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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) Strategy for 2020-2023

● Who are we?

Mission

ANND is an independent, democratic and civil network, established in 1997, aimed at strengthening and empowering civil society and promoting the values of democracy, respect for human rights, and sustainable development in Arab countries, consistent with the International Bill of Human Rights and the freedom and dignity of the individual, respect for pluralism, equitable distribution of wealth, preservation of the cultural heritage of the region, and achievement of the development priorities of local communities. ANND consists of 9 national networks and 23 NGOs operating in 12 Arab countries. ANND's work is organized according to three main areas:

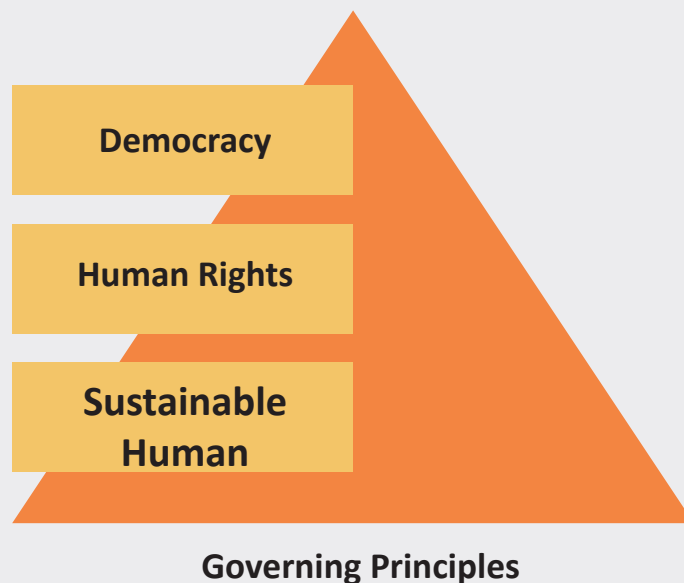
- Strengthen the capacity and role of CSOs in advocacy and lobbying in the field of economic and social policy-making in the Arab region;
- Strengthen the space available for CSO participation in economic and social policy-making at the national, regional, and international levels;
- Promote and develop knowledge products available in the Arab region related to the role of civil society.

Programmatic Directions

ANND's programs focus on lobbying and advocacy in the areas of economic and social rights in the Arab region. It operates in three key areas:

- Development Policies in the region
- Social and economic reform in the region and the role of international and regional organizations.
- Economic and trade liberalization policies and their social and economic implications.

At the horizontal level, ANND addresses security and peace issues in the Arab region. It strives to push for effective economic and social reforms based on the concepts of sustainable development, gender justice, and human rights approaches.



● SECTION ONE: General Background

1. Context

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) Strategy 2020-2023 was developed in light of the precarious situation throughout the region since the eruption of the Arab Spring. It builds on previous ANND strategies that sought to respond and address challenges related to democratic transition and the economic and social situation in the region's countries.

In the 2013-2015 strategy, developed during the momentum of the early stages of the Arab Spring, the language was somewhat optimistic and dictated by the prospects of democratic transition and its requirements. The language changed in the 2016-2018 strategy, becoming less optimistic due to the actual obstacles to this transition, following the fall several oppressive regimes in a short period of time.

Egypt suffered a setback, returning to military rule. Syria plunged into civil war under multilateral foreign intervention. The state in Yemen and Libya failed and violence and human tragedy spread. Only Tunisia saw a relatively successful transition to democracy. In general, the strategy acknowledged that the requirements for democracy were either fragile or absent.

Subsequent developments were unmistakably an extension of a situation of deteriorating development and human rights indicators and humanitarian emergency in wartorn countries. The situation in Yemen is regressing dramatically, Syria and Libya's future seems bleak, and rights and freedoms in Egypt are eroding. Tunisia, on the other hand is facing many political and social difficulties.

Worsening economic and social conditions in other countries also provoked mass mobilizations, such as in Jordan and Morocco. Algeria and Sudan have witnessed major transformations and are in a critical stage on the way to democratic transition.

Despite similar root causes, each country has its own specific set of problems and their repercussions. Some are torn by conflict and war. Others are facing regression in rights and freedoms. A third group is witnessing uprisings and popular discontent against systems of authority and economic and social policies, along with continuous struggles for democracy. A fourth set faces political and

social stagnation. Even in countries witnessing progress after the Arab Spring, namely Tunisia, economic and social indicators are in decline and require attention.

