

# cities & citizens series

bridging the urban divide



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Study

## cairo a city in transition



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة



HABITAT  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

# cities & citizens series

bridging the urban divide

cairo

a city in transition

Image: Chris Horwood





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Cairo: A City in Transition

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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME  
P.O. Box 30030, GPO, Nairobi, 00100, Kenya  
Tel.: +254 (20) 762 3120,  
Fax: +254 (20) 762 4266/4267/4264/3477/4060  
E-mail: [infohabitat@unhabitat.org](mailto:infohabitat@unhabitat.org)  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

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All sections of this book were researched and written by Christopher Horwood, Consultant of MRD. Contributions to the Special Features are individually listed in relevant Special Features and include, Pierre-Arnaud Barthel (CEDEJ), Dr Hoda Rashad, Dr Zeinab Khadr, Dr. Dina K. Shehayeb, Mahmoud Abdel Halim Khaled (GTZ), Lise Debout(CEDEJ), Pierre-Arnaud Barthel (CEDEJ). Special interviews were conducted by Pascale Nader. Editorial support by Darcy Varney.

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# Table of Contents

Introduction: Understanding Urban Dynamics Inside Cities	
The <i>Cities and Citizens</i> Series: The need for intra-city analysis .....	xiii
Executive Summary .....	xvii
Part One: The Context .....	1
What is Cairo? .....	1
Rural vs. urban categorization: The definition debate.....	2
Urban planning and contemporary Cairo .....	3
Dynamics of urban growth .....	5
Housing markets in Egypt and Cairo .....	7
Desert conquests: New cities and settlements .....	9
Cairo’s informality.....	13
Characteristics of informal housing in Egypt .....	16
Globalization and the urbanization of inequality .....	24
How poor is Cairo?.....	26
Disputed poverty lines in Greater Cairo.....	29
Contextualizing the terminology and understanding definitions.....	31
The question of slums .....	33
Part Two: The survey findings.....	39
Introduction to the survey analysis.....	39
Characteristics of household members .....	40
Cairo’s urban density in households.....	44
Housing quality and housing durability in Cairo .....	47
Urban access to improved water.....	52
Sanitation in the city.....	55
How secure is urban tenure? .....	58
Municipal solid waste management.....	68
Educating Cairo.....	74
Transporting Cairenes.....	80
Employment and informality.....	88
Access to health .....	101
Expenditures and income in Cairo.....	108
Part Three: Policy discussion .....	127
Key features of Cairo’s urban development.....	127
Formal urban development .....	127
Informal urban development .....	127
Supply-side housing production.....	129

Changes in the rental law.....	131
Unified building law .....	133
Urban expansion and claiming the desert .....	134
Slum and informal areas upgrading or relocation.....	135
UN-HABITAT recommendations .....	140
Survey findings and concluding comments .....	142
Bibliography .....	174
Endnotes .....	177

## special features:

special feature 1	
voting with their hands: the historic dynamics of informality .....	146
special feature 2	
making a virtue of necessity: recycling solid waste by the poor, for the poor.....	150
special feature 3	
the new metropolitan strategy 'cairo 2050': whose vision? .....	152
special feature 4	
providing suitable housing for slum dwellers by 2017? ISDF .....	156
special feature 5	
new towns: taming the desert with nowhere else to grow .....	158
special feature 6	
historic cairo: obstacle to development or hubs of new energy? .....	160
special feature 7	
city of the dead: informality and myths amongst the tombs .....	162
special feature 8	
gendered burdens: women in the slum of Ain Es-Sira.....	164
special feature 9	
urban governance through participation: from rhetoric towards reality.....	166
special feature 10	
poor urban boys: their dilemma of school, or work .....	168
special feature 11	
public safety in cairo: perceptions of changing security.....	170
special feature 12	
Zeinhum: a model public-private partnership slum transformation.....	172

city voices:

city voices 1  
it's too imbalanced..... xxii

city voices 2  
those on top stay on top and the poor get poorer ..... 22

city voices 3  
my wife is the dearest thing to me in the world ..... 36

city voices 4  
staying in this neighbourhood is what angers me the most ..... 64

city voices 5  
life for most Egyptians has become just a story of problems ..... 70

city voices 6  
our country is the best country in the world ..... 84

city voices 7  
i will wait for marriage ..... 96

city voices 8  
it doesn't seem like the city can keep up ..... 98

city voices 9  
you will find young people ready to suffer or take the risks ..... 110

city voices 10  
there is a read need for mad optimism ..... 122

city voices 11  
life is like it has always been, there is no change ..... 125



## figures:

- figure 1: Distribution of households by their poverty level and type of *mantiq*
- figure 2: Distribution of households by their poverty level in low-quality *mantiq*
- figure 3: Age distribution of male household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 4: Age distribution of female household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 5: Residents' cooperation level in case of a utility problem by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 6: Residents' cooperation level in case of a major problem with one of the neighbourhood residents by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 7: Households with a density of at least 3 persons per room by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 8: Housing structure by the type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 9: Walls and ceiling structure of the housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 10: Bathroom ownership by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 11: Availability of kitchen in the household by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 12: Fresh water in the households by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 13: Fresh water cutoff by type of *mantiq*
- figure 14: Toilet in the household by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 15: Immediate water source next to the toilet by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 16: Ownership of the land on which residence is built by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 17: Documents for land ownership by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 18: Ways of acquiring the building by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (with or without contract)
- figure 19: Ways of acquiring the apartment by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 20: Sense of security of tenure amongst live-in homeowners by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 21: Duration of residence in the housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 22: Rent type for apartments by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 23: Feeling insecure in current rented accommodation by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 24: Disposing of rubbish by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 25: Perceived impact of fees on rubbish collection service by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 26: Accumulation of rubbish by type of *mantiq*
- figure 27: Frequency of street sweeping by type of *mantiq*
- figure 28: Adult (age 25–59) labour and work stability for household population by gender, type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 29: Youth (age 15–24) employment by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 30: Child (age 6–14) labour for household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 31: Unemployment among non-working adults (age 25–59) for household population by gender, type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 32: Older adult (age 60+) labour by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 33: What household members do when sick by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 34: Receiving governmental medical expenses exemption by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 35: Being sick within the last six months by age group and type of *mantiq*
- figure 36: Being sick within the last six months by age group, type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 37: Average number of sick household members by age group, type of *mantiq* and household poverty level

- figure 38: Having health insurance by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 39: Prevalence of psychological disorders by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 40: Sufficiency of income for food needs by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 41: Average per capita expenditure by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 42: Changes in income by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 43: Changes in household expenditures by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 44: Households' ability to raise 2,000 EGP within one week by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 45: Type of support received by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 46: Having and using governmental food card by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- figure 47: Residents' perceptions of the 'usefulness' of upgrading projects by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level

## tables:

- table 1: Population of governorates included (some only partially) in Greater Cairo in the 2006 census
- table 2: Official projections and statistics concerning the eight new cities around Cairo
- table 3: An estimate of the growth of slum [ic] populations in Greater Cairo between 1950 and 2000  
Growth of *ashwa'iyyat* in Greater Cairo, 1950–2000 (GTZ estimates)
- table 4: Conflicting population figures for one squatter settlement alone — Ezbet et Haggana (Haggana)
- table 5: Sleeping arrangements by type of *mantiq* and household property
- table 6: Housing structure by type of *mantiq* and household property
- table 7: Type of housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 8: Educational attainment for household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 9: Sufficiency of income for all educational expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 10: Longitudinal study results concerning rubbish collection in Old Cairo (low *mantiq*)
- table 11: Sufficiency of income for transport by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (per cent)
- table 12: Perception of transport availability by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 13: Use of transport modes by income and type of residence
- table 14: Extra-legal business activities in Cairo
- table 15: Sufficiency of income to cover medical expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 16: Egyptian urban household income and expenditure distribution by Decile 2004–2005 (LE per month, at the exchange rate of 5.33 EGP = US \$1)\*
- table 17: Sufficiency of income for all housing expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (2007)
- table 18: Comparison of average expenditures by households in different quintiles and different expenditure categories in urban Egypt
- table 19: Sources of income by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level
- table 20: Annual household income by quintile (LE)
- table 21: Annual household expenditure by quintile (LE)
- table 22: Perception of needed services for the neighbourhood by type of *mantiq*
- table 23: Summary of selected SRC/UN-HABITAT Cairo urban inequity differentials

## Foreword



Internal urban divisions continue to illustrate the same kinds of separations Plato observed centuries ago when he wrote in one of his *Dialogues*, 'any city, however small, is

*in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other the city of the rich.*' Today, high rates of urbanisation in Asia, Africa and Latin America accompanied by high levels of poverty and inequality are creating serious challenges for good governance and urban leadership.

We need to redouble our efforts to bridge these urban divides that are so damaging to people's welfare and that impair the possibility of achieving future sustainable cities. Urban inequality has a direct impact on all aspects of human development, including health, nutrition, gender equality, employment opportunity and education. In cities where spatial, economic and social divisions are deep, lack of resources and social mobility tends to reduce people's participation in the formal sector of the economy and their integration in society. Pro-poor social programmes, equitable distribution of public resources and balanced spatial and territorial development, particularly through planning

and investments in urban infrastructure and services, are among the most effective means for mitigating or reversing the negative consequences of urban inequality.

The Monitoring and Research Division in UN-HABITAT initiated the *Cities and Citizens* series to offer policy-makers and researchers a wealth of information about how poor and non-poor, slum-dwellers and non-slum urban residents are affected by urban-specific issues such as security of tenure, social capital, transportation, crime and violence, employment, the growth of informality, municipal management, housing rights, gender, and the like. This book on Cairo is the second analysis of this series. Not only does this book offer a detailed analysis of Cairo, but it also serves to continue a fundamental part of our agency's efforts to develop strategic partnerships with centres of excellence and research in different parts of the developing world.

*Cairo: A City in Transition* is being released soon after the popular uprising and subsequent political events that started in January 2011. In so far as the urban uprisings in Egypt and other countries of the Middle East are sparked by complaints of social hardship, inequality and poor urban management, the analysis in this publication and the *Cities and Citizens* series has direct relevance to today's political and social environment. Enlightened and committed political leadership, combined with effective urban planning, governance and management that promote equity and sustainability, are critical components of cities that meet the needs of all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan Clos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr Joan Clos  
Executive Director  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
(UN-HABITAT)



*Crowds of celebrating demonstrators on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2011, in front of the presidential palace in Heliopolis.*

*Image: Ashraf Refaat (used by kind permission)*

## Introduction

The *Cities and Citizens* series is a new outgrowth of the Monitoring of Urban Inequities Programme (MUIP), initiated by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory in 2004 to administer Urban Inequities Surveys, conduct intra-city data analysis and map the distribution of various housing and social indicators throughout urban areas. The MUIP helps increase the capacity of city stakeholders to develop policy analyses and implement multi-stakeholder programme frameworks focused on improving the lives of the urban poor. As the severity and nature of poverty are not static, robust city poverty profiles should serve as a dynamic starting point for a better understanding of poverty problems and appropriate responses.

