

"Bottom of the pyramid" innovation and pro-poor growth (Making Innovation Policy Work: Learning from Experimentation)

Outside of China, despite rapid economic growth in many low- and middle-income countries, there has been relatively little progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG1) target of halving the incidence of global poverty by 2015. Part of the explanation for this has been the historic trajectory of innovation. During the 20th century, most global innovation had its origins in the north, producing products for high-income consumers, developing technologies that excluded poor producers and were energy-intensive and polluting. This innovation trajectory gave rise to the not-for-profit appropriate technology (AT) movement after the 1970s. But many of the technologies which it sought to diffuse were inefficient and scorned by both producers and consumers. However, a series of disruptive factors -the growth of low-income consumers during the global economic slowdown, the development of radical technologies (such as mobile telephony and renewable power), the development of capabilities in low-income economies and the emergence of new types of innovation actors- have begun to transform the AT's potential to support pro-poor growth. While the new AT movement will be largely market-driven (since it provides the potential for profitable production), important dimensions of this market-driven process can be supported by policy.

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Knowledge Type: [Thematic report](#) [1]

Other Tag: [energy](#) [2]

[base of the pyramid](#) [3]

[global value chains](#) [4]

[inequality](#) [5]

[product innovation](#) [6]

[diffusion](#) [7]

[value chains](#) [8]

[research policies](#) [9]

[middle income countries](#) [10]

Parent URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264185739-en> [11]

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Links

[1] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/knowledge-type/thematic-report-0>

[2] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/energy>

[3] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/base-pyramid>

[4] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/global-value-chains>

[5] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/inequality>

[6] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/product-innovation>

[7] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/diffusion>

[8] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/value-chains>

[9] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/research-policies>

[10] <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/topic/middle-income-countries>

[11] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264185739-en>