In the past few years, ANND, its members, partners, and experts paid great attention to analysing the contexts and monitoring changes. Based on recent involvement, the current context can be outlined as follows:

- Arab societies continue to face inequality and concentration of capital, on the one hand, and widespread tyranny, on the other. However, the region's problems are not separate from the global system, which is dominated by financial capital and where the interests of corporations are set above those of the people, in addition to the growing role of the growing role of international and regional financial institutions and the consequent privatization of development and draining its processes from social content.
- The extreme right continues to rise along with religious and political fundamentalism, the spread of populism, the exacerbation of armed conflicts, and the spread of hate speech.
- Shifts in the world order have inflamed conflicts and crises, with the notable rise of new players (Russia and China), and the growing role of Turkey, Iran, and the GCC, leading to conflicts, trade wars, and the emergence of a serious polarization in the Arab region.
- Democracy and human rights indicators in most countries of the region continue to suffer as a result of the decline in the importance of human rights in international relations and the deliberate curtailment of the UN human rights budget. It led to the creation of an environment conducive to the growing patterns of authoritarian rule, thus reducing opportunities for participation and accountability and curtailing freedoms, along with the economic and social deterioration.
- The civil society environment in most Arab countries has been shrinking, undermining several bodies that had played a leading role over the past two decades. The attack on civic space in some countries is accompanied by numerous violations aimed at the marginalization and exclusion of civil society and the blatant assaults on human rights activists and defenders.
- Phenomena facing the region have never been at this level of cruelty and breadth, especially humanitarian calamities brought about by conflict, war, and a deteriorating economic and social situation.
- Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories and

the power imbalance remains an obstacle to political tracks, limiting the prospects of reaching a solution.

- Armed conflicts resulted in a large movement of refugees and IDPs; the region holds more than half of the world's migrants.

Nevertheless, these conditions could not prevent civic formations from continuing their efforts to demand democracy and social justice under difficult circumstances. Young people found in social media an outlet to declare their rejection and criticism of all forms of tyranny and social injustice. They expressed their opinions and as solidarity with many social and human rights issues. This positive trend, although lacking organization and an institutional framework, is a strong indication that the current situation cannot be sustained. The region is unstable and the desire for change and demands for rights and freedoms are on the rise.

2. ANND's Tasks

For the past two decades, ANND managed to strengthen its presence in the regional and international arena, occupying a leading position in the defense of economic and social rights. ANND is generally considered to have an added value on several levels. On one hand, ANND is known for addressing critical and non-traditional economic and social rights issues and social justice in general, in particular those relating to economic and social policies and North-South relationships. On the other hand, ANND developed a network of international relations through coordination, joint action, and advocacy activities, building bridges between civil society organizations in Arab countries and international and other parties. Through social justice and development issues, through monitoring, dialogues and research work, they keep up with the effects of policies on the economic and social rights of Arab countries. Furthermore, ANND's knowledge production represents an added value for those concerned with social justice and development issues. Through monitoring, dialogue, and research, ANND offers insight on the impact of policies on the economic and social rights of the citizens of Arab countries.

In general, previous strategies were based on three governing principles that form the reference frameworks and three core areas of action that constitute the practical frameworks for programs and projects. First, ANND adopts democracy, human rights, and sustainable development as governing principles and reference frameworks.

Second, ANND's advocacy, capacity building, and research programs and projects were based on three main areas of action: economic and development policies, free economy and free trade policies and the role of international and regional organizations. Economic and social reform agendas and the role of international and regional organizations. The include North-South trade agreements, EU and US policies towards countries in the region, and the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. ANND undertook the ambitious task of providing an alternative development model and strengthening the capacities of civil society and development actors to achieve this key objective.

ANND undertook several activities and interventions in this context at the international, regional, and local levels. It paid great attention to international development tracks, strengthening the capacity of CSOs and coordinating efforts to engage in the MDGs and later the SDGs and Agenda 2030, in addition to the aid effectiveness track, which continues under the name of Development Effectiveness. In cooperation with its members, ANND has also been active in engaging with international mechanisms, such as the UN and the UPR in particular. It also focused on regional mechanisms initiated by the League of Arab States (LAS) and/or ESCWA.