With the *Cities and Citizens* series, MUIP introduces a new way to translate Urban Inequities Survey data into broadly accessible knowledge platforms, with the aim of impacting urban research and policy. This second *Cities and Citizens* book uses data, policy information, narrative stories and images from

Cairo, Egypt, to illustrate the complexity of that unique and diverse urban environment.

Drawing heavily on data developed by the Social Research Centre (SRC) of the American University in Cairo (AUC) in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, *Cairo: A City in Transition* shows that although the data used derives from studies and analysis during 2007 and 2008, the findings are still highly relevant today: in particular, those findings that illustrate the level of poverty and popular perceptions of lack of access to critical aspects of social and political capital. Events of early 2011 — where popular uprisings forced significant changes in the socio-political context — have undoubtedly initiated a new period of transition for Cairo and Egypt as a whole.

The urgency to better understand intra-city dynamics and the relative absence of disaggregated data provided the impetus for this new series. Cairo's pre-eminent position in the Middle East and North Africa makes this analysis and the current tumultuous events (driven by urban populations) in the region timely and relevant.

Oyebanji Oyeyinka  
Director, Monitoring and Research Division  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
(UN-HABITAT)



## Introduction

### Understanding Urban Dynamics Inside Cities

#### The *Cities and Citizens* Series: The need for intra-city analysis

The need for comprehensive, comparable and reliable information on cities and towns has long been recognized. However, it is clear that the collection and analysis of data at the city level must be augmented by disaggregated information at the intra-city level. Indeed, city-aggregated information often proves misleading. Aggregated data averages all urban households — rich and poor — to provide one single estimate of poverty, overlooking existing pockets of poverty in the city, and consequently underestimating the urban poor and the conditions in which they live.

A more qualitative analysis is also critical to contextualize our understanding of poverty, and wealth, from city to city.

Simply analyzing aggregated estimates of urban versus rural poverty, too, has masked the crisis that the urban poor and slum dwellers are facing. To improve the living conditions of the dispossessed, and indeed all urban citizens, local policymakers need to be informed about the consequences of vastly different living conditions experienced by slum dwellers, low-income households and others in the city. There is a need to assemble and disaggregate existing indicators to describe sub-city areas and design a database capable of maintaining and updating this information. Although the slum/non-slum urban divide is pivotal to UN-HABITAT's analysis, context is a prime factor that shapes the meaning of the data; in the context of Cairo, Egypt, definitions of slum, non-slum, formal and informal areas are central to policy discussions and have changed in recent years. Context is an important lens through which to correctly understand cities and the data relating to them. The *Cities and Citizens* series recognizes this and adapts its analysis accordingly. For example, in the analysis of La Paz in Bolivia the context is best divided between the indigenous and non-indigenous, poor and non-poor population. In this publication, the methodology primarily

examines the social differentials in Cairo between the wealthy and non-wealthy (poor/non-poor) in three groups of city neighbourhoods (low, medium and high quality, as defined in the methodology). There is no effort in this publication to map or quantify slums in Cairo — such work is already performed by government facilities and discussed in some detail in the book.

UN-HABITAT has monitored and reported on the progress of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda through its Urban Indicators Programme and its connections with local urban observatories in various cities around the world. Subsequent to the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, the agency also began reporting on Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11 (re-categorised in 2010 as Target 4) by designing a Monitoring of Urban Inequalities Programme (MUIP) and a global monitoring strategy that includes slum indicators. The objective of the MUIP is to enhance evidence-based formulation of urban development policies by systematically disaggregating data between urban areas and poor and non-poor urban areas, gathered through the implementation of Urban Inequality Surveys.

As part of these efforts, UN-HABITAT has launched the *Cities and Citizens* series, which aims to illustrate the situation of poor populations in specific cities, vis-à-vis their health, well-being, education, employment and housing conditions, as compared to those who live in planned urban areas in the same cities. The *Cities and Citizens* series recognizes the urgent need for better data at the district, municipality and household levels in urban areas: the levels at which urban problems can be solved. In the case of Egypt, the centralization of local administration means many problems can only be solved at the governorate level. Nevertheless, it is clear that analysis of data at the intra-city level is fundamental to local policy development. Without meaningful urban data — qualitative and quantitative — policymakers are rendered incapable of tackling persistent problems in their cities.

*This image has been reproduced by kind permission of Google Earth. Image©2011 GeoEye.*

*For all Google Earth images in this publication the image date is between 2009-2010*

By assembling and disaggregating existing indicators to describe sub-city areas, and by designing a database capable of maintaining and updating this information in a select number of cities, the *Cities and Citizens* series aims to create a different framework of analysis for urban policy to produce better information that can assist cities to become more liveable places, where citizens enjoy better health, better education, better livelihoods, better transportation, better access to infrastructure and basic services, and better environments — in short, a higher standing on a majority of MDG indicators, in a more equitable city setting. In the long run, the publications in UN-HABITAT's *Cities and Citizens* series aim to develop capacity among multiple local, national and international stakeholders on holding policy analysis in favour of all disadvantaged and marginalized groups, particularly the urban poor.

This publication is the second in the UN-HABITAT *Cities and Citizens* series. It discusses a wide range of disparities and urban inequalities evident in Cairo Governorate using data developed by UN-HABITAT through collaboration with the Social Research Center of Cairo's American University in Cairo (SRC) in 2007, as well as data and commentary from a range of government and non-government sources.

### The SRC/UN-HABITAT Methodology

Recognizing the multidimensional nature of urban poverty in Cairo and the heterogeneity of many districts where poor and non-poor people live in close proximity, the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo (SRC) developed an innovative Area-based Physical Deprivation Index (APDI). Using GIS methodology, the population was separated for detailed intra-city analysis focusing on urban inequality and relative deprivation. By no means should this survey be confused with a measurement of 'slums' or a slum analysis of Cairo city. This survey and the subsequent narrative following this introduction make no attempt to divide the city between slum and non-slum.

The survey covered Cairo Governorate in 2007, including what is now the city of Cairo plus Helwan Governorates. The survey is therefore not representative of Greater Cairo, but of about 40 to 60 per cent of its population, depending on the Greater Cairo Region definition used. The first stage was to spatially classify areas for analysis: using a wide range of factors and a weighted system of scoring, SRC analyzed neighbourhood characteristics to develop community profiles based on levels of physical deprivation. The *shiakhas* of Cairo governorate (the administrative units within the governorate) were divided into small urban areas of an average size 0.5 Km<sup>2</sup> (referred to as *mantiq*). Using GIS maps and analyzing land use and physical features of the *mantiq*, an index of physical deprivation was calculated. The main categories that formed the physical deprivation index were:

- **Physical characteristics** of the area (including assessments of the proportion of the area used for buildings, gardens, roads, alleys, agriculture, cemeteries, and the like);
- **Sources of Pollution** ( the number of factories, workshops and storage facilities as well as details of environmental and sanitation services);
- **Services** (the number of government offices, banks, hospitals, hotels, bakeries, schools, entertainment sites and sports facilities, and the like);
- **Security** (the number of embassies, police offices and military sites in the area).

The survey areas were analyzed from a 'block' perspective instead of the smaller, more closely identified 'plot' perspective that defines the specific use of every layer in every structure. This first stage allowed the classification of all *mantiq* in Cairo governorate into three clusters according to their levels of physical deprivation (low, medium and high). Reliability tests of the index revealed strong and significant internal coherence in which each constituent item of the index significantly differentiated among the three clusters. The index was also validated through field visits to one-third of the *mantiq* in Cairo governorates.

The second stage was to randomly select a stratified sample of 4,000 households representing the three clusters of *mantiq* in Cairo governorate. Researchers visited the participating households to administer an extensive face-to-face questionnaire between June and July 2007. A wealth index of household possessions to distinguish poor from non-poor in the three clusters of *mantiq* was developed. A median line was established based on the ownership of a number of household non-consumable goods, above which households were considered non-poor and below which they were treated as poor.

Given the different types of residential areas in Cairo, the households randomly selected for the survey were found to include households living in former agricultural areas that are now informal settlements, desert areas of new habitation by squatters, and core historic areas of downtown and cemeteries, where for particular historic and social reasons some residents live. The survey data were processed using the SPSS statistical package and the resultant findings are predominantly revealed in Part Two of this publication, while Parts One and Three offer critical context and relevance to the data. The key statistical significance or

strength of this methodology was shown to be high. While enabling the study to offer a clear analysis of relative differences through the differentials presented (in Part 2 of this book), this methodology does not attempt to offer absolute measurements of deprivation. Instead, it provides a comparison of the different *mantiq* and socioeconomic groups for the purpose of understanding the specific context. As such, the survey conforms to the UN-HABITAT's stated effort to offer intracity information on urban inequality and the urban divide rather than performing a deprivation analysis of poverty *per se*.

The Urban Inequality Survey was funded by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Monitoring Systems Branch (MSB) and was carried out by the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo in collaboration with the Cabinet, Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) in Egypt.

**Tables:** In certain tables, the use of the asterisk denotes the conventional statistical expression when findings are significant: †significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

### AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO: Social Research Center

Social Research Center (SRC) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) was established in 1953 to conduct and encourage multidisciplinary social science research in Egypt and Arab region, train researchers, guide and assist graduate students, scholars and organizations engaged in social science research in the region. SRC is a non-profit cost recovery center that raises external grants to conduct multidisciplinary research endeavors. The SRC cooperates with agencies of the Egyptian Government as well as with universities and research institutes in Egypt and abroad.

The Center's research program is multidisciplinary and combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to inquiry. Emphasis in the Center's substantive program is on health and gender and poverty and their policy implications, social problems, social change, and development. The Center aims to contribute to developing skills and building institutional capabilities in the region as well as to advancing public debate about priority social issues.

For more information please refer to SRC website at: <http://www.aucegypt.edu/src>





## Executive summary

This book discusses household conditions in Cairo within the socio-economic and policy context of the city. It uses the extensive results of the Social Research Center/UN-HABITAT household survey based on an innovative Area-Based Physical Deprivation Index (APDI) developed for the survey. The results and findings in Part Two offer a close examination of multiple differentials among social groups, by location and by wealth, within the city, but the city itself cannot be defined by these results. Contextualising the findings occurs throughout the book, but Parts One and Three specifically examine the wider environment and policy context of the city, and are offered as essential additional analysis to help readers make sense of and situate the survey results. In Part Three, key features of Cairo's urban development in recent years are outlined, followed by a presentation of issues that characterise policy imperatives and implications for the urban environment. This section also offers policy recommendations based on the findings of this and other urban analyses. Finally, the book ends with concluding comments relating to the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey and wider UN-HABITAT recommendations.

This book was prepared during the second half of 2010 and describes the metropolis and its citizenry at what transpired to be the final months of 30 years of rule by a regime that was both authoritarian and restrictive of democratic principles of representation and/or participation. The title for the book – Cairo: A city in transition - was chosen some months before the sudden events of the 'revolution' of late January / February 2011, but in light of the continuing changes as the country embarks on new reform agenda, the title seems more appropriate than ever. The findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey and the analysis of this book are likely to be relevant for the foreseeable future in so far that the living conditions of modern Cairo have developed over decades, and that time will be needed for political and economic reforms to significantly change the current conditions.

