

April 2024 Newsletter

Annual SESRI Conference

Short Summary about the Conference

The conference titled "Economic, Social, and Cultural Transformation for Sustainable Development," held on April 24-25, 2024, brought together experts, policymakers, academics, and practitioners to address various challenges in achieving sustainable development. Hosted by the Social and Economic



Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University, the event focused on integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across different sectors. Key themes included Education for Sustainable Development, Urbanization and Smart Cities, Sustainable Economy and Globalization, and Cultural Transformation. Discussions emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts, policy redesign, and innovative strategies to promote resilience, inclusivity, and a sustainable future for the Arab Region. A key highlight was the participation of Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and Regional Director of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the Arab States. In his opening remarks, Dr. Al Dardari emphasized the significant challenges facing sustainable development in the Arab world, including declining productivity, slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for greater gender inclusion in economics. He called for increased collaboration between academic and research institutions and the UN to improve productivity and achieve development goals in the region.



Summary about the Outcomes from the Conference

The International Conference on Economic, Social, and Cultural Transformation for Sustainable Development, held on April 24-25, 2024, provided critical insights into the sustainable development challenges and opportunities in the Arab World and MENA region. The discussions highlighted the persistent issue of declining productivity despite increased government and private expenditures, emphasizing the need for a reassessment of resource allocation. The conference underscored the importance of women's empowerment in education and leadership roles for economic growth and called for enhanced collaboration between academic and research institutions to develop AI-driven databases for informed policymaking. Additionally, the role of education was stressed as vital for preparing learners to navigate rapid global changes and technological advancements, with a specific focus on aligning educational systems with workforce needs and fostering a culture of continuous innovation. The concept of smart cities was explored as essential for sustainable urban development, necessitating a holistic approach that integrates technology and practical applications in urban planning. The conference also addressed the slow pace of economic diversification in the region, advocating for effective fiscal policies, strategic public investments, and intra-regional cooperation to drive structural transformation and economic growth. Lastly, the cultural transformation perspective highlighted the complex dynamics between urban development, cultural heritage preservation, and social sustainability, particularly in the context of Doha's evolution into a global city, calling for strategies to balance modernization with the preservation of cultural identity.

Below are the main findings from the conference whitepaper:

Education Transformation

- Emphasis on integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into all levels of education to ensure sustainable communities and future generations.
- The concept of "Communiversality," where community and university collaborate, is essential for achieving sustainable development and fostering mutual learning.
- Policy redesign is necessary to adapt education to technological shifts, focusing on curriculum and learning objectives.
- Higher education plays a pivotal role in societal sustainability, addressing challenges such as technology, workplace automation, mental health concerns, climate change, and political instability.

Smart Urbanization and Sustainable Cities

- Urban development strategies should prioritize human well-being and social cohesion over technological advancements.
- Effective governance, green infrastructure, and community engagement are key components.
- The balance between urban development and cultural preservation is critical, especially in rapidly modernizing cities like Doha.
- Smart cities need to integrate human development and capabilities over solely relying on AI and high technology.

Economic Diversification and Globalization

- Economic reforms are needed to address the slow pace of diversification by directing public investment toward structural transformation.
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in promoting economic diversification and ensuring fair social contracts between employers and employees.
- Public investment choices significantly influence the economic potential for diversification in the Arab Region.
- Reduction of carbon emissions across various sectors, such as oil and gas, power, and transportation, is central to Qatar's national sustainability strategy.

Cultural Transformation

- Practical strategies are needed to balance urban development needs with the preservation of cultural heritage.
- Effective public-private partnerships are essential to ensure a smooth transition in heritage conservation and address economic pressures and social inequalities.
- Encouraging holistic approaches to global citizenship education and integrating culture and heritage values into curricula to inspire tolerance and diversity.

Global Citizenship Transformation

- Collaborative efforts at different levels are needed to promote global citizenship.
- Education is a crucial entry point for contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Emphasizing the integration of culture and education to drive inclusive growth and social sustainability.

Overall Insights

- The interconnectedness of various sectors requires holistic approaches focusing on collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity.
- Redefining sustainable development concepts, reshaping education, revising economic priorities, and rethinking public investment and cultural preservation are essential.
- Coordinated stakeholder action is necessary to promote shared economic prosperity, environmental resilience, and social well-being across the region.
- Embracing innovation, collaborative partnerships, and human development is key to navigating the complexities of sustainable development and achieving a more just and sustainable future for the Arab Region.

Policy Department established New Desk: Policy Analysis and Strategic Insights Desk: AI and ML Driven Innovations

Policy Department has established a new Desk: Policy Analysis and Strategic Insights Desk: AI and ML Driven Innovations, lead by Dr. Hamad Al- Ibrahim. The desk is dedicated to harnessing artificial intelligence and machine learning to enhance policymaking with more precise and actionable insights. This initiative leverages SESRI's robust data capabilities and



Qatar University's research prowess allows it to develop tailored policy recommendations, thereby enhancing the decision-making process and responsiveness of policies to Qatar's dynamic needs.

Participating in the Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Conference with Two Papers

Prof. Arokiasamy had participated and presented two papers at the Population Association of America (PAA) annual conference on 16-20 April 2024 at Columbus, Ohio, USA. PAA 2024, entitled:

- 1) First paper: Urbanization and Sustainable Cities in the Gulf States in the Session: P05 - Neighborhoods, Environment, Spatial Demography, and Data and Methods.
- 2) Second paper: Gender, educational and subnational differences in cognition and contributing factors in India, Session: Flash: Cognitive Health and Dementia.



Dr. Hamad Al Ibrahim Joins SESRI Team

Dr. Hamad Al-Ibrahim has recently joined the policy department at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University. With a solid foundation in public policy analysis and a specialization in artificial intelligence applications in health, Dr. Al-Ibrahim brings extensive experience from his previous roles in various international organizations and research institutes. His work at the RAND Corporation as an Assistant Policy Researcher involved enhancing decision-making processes through the strategic integration of AI technologies, significantly improving organizational efficiency and policy effectiveness. He is also well-versed in the areas of healthcare, education, and national security through his analytical and research expertise. Dr. Al-Ibrahim holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy Analysis from the Pardee RAND Graduate School, an MD from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and an EMBA from HEC Paris.



Characterizing Multimorbidity Prevalence and Adverse Outcomes in Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Sub-Populations in India: Gaps, Opportunities, and Future Directions

Prof. Arokiasamy Perianayagam published a new research paper in collaboration with 7 fellow researchers. This study conducted a narrative review of studies on multimorbidity using the data from the Longitudinal Aging Study of India (LASI), the largest nationally representative longitudinal survey study of adults in India. The study findings, based on 15 reviewed studies, aimed to (1) characterize the definition and measurement of multimorbidity and ascertain its prevalence in ethnically and culturally diverse sub-populations in India; (2) identify adverse outcomes associated with multimorbidity in the Indian adult population; and (3) identify gaps, opportunities, and future directions.

For more details visit: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21030327>