To achieve its objectives, ANND adopted a working methodology based on a set of mechanisms, primarily advocacy, with the aim of influencing economic and social policies at the international, regional, and national levels. This key role is supported by two other roles: knowledge production through monitoring, research, intellectual events, and dialogue platforms, and capacity development through training, networking, and field interaction. Consequently, ANND seeks the active participation of members and partners at the decision-making level through the coordination office, the general assembly, and expert meetings, as well as participation in activities related to ANND's programs. Members often contribute directly to knowledge production and knowledge product reviews, capacity-building activities, and, most importantly, advocacy work, which is ANND's primary function.

3. Issues and Themes

Based on the 2016-2018 strategy, ANND developed intervention directions on three major issues, mainly founded on the need to reform developmental processes through policies and rationalizing and revitalizing the role of developmental actors. These issues are:

a) Macroeconomic Policies

ANND focused on bilateral and multilateral trade and investment policies, based on its view of the negative impacts of their neoliberal orientation, which, over the past decades, proved to be in clear contrast with the right of people to development and individual economic and social rights. This orientation was linked with impoverishment and marginalization, instead of contributing to promote developmental policies, as it favors large corporations, financial capital, and the elites who control decision-making positions. Similarly, ANND directed its attention to financial policies, including aid and debt, engaging in international and local efforts to achieve development aid effectiveness and counter the negative impact of debt on people’s capacities and right to development.

b) Distribution Policies

Locally, ANND focused on issues governing distribution policies in relation to development and the economic and social rights of citizens, namely: tax systems, social protection policies, and the informal economy. In terms of tax systems, ANND starts with the need to correct the imbalances resulting from tax policies that do not serve development and those imposing additional burdens on regular citizens, to the benefit of elites and capital. Negatively impacting development opportunities, they tend to deny citizens the rights and services provided by taxes as a tool for the state. Thus, tax justice became a priority for ANND.

These efforts are linked with ANND’s focus on social protection policies. It identified the main flaw in the failure of most states to comply with the requirements of social protection, whether in allocating resources, the effectiveness of concerned institutions, or in obliging the private sector to fulfil workers’ rights to social protection, in addition to the lack of clear mechanisms for the participation of rights holders and weak possibilities for transparency and accountability. Also in local contexts, ANND addressed the question of informal economy, which grows without the rights or legal and institutional

guarantees for workers. The expansion of this informal and marginal economy is directly proportional to the imbalance in development and distribution policies, as well as the increasing impoverishment of various social segments.

c) Roles of Development Actors

In addition to relations and policies, ANND focused on the roles of development actors, namely the governmental, non-governmental, and private sectors in decision-making and policy-making related to development and economic and social rights. Thus, ANND also focused its interest on democracy, human rights, good governance, and participation, whose absence leads to deep imbalances in developmental processes, due to the monopoly on decision-making processes and the exclusion of development actors from civil society, in its broad sense, from decision-making positions, especially NGOs, trade unions, social movements, and political parties. Empowering development actors and contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for participation, dialogue, and influencing development decisions and policies is a top priority.



Issues and themes

4. Challenges

The complicated situation in the region, its descent into instability caused by war and conflict, and the shrinking political and social action space in most countries constitute the variety of subjective and objective challenges faced by ANND, summarized below.

Country Level:

- ANND's presence and the implementation of its objectives depend on the participation and initiatives of member organizations, especially when it comes to working at national and local levels. However, as political and legal restrictions on civic organizations have widened in many countries around the region, opportunities for action at the local level have declined, along with opportunities for regional and international coordination and interaction. The situation is linked to the decline in the level of support for human rights and development CSOs, whether due to restricting their rights to receive support and develop resources or as a result of the reorientation of a major slice of that aid to humanitarian support as the region plunges into war and conflict. The above situation constitutes a key challenge facing ANND and member organization post-Arab Spring.

Regional Level:

- The region is experiencing an unprecedented situation. Some countries are mired in war and conflicts. Others are hostage to external alliances, which usurp resources and capacities to direct the conflict from outside. The remaining are attempting to distance themselves from the regional situation. There is a marked decline in the role of regional and subregional bodies, particularly the LAS and the GCC, and thus in the limited prospects of benefiting from regional organizations and mechanisms.

International Level:

- Despite the international community's adoption of development goals and tracks that are mostly shared by ANND, the political reality is moving in the opposite direction, whether through economic and financial policies or the military and security nexus. These challenges became evident with the new millennium and the decline in the development momentum of the 1990s. International relations and interests are increasingly moving away from the international community's commitment to development and human rights. Security and the war on terror became the governing priority in international relations. The

negative impact on development priorities was linked to a dominant atmosphere of restricting political and civic actors. Thus, ANND faces challenges on both pillars of its work, development issues and political and development actors.