### The special context of Cairo

In the jargon of modern urban observers, Cairo is the quintessential 'megacity' undergoing the trying experience of 'hyper-urbanization'. The population of Greater Cairo has grown from 4 to almost 18 million in less than 50 years, but it is still made up of traditional, socially vital neighbourhoods. Projections indicate that by 2025, Cairo will be one of the 13 most populous cities of the world.<sup>1</sup> A reporter recently commented, 'Travelling into Cairo, Egypt's monster-sized but curiously intimate capital, it is hard to tell if these are the best of times or the worst'.<sup>2</sup> Without a doubt, Cairo is a city in transition.

Cairo maintains a superior position in the minds of millions of Egyptians as the soul and beating heart of their nation. Non-Egyptians and nationals alike continue to praise Cairo as the pre-eminent centre of culture, heritage, education, economy and style in the Arab world. Its status is iconic in the region and throughout the world. To some social commentators, the city has also come to symbolize urban chaos, epitomized by areas of deprivation, rising crime, pollution, noise and congestion. In recent years, these themes have been debated in the media as people wonder how Cairo can bear the weight of so many people and vehicles, with evident poverty and what some regard as an archaic, convoluted urban management apparatus as part of a corrupt and unrepresentative regime. Perhaps the events of January / February 2011, with large scale demonstrations in Cairo and other cities that resulted in a dramatic change in the regime is evidence that the weight became too much for many people. However, today's Cairo is, inevitably, a complex result of different urban patterns layered on deliberately or haphazardly throughout its history of successive Islamic empires, colonial influence and westernisation, complicated further by shifts in policy and governance and burgeoning informal areas.

This book defines the informal area concept in Cairo and details how informal areas are



*An aspirational billboard in New Cairo*  
Image: Chris Horwood

home to between 8 and 10 million Cairenes who live and thrive, often in difficult but 'adequate' conditions (by international standards), in over 140 square kilometres around the city. In Egypt as a whole, between the years 1986 and 1996, 45 per cent of new housing units constructed were private and informal, while 28 per cent were state-built and 27 per cent were private and formal. Meanwhile, the structures of Cairo's glorious past have either become shabby or overshadowed by unregulated clusters of high-rise offices and residential blocks, while at the same time bold new structures are being built and bold new urban visions are being formed. Historic Cairo with the pyramids of Giza — one of the region's most lucrative and enduring assets — may even be transformed by the visionary mega-project plans of 'Cairo 2050'. These plans, along with the long-standing development of the new cities in the desert around Cairo, are the most ambitious efforts of any city in the Middle East to transform itself into a sustainable 'Global City' while meeting the many challenges of its growing population.

Successful economic growth, born out of financial reform, deregulation, privatization and considerable state intervention that have led the country toward more market-oriented economics, now finances new projects and new lifestyles in Cairo. Urban developments in the desert are becoming the new centres of city life; scores of new cities have grown up in the desert throughout Egypt and eight large new agglomerations already push the boundaries of Greater Cairo, and will continue to do so in coming years. Spaciously

planned and well-provisioned, these new developments are intended to satisfy the housing needs of the projected population in coming decades. This book will show how the developments planned to the year 2027 are expected to accommodate almost 15 million people, representing 65 per cent of Cairo's projected population of 24 million at that time. Approximately 1,000 square kilometres of public land will be developed for private purchase in eight new urban communities around Cairo over the next 15 years. To visualize the scale, the built-up areas in which Greater Cairo is currently situated comprise 600 to 700 square kilometres and house up to 15 million people.

Some areas of the new cities are also fast becoming the aspirational future face of residential Cairo — the places young Egyptian urbanites want to be. Some argue that such aspirations are unrealistic, however, since the newly designed settlements depend heavily on car ownership and do not support the daily living patterns of the majority of urban residents, who seek refuge in informal expansions of the city. In recognition of these shortcomings, the government now plans to increase the 'liveability' of the new cities by providing multiple affordable transport options.

Nevertheless, the growth of real estate as a sector for wealth accumulation is seen as significantly shaping the city. Billboards on Cairo's overpasses that slice through middle-class neighbourhoods and dilapidated core areas of the city offer tantalizing glimpses of the desert's new gated communities and

luxury apartments. Despite Egypt's impressive annual GDP growth, however, commentators have long- questioned the extent to which the poor are benefiting from the newly generated wealth and the government's redistribution mechanisms, asking who will really get to thrive in the attractive new desert developments?

Greater Cairo is home to almost 25 per cent of all Egyptians. The majority of the nation's commerce is generated in the city, or passes through it. The great majority of publishing houses and media outlets and nearly all film studios are based in Cairo, as are half of the nation's hospital beds and universities. This has fuelled rapid construction in the city — one building in five is less than 15 years old. Cairo's economy has traditionally been based on governmental institutions and services, commerce, trade and industrial production and is currently in a state of transition. The modern productive sector has expanded dramatically since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1952 revolution, large-scale industrialization has built upon previous developments in textiles and food processing, as well as the processing of sugarcane. In addition to the production of iron, steel and consumer goods, Egypt's main exports consist of natural gas and products such as ready-made clothes, cotton textiles, medical and petrochemical products, citrus fruits, rice and dried onion. Egypt's main imports consist of pharmaceuticals and products such as wheat, maize, cars and car spare parts. In the Arab world, Egypt has the largest non-oil GDP as of 2005.

This book shows that beyond urban planning and economic changes, the social indicators of Egyptians as a whole have never been better: the Gini coefficients for Egypt and Cairo remain low and declining — around 0.34 today, down from 0.39 in 19973 — suggesting good wealth distribution, and Egypt is moving forcefully to reach the targets of the Millennium Development Goals before 2015. For example, using UN-HABITAT's shelter deprivation analysis, Egypt as a whole has progressed from having 50 per cent of its population (representing over 12 million people) living in 'slum areas' in 1990 to just 17.1 per cent in 2007. Of this 17.1 percent (represent-

ing 5.5 million people), the majority (14.9 per cent) live with just one shelter deprivation — meaning they may lack clean water, durable housing, improved sanitation, sufficient living space or secure tenure as per UN-HABITAT's international criteria.<sup>4</sup> While millions have been 'lifted' out of poverty and deprivation in this way, statistics concerning water access and improved sanitation, for example, are also impressive. These are discussed, with other sections on different living conditions, in Part Two of this book.

Nevertheless a vast majority of Egyptians, and millions in Cairo, consider the growth and wealth evident around them to have passed them by. With ubiquitous rising commodity prices and stagnant or slow-increases in wages, poverty, unemployment and the difficulty of survival in modern Egypt were major complaints of the popular uprisings of January / February 2011.

### The importance of informality

Informality has been a significant phenomenon in all Egyptian cities, but is most evident in Cairo. The data and discussion in this book show that in modern Cairo 'informalization', while directly linked to economic, political and legal factors, is not synonymous with slum development. Some analysts argue that the city has survived and continues to thrive, *despite*, as much as *because of*, government policy and management. According to a new book on the city, much of the success of Cairo and the ability of vast numbers of new Cairenes to cope with limited essential services and resources must be attributed to the people themselves.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the millions living in the informal city have created for themselves an independent world of shelter, work, subsistence and community, in a context of limited government assistance, and beyond the significant pro-poor subsidization schemes. Meanwhile, the state continues to try to catch up with the informal communities by building schools and clinics, and providing infrastructure, policing, waste management and financial and economic facilities.

This book looks at the characteristics and typology of informal in contrast to formal hous-

ing and more specifically the poor and non-poor, while also charting the fast growth of informal settlements. It finds that in the year 2000, informal settlements were estimated to cover 105.<sup>5</sup> square kilometres in Greater Cairo.<sup>6</sup> The growth of *ashwai'yyat* (random or informal areas) is outpacing the growth of formal areas of Cairo. A recent study established that in 2006, informal settlements were growing at an average of 2.57 per cent per year, while formal Cairo was growing at 0.4 per cent per year.<sup>7</sup> Far from being a marginal or peripheral phenomenon, the 65 per cent of Cairenes who live in informal areas could be said to comprise the *real* city.

In his new book, *Understanding Cairo: The logic of a city out of control*, author David Sims suggests that Cairo displays a new form of urbanization — one in which informal city-building should be seen as normative.<sup>8</sup> In Cairo's context, the authorities are following and reinforcing spontaneous, uncontrolled urban growth in the informal areas through a 'post-facto municipal service extension' that can be seen, Sims argues, as efficient and logical. There is a logic to the city that seems 'out of control'; to all intents and purposes Cairo today, dominated as it is by informality, should be regarded as 'a kind of success story'.<sup>9</sup> The book finds, too, that the key to understanding Cairo today is looking at the city through a lens of informality.

The objective of UN-HABITAT's *Cities and Citizens* series is to examine urban equity and deprivation. It is important, as Sims argues, to analyse deprivation by comparing the city's informal and formal areas. The title of this book, *Cairo: A city in transition*, seeks to express a sense that Cairo is facing serious transformations on its way to modernity. In a city where most of the population clusters around the national poverty line, the issues of resource distribution and equity cannot be avoided. The importance of 'informality' versus formality in understanding Cairo is central to this analysis: irrespective of the illegality of informal settlements from the urban planning perspective, it is clear that deprivation in the city coincides in many cases with informal settlements. Whether exposed as a prevalence of shelter deprivations, at-risk structures, ex-

tremely low-income households or shortages of government services and facilities, these conditions are found in informal settlements more than anywhere else in today's Cairo.

### The survey results

In the context of Cairo, slums and informal settlements are distinct (although sometimes geographically overlapping) phenomena.

The main results of the Social Research Center/UN-HABITAT household survey that underpins the analysis in Part Two of this book show that access to resources and services is clearly predicated on wealth and location. Evidence-based survey analysis illustrates a clear gradient of living conditions from the wealthy to the poor as defined by spatial differences, neighbourhoods and divisions within those neighbourhoods: the poor in what have been classified as low-quality areas of the city consistently bear far greater burdens in their struggle to survive, thrive and advance.

However, in some areas, and with respect to specific differentials, poor and non-poor households show very slight differences. In terms of bridging the urban divide, the differences between poor and non-poor Cairo may therefore sometimes appear narrow, but the difference in terms of dealing with absolutes and relative values is important here.

Further comparative analysis with other African or Middle Eastern countries may shed more light on Cairo's progress or failure with regard to delivering welfare and opportunity to its citizens from a global and regional perspective. Indeed, the wealth index used in the sampling separation methodology in the SRC/UN HABITAT survey is indicative of the relative asset-wealth of Cairenes: the majority of households surveyed own a wide range of 'white' goods (refrigerators, cookers, fans, air conditioners, water heaters, colour televisions, satellite dishes, washing machines, and the like). A similar analysis of households in Nairobi, Khartoum or Lagos would reveal lower levels of ownership of such goods among the poor (as defined in those cities), leading some to argue that while many Cairenes are income-poor, they are asset-rich. For example,

Cairenes live with fewer shelter deprivations than people in any sub-Saharan African city.

