANND's strategy is the advocacy work that the Network performs, mainly at the level of European institutions and International Financial Institutions. The aim of this work is to influence policy decisions and thus reform inadequate and unfair structures. ANND's advocacy is often directly linked to the monitoring work led by the members and to policy analysis produced by the Network, allowing for experience-sharing and joint action on the regional and global levels. Experiences in this area have provided ANND members and partners opportunities to make their voices heard in elevated forums above their usual access, and opened channels of communication with civil authorities and research entities that influence the foreign policy of various countries. To pursue work in this area, ANND needs to closely follow evolutions of these policies and enhance partnerships with CSOs on the national and European levels, in order to facilitate communication with the concerned authorities..
3. *Capacity development and enhancing the enabling environment*: Through capacity development activities and joint actions and campaigns, ANND mobilizes CSOs from the region to address development and justice issues. This enhanced mobilization and increased knowledge leads to demands being made of decision makers regarding their policy choices at various policy making levels. The added value of this process is related to the network's capacity to integrate the beneficiaries of the capacity building work in its strategic interventions either in the research work or in advocacy efforts or in the different dialogues.
4. *Developing resources and home grown analysis*: The research effort undertaken by ANND is intended to prepare analytical papers on development policies for the benefit of activists and leaders of civic organizations. In this regard, ANND has produced a wide range of knowledge products on economic and social policy. These materials are high-quality, gender-sensitive, and fulfil an urgent need in terms of topics. ANND has an important relationship with a group of prominent researchers in the Arab region; it is important to consolidate and expand this relationship to other research centers. Moreover, ANND must tailor its research work to the needs of its members and partners. This facilitates opportunities for specific change in economic and social development policy. The monitoring function based on local efforts will strengthen the participatory approach to this work. This can be done by expanding the reliance on initiatives already in place, whether by the members or others.
5. *Social dialogues*: As a regional network focusing on economic and social policies, ANND should play an important role in engaging and facilitating social dialogues

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around specific policies. The ultimate objective here is to strengthen dialogue capacities between the different groups to project a balanced and sustainable social dialogue. This function acts as the accumulation of the different approaches by ANND, building on the policy analysis work and deepening networking efforts with different stakeholders in different countries. This approach will move from merely engaging different stakeholders (media, academia, parliamentarian, private sector) in activities and discussions, towards engaging an enhanced working relationship and deepened dialogue that will assist in agreeing on specific policy recommendations.

6. *Partnering with global network:* ANND seeks to build strategic partnerships for enhancing the impact of its advocacy work at the international level. Our main partners in the different thematic areas and policy processes are:

- UN Processes: Social Watch.
- Trade and Investment Policies: South Center, Third World Network (TWN), Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS).
- IFIs: Global Tax Justice Network, Christian Aid, Bank Watch Counter Balance, Bank for Human Rights, Bank Information Center, Bretton Woods Project.
- Private Sector and Human Rights: ETO, Treaty Alliance
- Monitoring Economic and Social Policies and Enabling Environment for CSOs: ESCR-net, Civicus
- Development Effectiveness: CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)
- ENP and EU-Arab Relations: Euro – Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform, Solidar, Concorde, Bankwatch.

VII. Developing ANND's Organizational Capacities

As recognized by ANND's Guiding Principle 8, the Network will continue to ensure that it commits to effectiveness and efficiency, with attention to improving practices, performance, sustainability and services. In order for ANND to generate the best results, it has identified several areas of opportunity to enact revisionary practices:

- Define a clear mechanism for the Administration of membership and increasing their engagement.
- Conduct regular assessment for the Staff at the secretariat and hold evaluation meetings (retreats) at regular intervals to evaluate the work and provide suggestions for development in a participatory manner (at least once a year).

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- Take advantage of the expertise scattered across the Arab region: Not to limit the office expertise with Lebanese nationals.
- Increase communication tools between the staff and make sure to handle internal regular meetings between the team.
- Provide opportunities for training and capacity building for the Secretariat team in different areas.