Under these conditions, addressing major questions to develop an alternative development model through influencing economic and social policies is not an easy task. ANND understands that the ability to impact the situation is beyond its capacity and probably that of civil society as a whole. However, it follows this strategic path to lead the way for civil society to play an active role in economic and social policies, as much as the situation and the balance of power allow.

Regarding challenges to structure and membership, ANND continues to operate based on a traditional membership structure and network building and maximizing participation and interaction through various means. In practice, it has links beyond the direct membership, through interaction and partnerships. ANND became a model for viability, preserving its regional character where most regional networks failed. This may be due to the active role played by the Secretariat and several member organizations. However, it may be useful to reassess and develop the organizational structure in line with current development, changing roles, effectiveness requirements, and capacity to influence.

Through this new strategy, ANND seeks to address two major challenges. The first is related to formulating more realistic strategic objectives and awareness of the surrounding conditions to enable the measurement of impact according to an accurate follow-up and evaluation system. On the other hand, ANND will aim to develop its organizational structure based on current developments and benefitting from its network of relations built in the previous years.

In preparing this strategy, ANND conducted a participatory SWOT Analysis by members of the Coordination Office to identify its current status based on strengths/weaknesses and opportunities/threats, summarized in the table below.

Strengths

The vision and the impact

- ANND's unique scope is an added value for civil society in the region
- ANND's work is based on a clear vision
- Participatory work, planning and critical thinking

Internal Regulations

- Trust, internal democracy and the ability to manage diversity within the network

Internal and External Communications

- ANND's geographical spread and ability to communicate with international and regional institutions and donors

Capacities and Expertise

- Diverse capacities and expertise of ANND's members, executive office, and experts

Weaknesses

The vision and the impact

- Weak capacity to respond to rapid developments in the region
- Lack of an integrated system for evaluation, monitoring, and impact assessment

Internal Regulations

- Gaps in the internal system affect membership structure and decision-making processes
- Absence of a clear mechanism for integrating new constituencies and activating their role within ANND

Internal and External Communications

- Weak direct communication mechanisms between ANND members
- Some difficulties that sometimes prevent effective communication between the Secretariat and members
- ANND's efforts are disproportionate with its visibility in relevant circles and media.
- Capacity for development and openness, through capacity building, communication with other individual and institutional expertise

Capacities and Expertise

- Lack of an institutional mechanism for transferring and benefiting from the experience of member organizations and linking work strategies and action plans

Opportunities

On the political level

- Opening up of new spaces for ANND's work, with the emergence of important issues due to social, economic, and political transformations; the existence of international platforms concerned with these issues; and ANND's work in general - including the question of reconstruction, environmental developments, and climate change
- The need for a greater role for ANND in supporting and promoting human rights in the region

On the level of the roles of developmental partners

- The continuation of popular movements in several countries, with prevalence of youth activism around the region
- Possibility of effective communication with partners in third world countries, whether on ANND's current work or on emerging issues such as migration and refugees

Threats

On the political level

- Deteriorating political and security situation in the region and the growing (informal) economics of war and militias
- Rise of the political and economic right internationally and locally, and the spread of populist and religious movements as well as the decline of human rights discourse and systematic weakening of human rights mechanisms
- Negative shifts in legal structures that contradict the requirements of economic, social, civil, and political human rights

On the level of the roles of developmental partners

- Shifts in donor priorities
- Hegemony of new development paradigm based on the privatization of development activities
- Restrictions on civil society and political forces in most Arab countries

● SECTION TWO: Strategy 2020 - 2023

1. Guidelines

This strategy is based on a set of guidelines that respond to the outputs of collective discussions, analysis, and evaluation and aim at increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of ANND's organizational structure, programs, and activities. They are:

1. Institutional Effectiveness

ANND is at a stage that requires its developed and, if necessary, restructuring, to increase its effectiveness and sustainability. This applies primarily to its role in capacity-building and knowledge production. ANND will pay more attention to investing in people and supporting the human capacity of CSOs and economic policy stakeholders. Accordingly, ANND will develop capacity-building programs, encompassing various regional and national activities, which will require the formation of a dedicated team to manage and supervise capacity-building activities, ensure their quality and relevance to ANND advocacy functions, prepare new generations to continue ANND's work, and utilize ANND's experiences in training, study visits, and summer school.