The results of the survey also indicate that the vast majority of Cairenes live in durable homes (mostly apartments) and enjoy access to clean water and improved household sanitation. Irrespective of their legal status in relation to their residences, Cairenes exhibit a strong sense of security of tenure. However, in terms of having income sufficiency to meet the critical areas of medical costs, educational expenses and transport, the gradient between the poor and non-poor is stark with evidence of continual struggle by the poor in all *mantiq* (small urban areas or neighbourhoods) to meet minimal expenses. Nevertheless, many of the non-poor surveyed in all areas also expressed an insufficiency of income to meet essential needs, and across all groups the average amount spent on food was 50 percent of household income, while for housing it was around 11 percent.<sup>10</sup> Unlike reports concerning employment, which show high levels of mostly informal employment among the poor, the education profile of the different groups in different areas suggests a strong correlation between poverty, or deprivation, and educational attainment.

Concerning education, for example, the findings of the 2006 national census indicate that among the population aged 6 to 18 years throughout Egypt, 10 per cent (around 2.1 million) have never attended school and 4 per cent (around 0.9 million) attended but then dropped out of schooling (considering that compulsory education is from 6 to 15 years only). The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey indicates that as many as 20.4 per cent of poor household members of all age groups in Cairo have never been to school, while only 4.8 per cent of the non-poor have never been to school. The wealth elasticity of educational attainment appears high despite the government's high-level investment in universal education. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey shows that in non-poor groups in high-quality areas, males are seven times as likely to have received a university education (or more) than poor residents in low *mantiq*. Meanwhile, females in high-quality areas from non-poor families are nine times more likely to have received a uni-

versity education (or more) than poor females in low-quality areas.

A surprising finding which will appear in almost every section analysed is the status of the poor living in high-quality *mantiq* in the city. In many cases, as the data illustrates repeatedly, they are more disadvantaged than the poor living in low-quality *mantiq*, due in part to the renting of single room roof units in older areas. The discussion of poverty in Cairo, poverty lines, informality and urban dynamics as laid out in Part One of this book is critical to the contextualization of the urban inequality debate in Cairo. Increasingly, a multidimensional research methodology is recognized as a superior tool for understanding poverty. The apparent under-reporting, under-estimating and under-sampling of large groups of poor in Cairo distorts findings and the subsequent policy debate and reforms.

The astonishing population growth has surged well ahead of city services and yet millions of Cairenes still survive and share the ancient city that feels as if it is bursting at the seams. In fact, its seams have burst, with glittering new cities rising in the desert and poorer informal concentrations clustering at the edges of the formal urban areas. The rising generation of Cairenes is better educated, more highly urbanized and far more exposed to the outside world than its forbears, and Cairo's youth are starting to demand modern changes to their system of governance and a more equal stake in their city's future as they grow into leadership. The events of January / February 2011 created the first quantum leap in the move away from an inflexible and elitist regime that endured for three decades. It remains to be seen if the 'revolution' that the youth of Cairo, Alexandria and Suez initiated will give rise to increased equity, better living conditions as well as greater respect for human rights, political participation and freedom. Either way, Cairo is being driven to change, to modernize and to transform itself into a sustainable city capable of servicing and accommodating additional millions in the coming decades. To do so while ameliorating the contrast between rising aspirations and enduring hardships will require urgent change and new democratic processes.

## 'it's too imbalanced'

*Adam Molyneux-Berry, interviewed 4 August 2010, is a young Egyptian-English businessman and musician who runs a family business in the interiors industry.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

I'm 32 years old, moved back to Cairo this year. Just moved to Dokki, where I live alone in an apartment; it's a five-minute drive from the office. I went to university and worked here for quite a few years, then I had enough basically, went to the UK, to Japan for three years and came back here now. I do see myself being here in the future for sure. Egypt is a really good place for entrepreneurs, people that want to make a difference, because you can make a small difference and see it happen.

### Changes and challenges in the city

There are positive changes in Cairo over the last five years, for example there were no clothing shops in Cairo before. It was impossible to buy clothes, it was very difficult to find and purchase a lot of things. There were traffic jams but nowhere near the amount of cars around today, I mean

I get stuck in traffic at 2 a.m. here! But something I really love about Cairo is that it never sleeps, and even more so today. I have never seen anywhere else in the world where it is alive 24 hours a day.

There is a lot more religion today than before I left. It can be a good thing as well as negative, and it's sort of a subject of endless debates amongst friends. Another positive thing is that businesses are more professional now. Customer service is better, for example, and as a result I'm willing to spend a lot more money now and happy to do that; staff look more presentable and clean and they know what they are talking about more now.

There is probably a much bigger middle class now than there used to be. Goodness, the amount of hotels going up in Cairo now — there's a lot of Arab and European money coming in now and a lot of development. Even in the free zones there are a lot more factories coming up for



production, but for export, not local consumption. For example, IKEA is here, making their products for export, so in that respect it is all getting bigger and better. In our interior design business, our customers are more aware of the brands that we carry now — there's a much greater awareness of international brands.

Cairo is really expanding fast. City expansion is of course a positive thing, but Katameya [a New Cairo compound], for example, is showing such extravagance in front of so many poor people I don't think it is that great — it's too imbalanced. For me, personally, I prefer older parts of Cairo and open communities. Like, I love Zamalek, Maadi for example — they are more in-tune with our culture. I love being able to leave the house and have bustling streets and people all around, typical urban life, action things to do, cafes, things like that, and more cultural places, like in Zamalek you have the opera house, galleries. Whereas in these new gated compounds, it's just you and your wider circle of friends, or expats; it is a bubble, definitely not real.

There are a lot of positive things happening but also a lot of terrible things — traffic, increased numbers of cars. I understand Cairo is one of, if not the most, polluted cities in the world now. Cairo is almost as expensive as London now in property prices, but in many ways the property is in way worse condition. The infrastructure is terrible still, there are no pavements for pedestrians and that's getting worse because what pavements there are, are being turned into car-parking spaces.

It is so very frustrating to be in a country where we've got amazing natural resources and really bright people and we have gone nowhere. Look at these cars, designed and manufactured in India being sold in Egypt! It just seems to me that the mentality today is just about cutting corners and not investing in local talent or industry and that is totally a reflection of a lot of waste happening.

The people are there, the money is there, even education is there — all of our brain power is outside Egypt, it's all in the US, all in the UK, in Europe, even in Japan. I met a lot of very successful Egyptians in Japan, but they just know that they are not going to make it here and so they go abroad and stay there.

### **“The city has been torn in half”: Inequality and social dynamics**

The inequalities in our society are shocking. The living conditions here are shocking: people literally living in sewers and children swimming in waters that have so many parasites, which is not fit or healthy at all. And, yes, it affects everyone. I tend to think about it abstractly, but if everyone is struggling and poor then basically all the people that are working in our company are going to also be coming from that poor background, and the standard of service I can offer is going to be affected, it affects business. We really need to raise the bottom up instead so that everybody is operating at a similar level so the country can move forward.

That is all on an academic level. Speaking from a human level, I find it ridiculous that a lot of the people I know go out to bars and spend EGP 4,000 [US \$700] per person a night and literally to your left and right is a guy on a donkey cart because he can't afford a car. I am too Western to look at things like that and be alright about it.

The differences and gaps between people are too massive. And it's not about education — there are quite a few people who are very wealthy in Cairo who are to my mind largely uneducated. Education is not about literacy. There are things money cannot buy; if you are going to act like an animal with people who have less money than you, then you are literally the one who is an animal as far as I'm concerned. Living in Cairo is a survivalist lifestyle now, just make it through the day, especially for the poor.

I have a friend who works in promoting human rights, and she tells me that 70 per cent of poor people's income is spent on medical bills, so they are working in a year up until July just purely to pay for medical bills! And then from August to September, they work to make just enough for food and clothing, mobile phone — it is crazy. Just basic survival.

I think the city has been torn in half. There is a middle class that is up and coming and literally rocketing ahead, working with banks, multinational companies, telecom companies. And then you've got a very dangerous social aspect, which is money coming into poor areas from Arab countries that are religious fundamentalist, like Saudi Arabia or Iran giving the poor who have nothing an education, clean water and their version of religion. When you listen to what preachers say during Friday sermons it is seriously scary and has nothing to do with religion. They say things like Westerners are evil, modernity is evil.

I just think that the only thing that really saves Egypt is the people: the fact that they are willing to take all this absurdity they see with a pinch of salt and continue on. It is the only thing that keeps the country going. And hopefully, they will keep it going until the younger generation start to wise up. But we are not going to get anywhere until we fix the education and value system; the graduates we see here in our company tend to be from architectural school, they tend to be spoilt and don't want to get their hands dirty. They have fantastical expectations, living in a fantasy world of what is owed to them.

What I've been talking about is Cairo and that is not all of Egypt. People outside Cairo are cleaner, happier, the culture is totally different. Being so centralized, Cairo has the jobs and is where people need to be but it is not representative of our nation. I love the country, the different types of desert, the natural aspects, the people are so lovely. In the city, you just forget that people can be nice, that there can be more space between people; every weekend, religiously, we drive out of the city to oases, the desert, anywhere that is not Cairo, basically.





## Part One: The context

### What is Cairo?

Greater Cairo today is divided among five administrative areas or governorates, which comprise all of Cairo governorate and parts of four others: Giza, Qalyoubia and, as of May 2008, Sixth of October and Helwan (both suburbs of Greater Cairo city which became two newly independent governorates). With the last census data recorded in 2006, it is important to understand that the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) classifications of urban parts of Greater Cairo (also known as the Greater Cairo Metropolitan Area, or GCMA) correspond to the main metropolitan agglomerations of:

- Cairo governorate, located on the east bank of the Nile, extending south to Helwan, north to Shubra, and North East to Heliopolis and Nasr City;
- Giza City, the district on the west bank of the Nile, effectively part of the city, developed at high density (including intensive office and residential development);
- and Shubra al-Khayma City (as part of Qaliubiya Governorate), a district north of the city, located in the adjoining governorate, but still close by.

Peri-urban Greater Cairo refers to nine predominantly urban administrative districts

(*marakaz*) in Giza and Qaliubiya governorates (but rural in classification), while Greater Cairo’s deserts include the eight new urban developments known as the new cities.<sup>11</sup> In addition, these new cities fall under the independent authority of the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA), and to date none has been handed over to governorate control, even though they fall inside different governorate boundaries.

Greater Cairo has unclear, ever-changing boundaries that give rise to inevitable disputes and confusion not only in terms of statistical analysis, but also around issues of jurisdiction. Greater Cairo is rarely handled as a whole city. There is no administrative body in charge of Greater Cairo, and each governorate has its own administrative structure. The totality of Greater Cairo is a combination of Greater Cairo (as described above), the peri-urban areas and the new cities of the desert.

Depending on the boundaries chosen, population figures for Greater Cairo range from 12.5 million to 18 million. The official CAPMAS census data (Table 1) provides the populations of the governorates of Greater Cairo. The total urban population in the five governorates is 13,497,480, with the city of Cairo comprising the majority.

**Table 1: Population of governorates included (some only partially) in Greater Cairo in the 2006 census**

Governorates	Urban	Rural	Total
Cairo	6,758,581	0	6,758,581
Giza	2,891,275	252,211	3,143,486
Qalyoubia	1,899,354	2,352,318	4,251,672
Helwan	1,202,395	510,833	1,713,278
Sixth October	745,875	1,835,184	2,581,059
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13,497,480</b>	<b>4,950,546</b>	<b>18,448,076</b>

Source: IIED 2009.