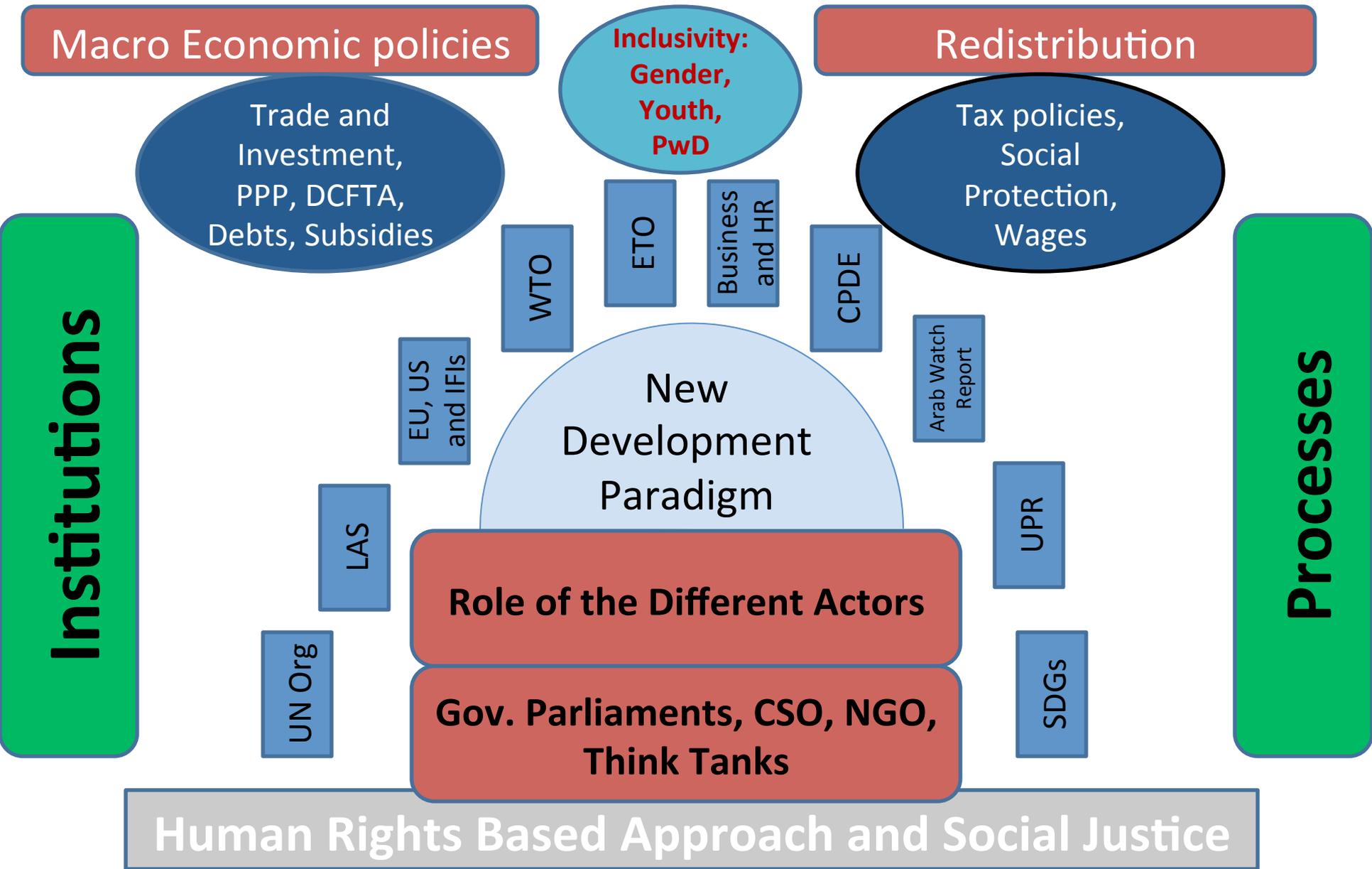
Communication strategy:

This component is a high priority for ANND in the next strategy period. Fulfilling the objectives of ANND's new communications strategy -external outreach, public image and advocacy- is an essential component of organizational development. Providing a clear and consistent message across all forums, utilizing media and technology tools, and improving efficiency of administrative procedures in this regards, are all areas that ANND has now provisioned for. With a coherent strategy, the enhancement of both the quality and efficiency of ANND's work has commenced.

ANND is in the process of implementing a forward-thinking communications strategy. It seeks to expand the outreach of the Network as well as refine its public image using various strategies of media engagement and utilising technology tools. Strengthening and synchronizing media work of ANND is essential to promoting the work of the Network to citizens, partners, donors, governments, international organisations, researchers and other parties.