Similarly, effective work in knowledge production requires the institutionalization of ANND's related efforts and resources through ad-hoc working groups of members, experts, and specialists. Thus, ANND's Secretariat functional structure must be developed to ensure better coordination and follow-up of programs and teams.

2. Openness

Related to the trend towards restructuring ANND's functions is openness to non-member actors and investing in ANND's achievements over the past years in communicating with experts and institutions with similar concerns. The relationship of non-members must be conceptualized within ANND's structure to ensure continuity and commitment, such as through the formation of a new structure of committees or specialized scientific teams. More attention should also be accorded to communication and coordination with similar entities in the Global South.

3. Innovation

ANND seeks to make greater use of information technology in communications, knowledge dissemination, and capacity building. ANND's priority in this strategy is to develop a digital library to serve as a resource center in the field of economic and social policies, allowing access to knowledge for a wide range of sectors within the Arab region, such as civil society, academic and research institutions, the media, and relevant government bodies.

4. Good Governance

In line with this strategy, ANND will keep striving to promote the principles of accountability and transparency internally through members and partners, with better information sharing and enhanced participation in decision-making processes. One of its top priorities is to develop a systematic M&E system to track workflow and progress, allowing members and partners to be systematically informed of ANND's progress through clear and measurable indicators.

5. Integration

ANND's new strategy adheres to the policy of inclusion and non-discrimination at the level of gender, minorities, and persons with disabilities. This applies to participation in ANND's and the adopted issues. ANND will take the necessary positive measures to ensure a good representation of all groups and their specific issues. Similarly, it will work on approaching the environmental and cultural dimensions, not merely as a quantitative addition to the economic and social dimensions, but as



Guidelines

2. Strategic Goals

In the light of the above, ANND's strategy for the next four years requires careful formulation of what can be achieved and accomplished regarding issues, work methodologies, and institutional building. This new strategy may be a turning point in ANND's course of action. It can be described as a strategy for effectiveness, re-institutionalization, and continuity, in the sense of more realistic and measurable goals, an empowering institutional structure that integrates key actors, and the development of human and material resources for continuity.

Strategic Goal One.

Build a critical mass of development actors and partners in the Arab region to become effective in development policies at national levels, (including those related to economic and social rights, trade union and professional demands, and CSO involvement in influencing social and economic policies, women's empowerment, integrating PwDs, and defending minority rights), through influencing alternative policy proposals and raising awareness.

Specific Goals

Expect to see	Developing capacities of members and partners to engage in policy-making processes. Developing capacities of members and partners to influence policy-making processes in their countries, including post conflict and post war countries
Like to see	Members and partners create a common alternative narrative for development and reach out to policy makers for adopting it.
Love to see	Members and partners are engaging with policy makers in a constructive dialogue around alternative development policies, including in post conflict and post war countries.

Strategic Goal Two:

Community organizations are successfully influencing alternative regional and international development policies by working together and collaborating to put pressure on international and regional institutions.

Specific Goals

Expect to see	Members and partners are actively participating in the advocacy on international and regional institutions. Members and partners are engaging in dialogues with regional and international institutions around alternative development policies.
Like to see	Members and partners are using the tools and methods from the action plan in their interactions with World Bank, IMF, EU, EIB, and EBRD.
Love to see	The World Bank, IMF, EU, EIB, and EBRD representatives in the region are taking into consideration the opinion of ANND members in their recommendations to the governments in the region.

Strategic Goal Three:

ANND produces knowledge that proposes policy alternatives and serve tasks related to advocacy, awareness-raising, and communication with parties concerned with economic, social, and cultural policies in the Arab region.

Specific Goals

Expect to see	ANND is producing knowledge that is proposing alternative development policies. ANND members and partners, as well as extended development actors including CSOs, academia, media and trade unions in the Arab region have access to the knowledge produced by ANND.
Like to see	ANND members and partners, as well as extended development actors including CSOs, academia, media and trade unions in the Arab region are referring the knowledge produced in research and policy dialogues.
Love to see	Authorities and policy makers are taking into consideration the policy recommendation developed by ANND.

Strategic Goal Four:

ANND supports efforts to improve the civil society enabling environment in Arab countries through networking and providing channels for dialogue at the national, regional and international levels.