*An image of the nation's leader for three decades stands on the banks of one of the few small islands – that are still farmed – situated in the Nile in central Cairo.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

## Rural vs. urban categorization: The definition debate

Just as debates about definitions hamper the analysis of urban poverty, slums and informality, so too do they impact the analysis of urban versus rural growth. The primary issue is the official definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' used in Egypt.

The official census definition of urban areas in Egypt is administrative. Urban areas are either:

- (1) urban governorates — limited to Cairo, Port Said, Suez and, until recently, Alexandria;
- (2) agglomerations that have been declared 'cities' and have a city council; or
- (3) the capitals of rural districts (marakaz) and capitals of rural governorates.

This official categorization deviates from conventional urban definitions used in other countries insofar as it does not relate to the actual size of an agglomeration's population, or its importance as an urban area. Consequently, official figures report that in 2006, a total of 42.6 per cent of Egypt's population was urban, residing in 214 urban places. The government's official statistics for urban population percentage in 1966 was 40 per cent, suggesting a virtually static — and unrealistic — relationship between the country's rural and urban population growth.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, the urban population increase between 1966 and 2006 has been considerably greater than 2.6 per cent. In particular, the of-

ficial statistics indicate no change at all in the proportion of the urban population between 1996 and 2006. Furthermore, Egypt's 1996 census states that 17.5 per cent of the population then lived in settlements of between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. Despite their size and their urban characteristics, these areas were not classified as urban areas. Had the urban definition used in India been applied in Egypt, for example, approximately 80 per cent of all Egyptians would be classified as living in urban areas.<sup>13</sup>

Another analysis that used data from the 1996 census defined urban places as settlements of more than 10,000 inhabitants, finding that Egypt's population was at least 66.8 per cent urban, residing in 628 urban places.<sup>14</sup> According to this analysis, the urban population was therefore approximately 39.8 million in 1996, which if projected to 2006 would represent an urban population of at least 49 million inhabitants, or 67.5 per

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**Egypt's population was at least 66.8 per cent urban, residing in 628 urban places.**

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cent of the national population.<sup>15</sup> Either way, it is clear that Egypt is already 'overwhelmingly urban', as described in the World Bank's 2008 Urban Sector Note; it characterizes the 'gross underestimation of urbanization' as one which is 'progressively...out of touch with reality'.<sup>16</sup> The report also notes the political implications of new definitions, while

possibly identifying a motivation to maintain current ones: 'Declaring a rural agglomeration to be administratively a city commits the government to provide higher levels of services and changes in representation in Parliament'.<sup>17</sup>

Using long-standing administrative definitions to describe the rural and urban space in Egypt and around Cairo also results in the government missing important socioeconomic trends and patterns, including the rise of numerous small towns and the change of economic activities in rural areas. Many agglomerations in dense rural areas throughout Egypt have grown to exceed 10,000 inhabitants; these require a stretch of the imagination to still be considered rural places. Meanwhile, looking at types of employment as an indicator of rural versus urban, census figures for 1996 show that in all of rural Egypt, only 50.5 per cent of working persons aged 15 and older (8.4 million persons) were engaged in agriculture, fishing and related activities.<sup>18</sup>

Another important example, described in the 2008 World Bank analysis, is that of the population's spontaneous 'overspill' from urban centres into village agglomerations on the periphery of the large cities, and of larger villages and small towns. They are therefore urban population classified as residing in rural areas no matter how numerous they become. The transition has been facilitated by relative affordability of shelter in the outlying areas, the proliferation of minibuses to ease transport problems and inner-city congestion, and changes in land use.

The phenomenon of in-migration to Cairo from villages is still regarded by some as an important contribution to Cairo's growth, but according to studies from the late 1980s, this phenomenon has been vastly eclipsed by natural growth as the main driver of urban population expansion.<sup>19</sup> Migration is currently estimated to comprise less than 5 per cent of urban population growth in modern Cairo. These findings are even more evident in today's environment, where resident mobility has been shown to be unusually low, with only an estimated 2 per cent of families moving per year in Greater Cairo.<sup>20</sup> According to

the Urban Sector Update, for most Egyptian families, the move to a new location is a once in a lifetime decision, usually at the point of marriage. Despite recent spatial development policies promoting new cities or settlements in the desert, stimulating new urban growth

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**Migration is currently estimated to comprise less than 5 per cent of urban population growth in modern Cairo.**

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poles, 'historic migration patterns show that there is a tremendous "stay at home" inertia'.<sup>21</sup> There are regional variations in this phenomenon, however; Upper Egypt, for example, continues to supply migrants to Cairo and other cities in the Arab world.

A different picture of the degree of urbanization in Egypt and the spread of Greater Cairo emerges, therefore, if the country's administrative definition of 'urban' is abandoned in favour of one that considers the size of settlements. Redefining urban and rural areas also changes the profiles of urban and rural poverty. There are under-researched but interesting patterns of urbanization in rural areas that lead analysts to conclude that most villages are occupied by urbanites. At the same time, rural ways of life, such as raising animals at home, are practiced in some informal areas in Cairo and other cities. The social networks among residents of informal urban areas who come from the same rural place provide important safety nets, with migrants protecting each other against poverty by finding employment for relatives, participating in savings groups, caring for each other's children and performing other supportive services.

## Urban planning and contemporary Cairo

The 1970 and 1982 master plans for the Cairo area acknowledged the demographic challenges facing the city and attempted to meet them in the following manner:



*In Central Cairo, high density residential blocks hug the banks of the Nile.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

Cairo was considered over-centralised in terms of economic activity around its centre and central business district (CBD). To reduce travel distances, improve traffic congestion and the associated costs (financial, environmental and aesthetic) the impetus was to urgently develop Cairo as a polynuclear city. East of Cairo was selected as the major secondary service centre in these master plans.

With this, the conception and initiation of plans to develop new cities and settlements became the primary solution to the ongoing and projected population surges. This idea successively grew from first to second and now third generations of new cities, including eight major developments around Cairo. Part of the logic of developing these new cities was to absorb millions of low-income households that were otherwise contributing to the expansion of Cairo's informal areas inside and alongside the city's ring road.

Ambitious and imaginative public transport networks were planned, comprising a metro rail system, regional railway lines, bus lanes, tramways and flyovers, road bridges and the ring road around Cairo — which would also serve as the outer boundary of the urban centre. Road (but not rail or metro) linkages were planned and implemented from Cairo to the new cities.

The actual development that took place in the three decades between 1970 and the year 2000 only partially fulfilled the earlier master plans, but what was built has come to characterise urban Cairo today.

As the idea to build a major services centre to the east of Cairo and other ideas to build a new Egyptian capital were dropped, what transpired was a reinforcement of the central area and the overflowing of the CBD to the west bank of the Nile and to Mohandesseen and Dokki areas.

These years saw the uncontrolled expansion of low-income housing along the edges of urban or wealthy districts, the transformation of urban agricultural land and the development of high-density squatting on state desert lands. At the same time, residential densities increased along the corridor of the first metro line.

The wealthier classes fled the congestion, noise and pollution of the city, increasing migration to good-quality developed districts such as Nasr City, 15<sup>th</sup> of May, Mokkatam and Al Haram, while large numbers of city flats were left vacant, converted to office space or

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**Some population movement also occurred in the direction of some of the first and second generations of new cities**

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used as secondary residences. Some population movement also occurred in the direction of some of the first and second generations of new cities, such as New Cairo, the extension of 15<sup>th</sup> of May, Al Sheik Zayeb, Sixth of

October and Al Shorouk. Not only were occupancy rates low, but the absence of rapid and affordable public transport to these new cities also influenced their settlement by non-poor social classes with cars.

The unplanned natural development of secondary centres of metropolitan activity at Nasr City and Heliopolis was encouraged by the poor transport links between the further located and desert-developed eastern districts and central Cairo.<sup>22</sup> This included a pattern of densification based on knocking down villas and constructing high-rise apartment blocks, further worsening the traffic and infrastructure problems.

## Dynamics of urban growth

### Building on state desert lands

In the last four decades, virtually all urban development in Egypt and around Cairo has taken place on state-owned desert land. Apart from sanctioned sale and allocations of desert land, large areas of desert have been converted informally over the years. While many large plots of desert land lie untouched and still await development, others have been sold and resold in recent years, creating huge windfall profits for those who purchased their allocations below market prices. Some of these areas have been, and continue to be, developed in the intense public and private building rush that is creating the new cities, industrial areas, gated communities and other 'elite spaces' or new settlements around Cairo. Many of these developments were allegedly purchased and developed under the regulatory mechanism of the Ministry of Agriculture as 'land reclamation' projects, to be transformed later into residential gated communities.<sup>23</sup> The scale of construction and the high-value housing market of serviced desert lands in New Cairo are emblematic of these trends and will be discussed in more detail elsewhere in this publication. In addition, some unsanctioned desert developments in the past have been incorporated into recent

versions of the Greater Cairo Region Master Plan, according to the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP).<sup>24</sup>

Informal development of state desert lands by individual squatters has also taken place. Often triggered by state-initiated relocation and emergency housing development, and then ambiguously permitted to grow through the Egyptian civil code,<sup>25</sup> this incremental creeping urban development on desert fringes of urbanized centres has resulted in sizable informal settlements. The largest long-standing



*Examples of apartments in the Public Housing for Youth Project, in New Cairo.*

*Image: Pascale Nader*



*Agricultural land still visible along the rail tracks and sandwiched between informal settlements on either side. (Sudan Street and Ard El Lewa area)*

*Image: Pascale Nader*

examples in Cairo are Manshiet Nasser and Ezbet el Haggana, where territorial expansion is now predominantly constrained, even if increased growth through densification continues. In less public desert fringes such as Khanka, Abu Zaabal, Tibbeen, el Saff and Atfih, new informal settlements are, according to a 2008 World Bank report, 'replicating, expanding, and consolidating'.<sup>26</sup>

This is the desert corollary to the phenomenon of encroachment on private agricultural land. Both will be discussed in detail below.

### **Building on agricultural lands**

The conversion of private agricultural land for urban use has been ubiquitous throughout Egypt, and particularly around Cairo in recent decades. More than 80 per cent of all informal settlement growth has taken place on agricultural land in contravention of laws and decrees issued to prohibit the process. Special Feature 1 offers a history of the startling growth of informal settlements in Cairo, charting the rapid unplanned, irregular urbanization on agricultural land.

Operating through word-of-mouth networks, intermediaries, brokers and entrepreneurs have typically taken agricultural land subject to urban pressure close to the Nile and subdivided it into 80 to 120 square metre parcels, then sold it to buyers who develop small apartment blocks on the parcels. This is the typical market operation that has given rise to the informal areas. Each parcel owner reserves

limited space on the property to create public access between plots, and as the occupants' finances permit, they add successive floors in a process of verticalisation that has successively increased densities in the settlements to the high levels observed today, averaging eight floors in the denser settlements such as Dar el Salam and exceeding 15 floors along main access streets.<sup>27</sup> Water and sanitation has been organized privately at the sites as they were developed,<sup>28</sup> since the newly converted areas were unplanned and beyond the reach of government plans for utilities. Since the 1980s, electricity has gradually been provided by the national distribution companies, eventually followed by upgrading efforts where roads

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### **The spread of informal construction on agricultural land is demand-driven**

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were widened and paved, water networks installed and sanitation provided through formal sewerage systems. This process started in particularly dense sections of the informal areas, sometimes linked to bids for political support in the run-up for local elections or security concerns in areas where the government wanted to raise its profile and presence.