ANND is utilising a number of methods and online resources to achieve these ends. A major platform for outreach is the ANND website, which is in the process of being completely renovated. The resulting product will be an improved area, addressing ease of use and clarity of information issues, and one that keeps up with fast moving trends in digital media. The e-Newsletter, another significant media tool, is being revitalized with improved format and linkages to social media platforms for sharing capabilities. Furthermore, the CSR-DAR website has been re-uploaded to serve as a research portal for development in the Arab region. In this regards, ANND partners are being stimulated to ensure a regular flow of research material to the website. On another note, the ANND Wikipedia page is being prepared. As part of media relations, an Arab media database for reference purposes in covering ANND regional activities is being formulated.

Strategic Interventions

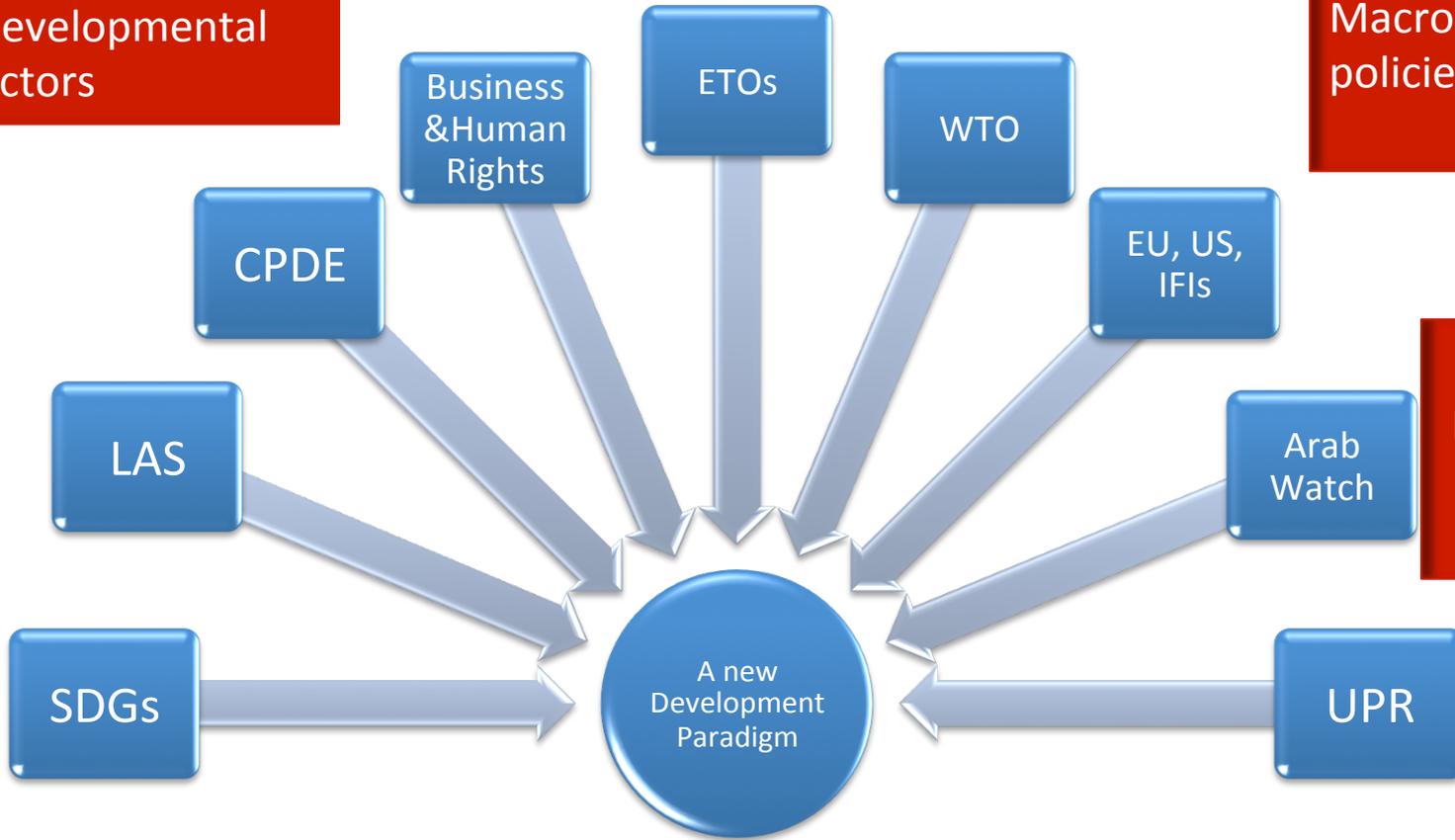


Strategic Interventions

The roles of different developmental actors

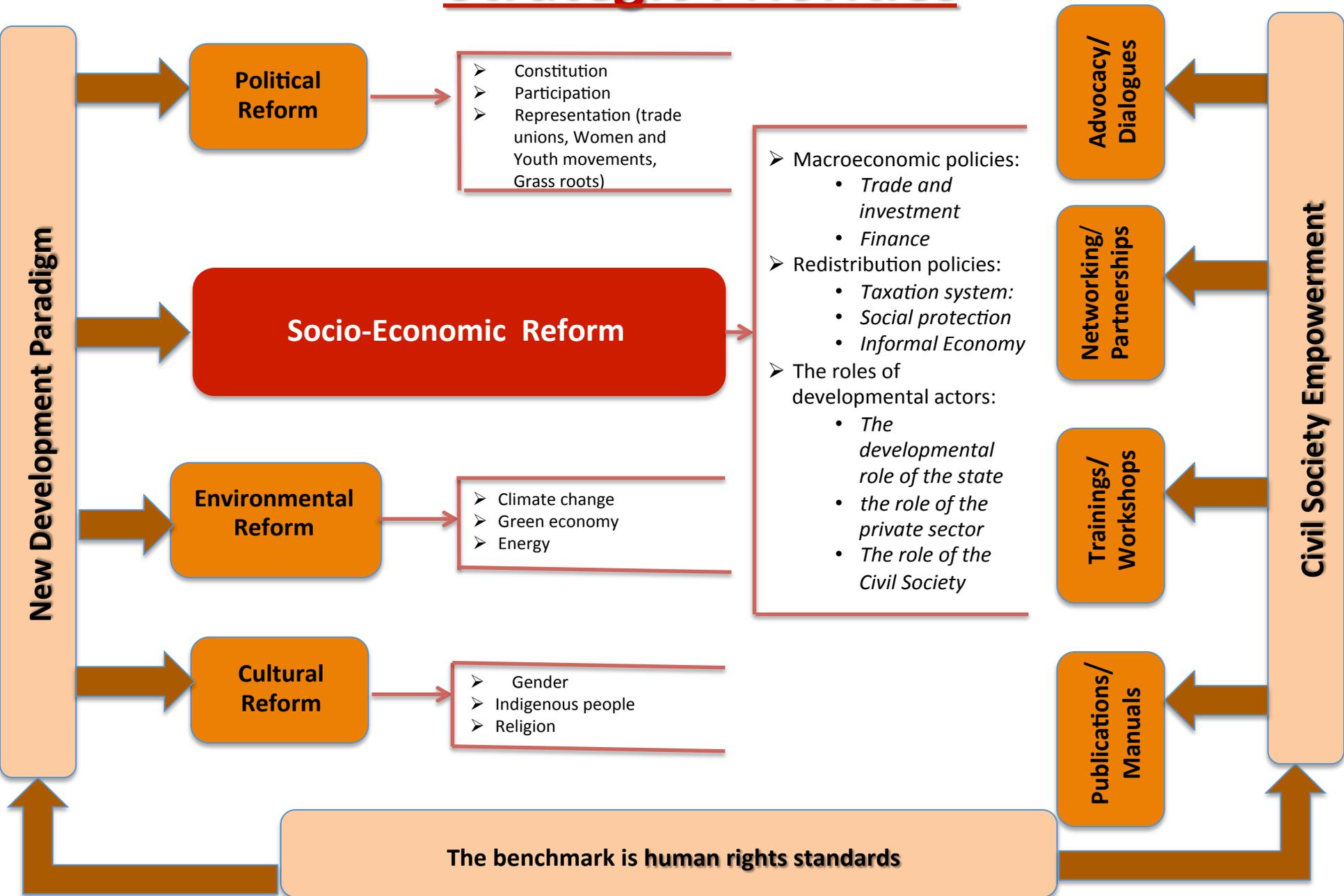
Macroeconomic policies

Redistribution policies



Human Rights Based Approach and Social Justice

Strategic Priorities



Strategic Processes