Specific Goals

Expect to see	Civil Society Organizations and interested parties are involved in developing a better understanding of the conditions of civic space in the Arab region and developing mechanisms to improve the civil society environment through participation in the communication and available channels. Civil Society Organizations and interested parties in the Arab region develop new knowledge and analysis (reports, summaries, etc.) on the status of civil space in the Arab countries.
Like to see	CSOs in the Arab countries are gathering and translating their efforts into common advocacy actions/initiatives on the regional and global level, in order to defend civic space
Love to see	Networking among CSOs is strengthened on the national and regional levels, and linked to the global level, represented in joint and coordinated actions.

Strategic Goal Five:

Develop ANND’s institutional capacity in coordination, communication, and sustainability

Specific Goals

Expect to see	Policies and tools are developed at the institutional level to promote knowledge and information production and sharing.
Like to see	ANND's members, partners and staff can exchange information, knowledge and experience systematically.
Love to see	The communication between Civil Society Organizations at the National, Regional as well Global levels is enhanced, through joint and coordinated actions.



Strategic Goals

3. Work Methodologies and Mechanisms

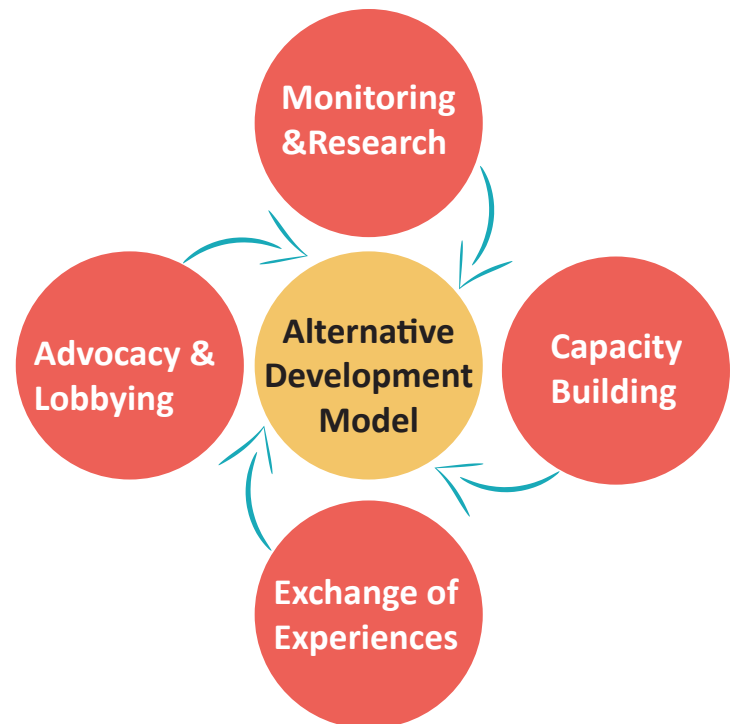
Through many years of action, ANND developed its work methodologies and mechanisms related to advocacy, monitoring, knowledge production, and capacity building. Its experience was formed within an interactive framework among members and partners, nationally, regionally, and globally, adding value to its work methodologies as they evolved in the context of addressing non-traditional issues and a diverse, plural, and changing reality. ANND always has sought to develop its methodologies and mechanisms to respond to diversity and pluralism and keep pace with changes. In general, its work methodologies are based on three interrelated components: advocacy, knowledge production, and capacity development, which are based on multiple mechanisms, such as campaigning, monitoring, research, development of training tools, training, networking, partnership building, and so on. Although ANND's strategy is based on the same methodological framework of implementing activities, these strategic guidelines aim to achieve more effectiveness, quality, and sustainability.

In advocacy, ANND will continue to invest its strengths in working internationally as a platform for the participation and representation of the Arab region's civil society in international tracks and fora. According to this strategy, more attention will be given to action on the national level, through national fora and local capacity building activities, as well as local initiatives to influence policy and raise the awareness of local actors.