The spread of informal construction on agricultural land is demand-driven, as reflected by the evident difference in land values according to use in the Nile Valley generally: a high-quality *feddan* (almost 1 acre or 0.5

hectares) of land intended for residential or commercial development allegedly commands nine times as much as the same land intended for agriculture. The need for housing is not the only factor behind this demand. An overlooked contributing factor lies within the agricultural sector, where policy reforms from the 1950s onward do not make farming a profitable economic activity. Despite severe threats of demolition, judicial castigation and new decrees prohibiting building, construction on agricultural land has continued in an environment of *de facto* impunity, corruption and surprisingly reliable tenure. The issue of secure tenure is discussed in more detail in Part Two.

### Inner-city exodus

Despite the apparent urban densities and visible overcrowding in Cairo's centre, the transformation occurring at the heart of the city is a distinct exodus. Many districts have for years shown negative population growth, as newly formed households are barred from accessing housing in the city centre for several reasons: rent-control laws have led to physical deterioration of the housing stock and an increase in the number of leased but deserted dwellings; districts designated as historic areas languished under a development freeze for years, restricting demolition or rehabilitation of existing buildings; and newly developed apartment buildings offer units for purchase only (not for rent), making them unaffordable to most residents. Many of these newly developed units are occupied by commercial uses, whether professional and service-providing businesses or industrial operations. All of this is compounded by the fact that inner-city districts suffer the poorest performance in local management, leading to the accentuation of 'push' factors (which repel potential residents), such as poor basic services (water, sanitation, electricity, road conditions), inadequate garbage collection, and general neglect.

The alternative to living in unaffordable, increasingly commercialized core areas of the city is to move to the fringe developments and informal areas. Special Feature 9 sheds light on why these districts may still be attractive to their former residents despite the

gradual increase in push factors. This process, where former residential and mixed-use space is transformed into offices and commercial uses in the midst of accelerated urban decay, is not unusual for major historic capitals, in both developed and developing countries.

## Housing markets in Egypt and Cairo

Analysis of the housing markets in Egypt, and in Cairo in particular, reveals a certain amount of distortion. The implications of Cairo's distorted housing market are direct adverse impacts on the middle-income and poorer sections of the population, urban inequity and the spread of informality. The four salient factors causing the distortions are interrelated and can be summarized as follows.

**Semi-formal housing market:** Housing markets in all Egyptian cities, for rental or purchase, are active but operate mostly using straightforward and inexpensive traditional contractual arrangements, often without any governmental contact.<sup>29</sup> This private, semi-formal market mechanism operates more by word of mouth and through informal neigh-

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### The market is equally active and dynamic in the formal and informal sectors

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bourhood agents rather than through registered real estate agents. The market is equally active and dynamic in the formal and informal sectors, but many housing exchanges take place outside of any market-based arrangements, constituting family gifts, inheritance or other purely informal arrangements. 'Of the households who moved in 2003-08, 53 percent of housing units exchanged took place through the market while 47 percent of moves were not exchanged through market mechanisms'.<sup>30</sup>

1. **Top-end concentration:** There is an oversupply of top-end units in the new





*High density residential areas fill the plateau on top of Mokkatam mountain – demand-driven housing developments continue to push the city limits outwards.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

cities and in Cairo itself. Luxury villas, gated communities and exclusive, all-inclusive apartment concepts are unaffordable to most Cairenes, yet their production continues to fuel and to be fuelled by land speculation and land transformation from rural to urban. The corollary is that there is an undersupply of mid-range and low-cost formal housing, creating a demand the informal sector has filled for many years.

2. **Rent control distortions:** Up to 50 per cent of existing dwelling units nationally remain under rent control with unrealistically low rents set in the 1940s and 1950s. The new rent laws of 1996 abolished rent control and the indefinite inheritance of old contracts, but the fixed rental contracts

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### **...the impact of the rent freeze on the housing stock in Cairo has not been sufficiently appreciated.**

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remain valid for a major portion of housing units occupied before 1996. Nationally, 61 per cent of so-called 'old renters' pay only 50 EGP or less per month (about US \$9, just 18 per cent of perceived market rents), while only one per cent of 'new renters' pay this amount. The median rent for 'old renters' is 30 EGP per month, whereas the median rent for 'new renters' is roughly 200 EGP per month — more than six times the median old rent.<sup>31</sup> Historically, this has

been a major inhibitor of new private for-rent apartment construction and has contributed to the rise of informality. The 'old' rental contracts can be inherited once by offspring of the original renter, thereby ensuring that the units will remain locked out of the process of market-based housing exchange for decades to come. New rent contracts are increasingly being used, representing more than 81 per cent of new housing unit rental transactions in Greater Cairo between 2001 and 2006. Some commentators feel the impact of the rent freeze on the housing stock in Cairo (and the high costs of housing for low-income families) has not been sufficiently appreciated. Conversely, the positive impact of market-based rent reform ('thawing' of prices), along with new housing finance, guarantees for home loans and the rising mortgage market, likely contributed significantly to the slow down in informal area growth as well as the growth of more efficient land market systems.

3. **Empty units:** Housing unit vacancy rates are very high in urban Egypt, reported to be in excess of 20 to 30 per cent of the housing stock. In Cairo in 2008, an estimated half million units were empty (representing 17 per cent of the available stock).<sup>32</sup> These high vacancy rates are partly due to the freezing of rents in some areas, as well as property speculation, urban decay and administrative difficulties around sale of property. Plenty of housing units are also empty in the informal areas,

illustrating the speculative investments made there and illustrating the potential of such areas to increase their density.<sup>33</sup>

## Desert conquests: New cities and settlements

The government’s intention to create new cities in the desert surrounding Greater Cairo was first described in the Master Plan of 1975. By opening up new tracts of land and providing tax incentives and financial facilities with real estate development agencies, the aim was to deconcentrate population and decongest the Nile Valley by drawing people away from Cairo itself, offering alternatives to informal settlements and illegal squatting. It was an audacious and visionary concept that

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**Significant national resources have been allocated to these new city initiatives.**

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has developed into the largest ongoing urban development project in the world. The current projected developments to the year 2027 are expected to house almost 15 million people, representing 65 per cent of Cairo’s projected population of 24 million at that time. While the first generation of desert cities, built during the presidency of Muhammad Anwar El Sadat, numbered 18 new entities, the second generation, which began in the mid-1980s, included another two to make 20 new cities. Today, the third generation of new town planning includes 44 cities and communities throughout Egypt with 23 under the jurisdiction of the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) as of 2010.<sup>34</sup>

At first, the new cities were intended not just to provide housing, but to be economically self-sufficient and self-sustaining with new industrial belts where foreign investment could thrive and where high-tech services could grow and franchises operate. Around Cairo, four such mixed-use new cities were founded. They were later followed by 10 settlements

designed with a more residential model and hardly any economic base; these formed the core of the second generation of new cities. The conquest of the desert has become a top planning priority throughout the last 40 years, as population growth projections have materialized into an inescapable reality.

Significant national resources have been allocated to these new city initiatives. Between 1998 and 2002 alone, 22 per cent of the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development’s (MHUUD) national investment



*Infrastructure of well-constructed roads and extensive street-lighting prepare the way for development into the desert. New Cairo*

Image: Chris Horwood

budget for all of Egypt was dedicated to the newly created NUCA, even though just 2 per cent of the population resided in new cities during that period. Although 'not even a fraction of the population target were being met, the allocation policies have been maintained and even increased, with more new cities being announced and more state investments targeted at both new and earlier New Cities'.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, such are the reformed methods of land sales and the value of land that NUCA now claims to be self-financing and through land sales likely contributes income to state coffers above and beyond what it needs for the comparatively generous provision of services to the new cities.

In the last two and a half decades, NUCA has released approximately 1,000 square kilometres of public land for private purchase in just eight new urban communities around Cairo. To visualize the scale, the built-up areas of the three governorates in which GCMA is situated comprise 600 to 700 square kilometres and house up to 15 million people. The potential and scale of these new developments

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**Cairo today is surrounded by a hive of exurb construction activity as thousands of new homes, apartments, offices and shopping centres are being built in the desert.**

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are therefore colossal. Developing the desert has been promoted as a major opportunity to reconfigure Cairo and its urban future as well as to provide solutions to millions of poor who otherwise may choose to occupy informal, auto-constructed settlements, irrespective of proscriptive legislation.

Egypt has experienced a desert property boom since the 1990s. The highly lucrative business of land speculation encouraged what some have described as a 'frenzy' of development of luxury buildings and exclusive gated communities. Analysts suggest there is an oversupply of top-end units that remain unfilled and waiting for clients. Some state agencies,

especially the military and police, took possession of desert lands in the 1980s in expectation of future value.

Industrial areas were planned as part of the vision that new cities would be self-sufficient and sustainable economic units. In the first generation of new cities, including Tenth of Ramadan, Sixth of October, Sadat City, and El Amiriya el Gedida, each had large, planned industrial zones attached. By 2008, the new cities had more than 2,700 factories serviced by a labour force of more than 250,000. The rapid rise of industrial development in the new locations was created by offering below-market cost land prices, 10-year tax holidays and restricted permits for foreign investors.

Nevertheless, migration to the new desert urban communities has been very limited and the success or failure of these communities is the subject of ongoing debate amongst planners and other observers. All the while, Cairo today is surrounded by a hive of exurb construction activity as thousands of new homes, apartments, offices and shopping centres are being built in the desert. But the statistics offer a clearer indication of how well these settlements actually offer viable alternatives to living in urban Cairo.

### Occupancy and absorption confusion

According to the World Bank's Urban Sector Update in 2008, the total population of all the new cities and settlements in Cairo's desert in 1996 did not exceed 150,000 persons, with 66,000 (44 per cent) of this number living in 15<sup>th</sup> of May city. 'For comparison, over the 1986 to 1996 period, the population of Greater Cairo grew by over 2.1 million persons. In other words, by 1996 all the new cities and settlements around Cairo had not absorbed the equivalent of six months of Cairo's growth.'<sup>36</sup> According to the World Bank analysis and the 2006 census results, the 20 listed new cities had only absorbed approximately 1.06 per cent of Egypt's total population. In the 10 years between 1996 and 2006, all new cities country-wide only absorbed 4.3 per cent of the nation's population increase.



