



## FEATURES OF RURAL POVERTY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING THE EGYPTIAN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN LIGHT OF THE 1000 VILLAGE GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Poverty is great obstacle towards achieving sustainable development and economic growth, and threatens political and social stability and security. Poverty doesn't mean only lack of necessities to fulfill individuals' welfare, but deprivation from opportunities and choices. Though, previous governments-prior to 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution embarked a program aiming poor people through an integrated bunch of developmental projects to improve poor people's quality of life. This program consists of two main parts: first the main development program targeting 1000 poorest villages (according to the economic development ministry, 2008) and second part the integrated development program which targets 151 villages. In order to enhance the governmental initiative and improve the agriculture sector in Egypt, the current study aims at identifying the conditions of these poor communities via targeting two main and important categories which are agricultural laborers and farmers either tenants or renters of the agricultural lands from gender perspectives, besides identify-

ing their problems and suggestions to overcome these problems and their relationship with the relevant agricultural institutions and private sector, and finally their suggested policies to enhance and attract investments to the agriculture sector in Egypt, which will eventually lead to application of more convenient measurements and policies to improve poor people's livelihoods. The study's results revealed the rooted poverty especially among agricultural laborers either male or female, but mostly among females, as most of them lack skills, and not gathered in one entity, besides low wages and seasonality of the agriculture work. Therefore most of them are willing to shift to other work opportunities. As for farmers, they suffer from many problems such as high agricultural input prices, soil deterioration, irrigation problems, and deteriorated drainage networks and finally lack of agriculture extension services. In light of the previous results, if no serious measurements and actions taken by the government and relevant stakeholders to improve the agriculture system as a whole, and improve laborers capabilities, solving irrigation and drainage problems, and accessing markets, then we will lose our capabilities to face the accelerating challenges and imbalance in our food security and moreover trapped in the vicious poverty cycle.