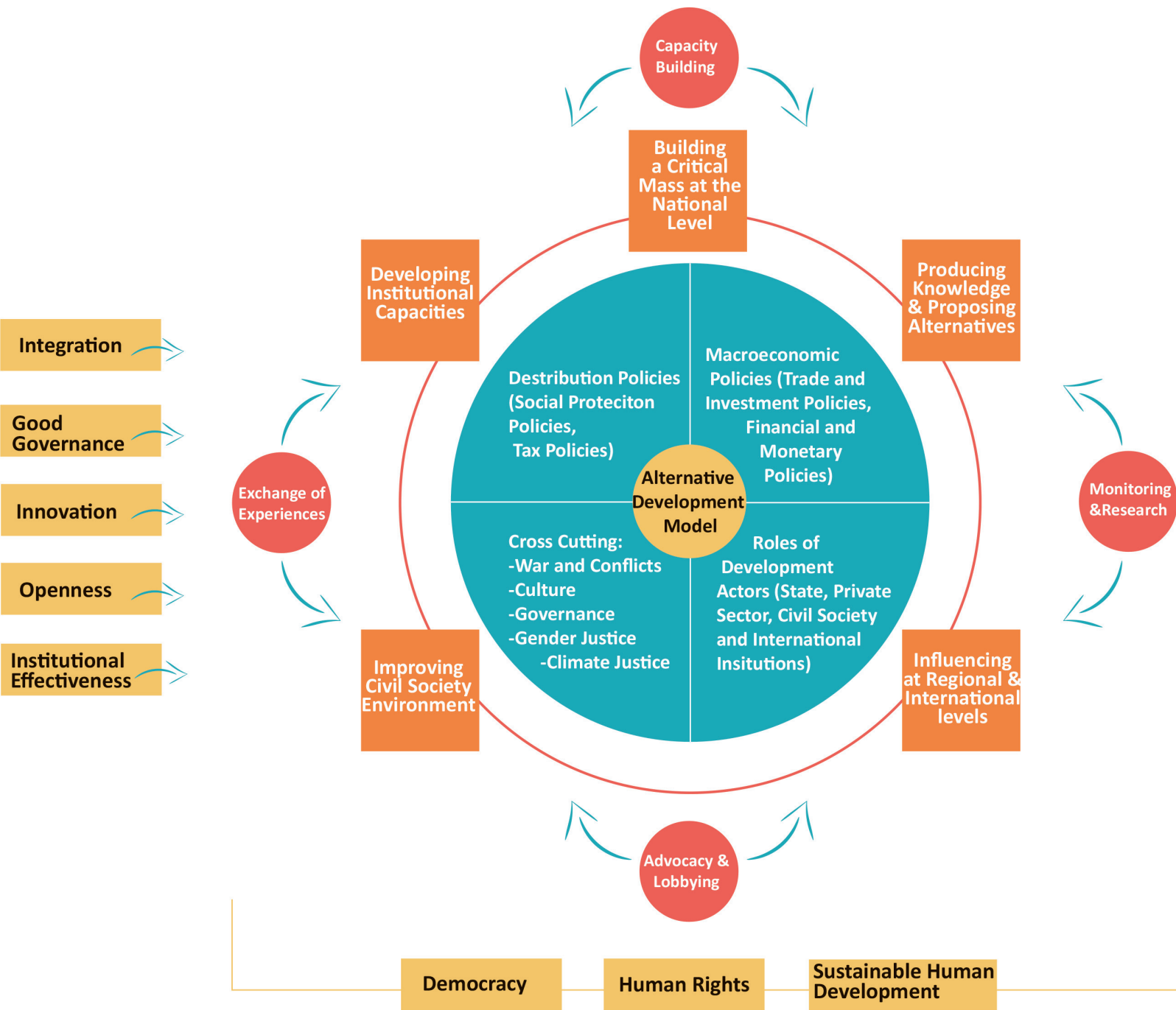
In building capacities, this strategy will adopt a methodology aiming to reorganize capacity building activities in a regional structure to provide a methodological and sustainable model concerning development policies, which will be an added value in the field of capacity development in the Arab Region. On the other hand, the new strategy aims at more effectiveness in local capacity development initiatives, through members and partners, as a systematic process characterized by centralized planning and follow-up and decentralized implementation.

In knowledge production, the new strategy aims to strengthen ANND's tangible role in this regard, through monitoring, research, and the formation of specialized research teams. In addition to linking knowledge production to advocacy activities, ANND aims to disseminate relevant knowledge to wider sectors of stakeholders. Thus, the

strategy includes the objective of establishing a digital library to make knowledge products available to the development policy community. According to the new strategy, ANND will address the cultural and environmental dimensions of development.



Work Methodologies and Mechanisms




Theory of change



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