*Blocks of empty and/or unfinished apartments around the Cairo ring road.*

*Image: Pascale Nader*

Again, the 2006 Census recorded only 602,000 people living in the new cities around Cairo, representing a further absorption of only 13.8 per cent of the 3 million people added to all Greater Cairo over the preceding 10 years. NUCA claims the numbers are rapidly increasing as the idea of living in these new communities gains traction. They claim that in 2009, 2,670,000 people lived in the eight new cities, based on active electricity and telephone connections. If accurate, these

figures suggest a spectacular and remarkable rise from the CAPMAS census data from the same locations.<sup>37</sup>

Another analysis recently found that in 2005, GOPP estimated occupancy at 10 per cent of the Greater Cairo population when the 2006 census results showed just 3.7 per cent of the Greater Cairo population lived in the desert. If the NUCA statistics offered for this publication, featured in Table 2, are to be

**Table 2: Official projections and statistics concerning the eight new cities around Cairo**

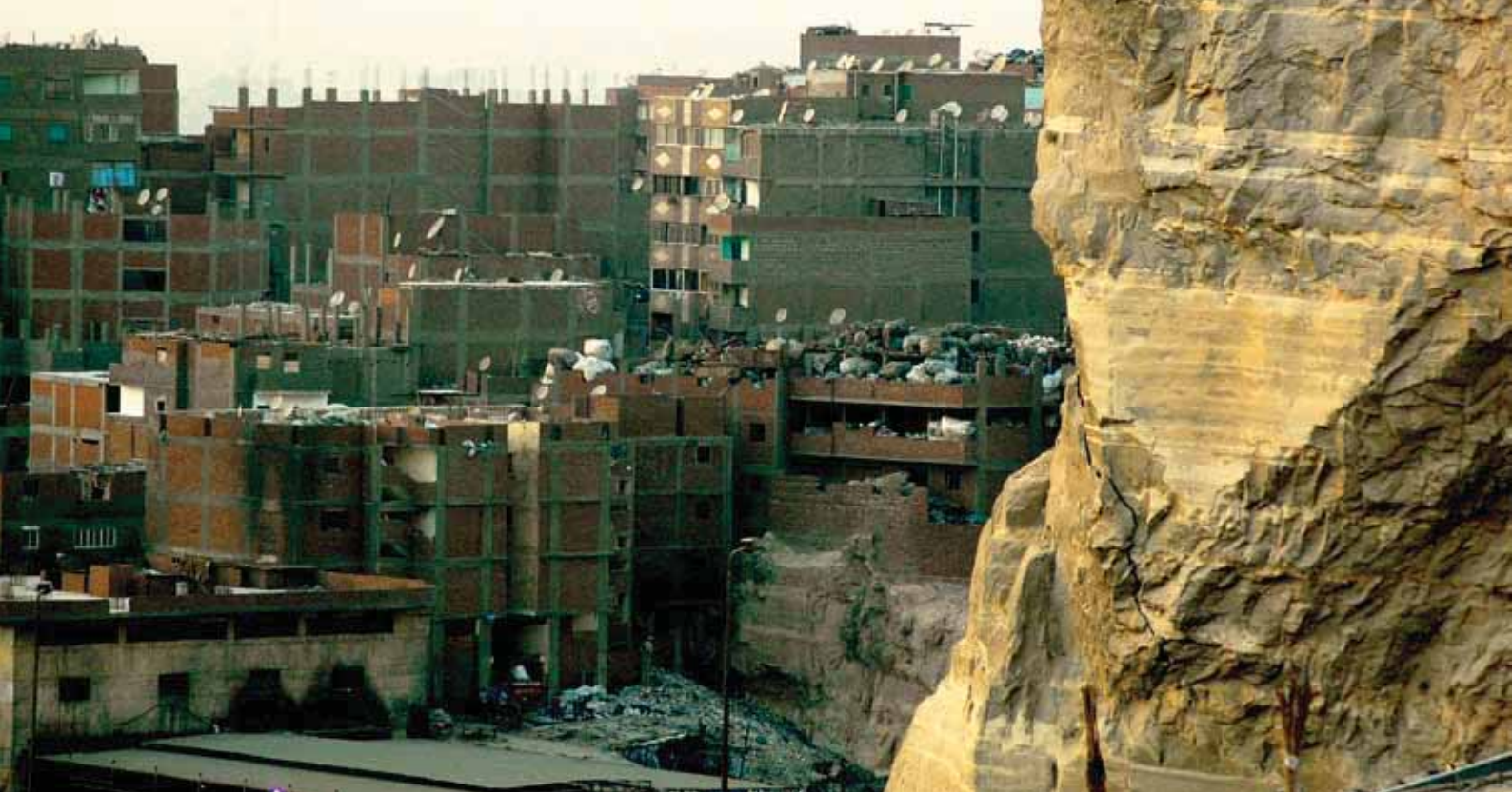
New Cities	1996 Census statistics (CAPMAS)	2006 Census statistics (CAPMAS) <sup>38</sup>	2009 actual residential population (according to NUCA)	rate of increase between 2006 Census data and 2009 claims (according to NUCA)	2027 Projected occupancy (NUCA data)
<b>6 October</b>	35,354	157,135	680,000	432 per cent	5,500,00
<b>El - Shiekh Zayed</b>	-	29,553	140,000	473 per cent	675,000
<b>10 Ramadan</b>	47,833	124,120**	680,000	547 per cent	800,00**
<b>15 May</b>	65,560	90,324	200,000	221 per cent	260,000
<b>El - Obour</b>	997	43,802	240,000	547 per cent	600,000
<b>El- Badr</b>	248	17,172	100,000	582 per cent	450,000
<b>El - Shorouk</b>	-	20,983	140,000	667 per cent	500,000
<b>New Cairo</b>	-	118,678	900,000	758 per cent	6,000,000
<b>Total New Cities as part of Greater Cairo</b>	149,992	601,767	2,670,000	444 per cent	14,785,000
<b>Total Greater Cairo Population</b>	13,231,000	16,292,000	17,290,000 (for 2010)*	-	23,660,000 (for 2030)*
<b>New City population as proportion of Greater Cairo.</b>	1.13 per cent	3.69	15.4 per cent	-	62 per cent

Source: The 1996 and 2006 Census data is quoted in Sims 2010, p.104. The NUCA data was given to UN-HABITAT for this presentation.

\*Estimation of current and future population from Demographia World Urban Areas & Population Edition 6.1 July 2010 Projections <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf>

\*\* A further example of confusion is that a document by Arthur D. Little (international consultant working with GOPP) presenting key planning targets indicates that planners are working towards population of 2,100,000 in 2027 and claim that today there are 260,000 people living in Tenth Ramadan. Both figures are considerably different from those of CAPMAS and NUCA.

<sup>1</sup>significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) <sup>\*</sup>significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) <sup>\*\*</sup>significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) <sup>\*\*\*</sup>significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).



*Mature and consolidated informal areas of Cairo are vibrant centres of activity.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

believed, not only has occupancy soared in the three years between 2006 and 2009 by fantastic amounts, but those living in the desert cities now comprise 15.4 per cent of the total Greater Cairo population. Can it really be plausible that the combined population of the eight cities rose on average 444 per cent in three years to almost 2.7 million, after taking many decades to reach approximately 602,000 in 2006? These wildly different data sets suggest caution must be used in handling agency data in a politicized context where presentation of positive data concerning the new communities has become important for state agencies such as GOPP and NUCA, in the face of sustained criticism for low occupancy and outcomes that disfavour (and disinterest) low- and middle-income families.

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### **Informality also offers a relevant entry point to explore the urban divide, intra-city inequality.**

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In spite of considerable incentives, the low-income population of Cairo has failed to move out to the new cities in significant numbers. With suburban patterns of densities, street patterns and services suitable mostly for car owners, living conditions in new cities remain unaffordable and to a large extent inconvenient for most, so workers commute daily to the new industrial areas from their homes in Cairo and other cities — which are, by con-

trast, thriving informal settlements. More details of the new cities policy past and present are elaborated in Special Feature 6.

## **Cairo's informality**

What was a relatively minor phenomenon four decades ago has come to dominate the demographics of the city: the proportion of the population living in informal settlements and the spread of informal settlements through Greater Cairo has been remarkable, presenting urban planners and government with some of Cairo's most urgent and formidable challenges, and some of its greatest opportunities. Informality also offers a relevant entry point to explore the urban divide, intra-city inequality, special policies and governance issues in modern Cairo.

What is informal? For some, it epitomizes the architecture of the banal, the un-aesthetic, the unclean and unsafe: a breeding ground for vice, violence and religious extremism that thrives in the congested, rubbish-filled narrow alleyways between tall, sun-starved and undecorated buildings. The articulation of urban informality and slums as forms of social and urban pathology is a global phenomenon. It is present in the policy, and especially the security discourse, of a number of cities similar to Cairo that feature inadequate public services and poorly controlled urban development stemming from a failure to provide sufficient and affordable housing. In fact, the

Egyptian state constructed more than 1 million low-income housing units between 1985 and 2008, but they remain insufficient and, in many cases, unpopular or unaffordable for their targeted income group.<sup>39</sup>

The ‘metadiscourse’ on informality in Egypt has stigmatized and stereotyped informal-area inhabitants as destitute and homogeneous blue-collar labourers.<sup>40</sup> Continual linkage of rigid negative social concepts with informality such as marginality, disorder, poverty, rural origins, provincialism and backwardness are only partially true and deny informal inhabitants support for upward mobility, social transformation and change.<sup>41</sup>

The reality of the internal diversity and heterogeneity of informal areas has been denied as they have been demonized and cut off or poorly linked with the formal parts of the city. The economic vibrancy of informal areas, and the added value they contribute to the city and the national economy, has been overlooked as commentators and state officials have focused on the negative sides of this unplanned urbanization. In Mansheyet Nasser, one of the largest and oldest informal areas around Cairo, 65 per cent of the population come from districts in formal Cairo, and 35 per cent are rural migrants; many informal areas accommodate the burgeoning population that spills over from neighbouring middle and lower-income districts.<sup>42</sup>

Informal urbanization has led to partial official neglect and reduced formal visibility, resulting in a list of absent or poor-quality services. Reliable water supply of decent quality, sanitation and sewerage connections, solid waste removal, police presence, educational and health services, electricity, telephone services, parks and paved and lighted roads have all been absent for many years in most informal areas. However, this has to be seen in context of the deteriorating public services provision in the city at large; major infrastructure improvements have not been implemented since the 1980s. For example, solid waste management has recently been problematic in high-income districts as much as in informal areas. Water and electricity cuts are becoming more frequent in Nasr City, Mohandseen, and other areas.<sup>43</sup>

Many services have now been introduced and continue to be introduced as informal settlements undergo upgrading and formalization, but many other settlements still do not have reliable services.<sup>44</sup> Adding services and infrastructure after the congested areas are fully built up is both costly and time-consuming.<sup>45</sup>

In Cairo, however, informal areas continue to grow and develop. Between 8 and 10 million Cairenes live and thrive in over 140 square kilometres that comprise the numerous informal settlements of the city. In Egypt as a whole, between 1986 and 1996, 45 per cent of new housing units constructed were private and informal, while 28 per cent were state-built and 27 per cent were private and formal.<sup>46</sup> Far from being a marginal or peripheral phenomenon, the 65 per cent of

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**...informal settlements can be seen as a dynamic demonstration of methods and strategies used by urban residents coping with ever-accelerating rates of change in a society.**

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Cairenes who live in informal areas could be said to characterise the *real* city. In fact, the informal settlements are now entirely integrated into the city's metropolitan area and their residents are members of its community. A new publication suggests that ‘informal city-building should be seen as normative’, with various advantages, not only in Cairo but many cities of the developing world.<sup>47</sup>

As further sections of this publication will show, the perception of informal areas as Hobbesian worlds of violence and vice where lives are ‘nasty, brutish and short’ is in direct contrast with perceptions on the ground. The part-myth of the socio-spatial disorder of the informal sector is often based on superficial analyses. Instead, informal settlements can be seen as a dynamic demonstration of methods and strategies used by urban residents coping with ever-accelerating rates of change in a society increasingly fractured into subgroups marked by deep inequality and economic restructuring.<sup>48</sup>



Typical street life in the Imbaba informal settlement.

Image: Chris Horwood

## The myth of homogeneity

Another misconception is the notion of overall homogeneity of informal areas. 'Given the number of informal settlements in Egypt, there is great diversity in their histories, housing arrangements, extent of services, physical characteristics, layout, costs of living, living arrangements and profiles of the people who live in them'.<sup>49</sup> In Cairo, many informal settlements are four or five decades old, but developments and expansions continue on their periphery or upwards with multi-floor expansions. Despite the diversity of such settlements, it is widely acknowledged by the government and its critics that public services and infrastructure such as schools, health centres, clean water and sanitation are lacking in many informal settlements *per se* and, in particular, when contrasted with planned areas. Planned areas may also suffer from certain deficiencies, however.

Informal development has become the dominant mode of modern *de facto* urbanization in many developing countries and is often synonymous with slum growth. Informality has been a dominant phenomenon in all Egyptian cities but most represented and most concentrated in Cairo. The data and discussion in this report show that in modern Cairo 'informalization', while directly linked to economic, political and legal factors, is not synonymous with slum development. In the context of Cairo, slums and the majority of the informal settlements are a distinct

(although sometimes geographically overlapping) phenomenon. This means slums may exist as part of informal settlement areas but

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## Informality has been a dominant phenomenon in all Egyptian cities but most represented and most concentrated in Cairo.

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by no means are informal areas usefully categorized as slums. A more comprehensive discussion of slums and the government's recent activities in respect to slums is presented below.

Because of the physical characteristics of informality and the resulting ambiguous citizen's rights, close tracking of the growth and numbers of informal settlers in Cairo has not always been easy and in the past has, reportedly, been prone to error. Some analysts have suggested that the imprecision and absence of close monitoring of the growth of informality may have served wider political or economic interests. Nevertheless, recent new data claims to reveal the scope of informality in Cairo with increased accuracy: according to one analysis, the city's informal settlements sheltered approximately 7 million residents in 1998. Just eight years later, in 2006, the number was 10.5 million, or 65 per cent of the city's population.<sup>50</sup>

## Heterogeneous informality

Recent research and analysis reveals that informal settlements are locations of considerable heterogeneity in terms of the kinds of people living in them. The fact that most settlements also feature mixed-use amenities indicates, too, that they are important and thriving economic concentrations of retail, services, small-scale enterprises and artisanal industry. Informal settlements are increasingly understood as consolidations of private investment by millions of Egyptians attempting to provide liveable, appropriate and affordable living environments within the constraints of available choices. Turning the formal-informal debate upside down, one specialist provokes discussion by suggesting that informal areas are exactly what city planners, neighbourhood designers, sustainability policies and international environmental agendas have been calling for: 'Informal areas are a 100 per cent self-financed, self-help housing mechanism. They are demand-driven, incremental in growth, yield a built form that is compact, low-energy-consuming, "walkable" with an efficient mixture of uses allowing work-home proximity and district self-sufficiency in terms of daily and seasonal needs'.<sup>51</sup>

When contrasted with the characteristics of some of the new cities and their dilemmas in attracting new residents, the features listed above seem remarkably successful, fulfilling many requirements for what makes for a 'liveable' city. Nevertheless, few would argue that the informal areas are desirable models for planned urban growth, even if they offer important indicators as to what people themselves develop in the context of limited formal organization or assistance. By this analysis, they have been and continue to be highly organic and fulfil many of the aspirations of the practical, risk-averse low-income populations, and therefore provide important lessons to planners.<sup>52</sup>

Is this general change of opinion driving renewed government commitment to embrace informal areas, or is renewed government attention to informal areas driving the change of perception? Since 2008 and the introduction of the Unified Construction Law (Law 119), informal areas have been formally

recognized in Cairo and the government has made a commitment to allocating budgets for upgrading and formalization. However, to avoid falling into the debate of what is considered informal, the new law replaces informality with what it calls unplanned or deteriorated areas, thus lumping historic urban areas with informal areas and any other part of the existing city that contrasts with the planning of new communities, which are set as the standard. The most dire areas of informality, including some cemeteries, dilapidated core areas and dangerous slum dwellings, are recognized and will be dealt with under a special mechanism (by presidential fiat) directed

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**Informal settlements are increasingly understood as consolidations of private investment by millions of Egyptians attempting to provide liveable, appropriate and affordable living environments within the constraints of available choices.**

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by the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), whose specific mandate is to rid Egypt of all slums by 2017.

These moves come at a time when the government is redefining housing. Areas are now categorized simply as planned, unplanned and unsafe. All areas considered 'slums' fall under the unsafe designation for the structural, environmental or health risks they pose.<sup>53</sup> Those living in unsafe areas will be offered alternative housing, while those in unplanned areas will be subject to a variety of upgrading, formalizing and regularizing mechanisms. Beyond these changes, the whole city will become subject to massive revitalization schemes that are part of the 'Cairo 2050' vision. The potential impact of the 11 planned mega-projects that form the skeleton of the 'Cairo 2050' plan is far-reaching, with implications for both planned and unplanned areas of Greater Cairo. According to one commentator, such projects are emblematic of ongo-





Boys living in Imbaba – a massive informal settlements that was once a village on the city's periphery.

Image: Chris Horwood

ing elite attempts to override more popular claims on the urban space of Cairo: 'Those residing in informal areas are already subject to exclusion from city services based on their inability to comply with a regulatory bar that is set too high for the majority'.<sup>54</sup>

## Characteristics of informal housing in Egypt<sup>55</sup>

**Scale:** Inhabitants of 41 per cent of units surveyed in urban Egypt considered their dwellings informal. With informal dwellings normally having higher density than formal dwellings, this would translate into higher proportions of people living in informal settlements nationally. In Cairo, an estimated 65 per cent of the population lived in informal settlements in 2006. With growth rates higher than the formal sector, the proportion should be yet larger in 2010.

**Market share:** 28 per cent of the units purchased nationally between in 2003 and 2008 were in informal areas; 45 per cent of new buildings constructed between 1986 and 1996, nationally, were informal.

**Purchase cost:** Housing in informal areas is cheaper to purchase than that in formal areas: the median price of purchased units was 40,000 EGP (approximately US \$7,200)

in informal areas versus 80,000 EGP (approximately US \$14,400) in formal areas.

**Rental cost:** Rentals under the New Rent law were less expensive in informal areas than in formal areas: median monthly rent was 200 EGP (approximately US \$36) in informal residential areas, compared with 250 EGP (approximately US \$45) in formal residential areas.

**Living space:** At the national level, the median informal housing area was 72 square metres, versus 95 square metres in formal areas. Informal units either sold or rented under the new 1996 law range from 40 to 80 square metres, typically located in multi-storey walk-ups. Such units may be as large as 140 square metres along the main streets, with heights exceeding 15 floors (median heights vary by area between five and eight floors in the denser areas). In informal areas, residents use the streets and alleys for activities that households in formal areas might reserve for designated recreational areas, such as gardens, parks and sports areas.

**Quality:** The structural integrity of informal buildings is normally considered good, as builders typically use 'over-designed' reinforced concrete frame construction. Those financing the construction are often owner-builders and owner-occupiers, who are most likely to build solid structures for their own families and take pride in the endurance of their investment.

**Unit conditions:** The absence of planning and regulation means that informal areas are often characterized by poor light and ventilation, narrow streets without open spaces and few public services. Densities and congestion are very high, but water, electricity and some form of sanitation or waste disposal are normally available, to varying degrees of reliability and quality.

**Financing:** Informal units are typically financed by individuals and families.<sup>56</sup> Sources include savings, informal loans from friends and relatives, conversion of other family assets, sale or rental of other units, and remittances. The dominant mode of progressive building — room by room and floor by floor — allows for incremental rates of investment, which is accommodated by the land, construction and building materials market. High costs of building permits and other fees are avoided through their illegal status, but bribes to officials are considered commonplace.

**Construction:** Owner-builders tend to closely supervise construction and material purchase. They rely on the informal labour market and on local masons or engineers for design. The designs are usually standard, based on tried and tested models that best fulfil their users' needs under the given spatial constraints. Not surprisingly, the costs of building are often considerably less than similar construction by the private sector or the state. Façades are normally unfinished and undecorated.

**Legality:** Informal units are typically constructed on privately owned designated agricultural land or on (mostly desert) state land in contravention of state laws, making them illegal. They also violate the standards and regulations of building laws and are built in areas that do not have an approved detailed comprehensive plan or land subdivision plan.

### Typology of informality

Cairo's informal settlements have spread horizontally across four main categories of land

and vertically everywhere, contributing to the city's densification. The four land types are privately owned agricultural land, state-owned desert land, private cemeteries and unregulated or illegal verticalisation (or use) of buildings in core parts of old and historic Cairo (although this last phenomenon occurs throughout the city). This typology also forms the basis of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey sample that will be examined in Part Two of this

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### ...apartment blocks on agricultural land accounts for the bulk of informal settlements.

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book. The unplanned and illegal building of houses and apartment blocks on agricultural land accounts for the bulk of informal settlements. In 2000, they were estimated to cover 105.5 square kilometres and represent 81.6 per cent of all informal residential areas in Greater Cairo.<sup>57</sup> In 2008, the loss of agricultural land nationally as a result of informal settlement building between 1982 and 2004 was calculated by the World Bank to be 1.2 million *fedan*<sup>58</sup> (one *fedan* is approximately equivalent to an acre, or 0.50 hectares).

### 'Quiet encroachment' and 'risk avoidance'

The growth of *ashwai'yyat* (random or informal areas) is outpacing the growth of formal areas in Cairo. A recent study established that in 2006, informal settlements were growing at an average of 2.57 per cent per year, while formal Cairo was growing at 0.4 per cent per year.<sup>59</sup> Between 1996 and 2006, the following large informal areas of Greater Cairo registered very high annual growth rates: Waraq 2.6 per cent, Imbaba markaz (including Kirdasa) 3.66 per cent, el Umranniya 2.9 per cent, Manshiet Nasser 4.5 per cent, Markaz Qaliub 3.3 per cent, Markaz Ousim 3.6 per cent, El Khanka (including El Khusus) 4.7 per cent.<sup>60</sup>

What one writer has described as the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' has been 'marked by quiet, largely atomized and pro-

longed mobilization with episodic collective action — open and fleeting struggles without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization'.<sup>61</sup> According to the German development agency GTZ (which works with the Ministry of Economic Development in Egypt and the governorates within the Greater Cairo Region), so-called 'slum' populations grew from 0.4 million in 1950 to 6.3 million in 1991 to 8.3 million in 2000. The area covered by informal urbanization increased by more than 20 times, from 6.7 square kilometres in 1950 to just over 140 square kilometres in 2000.<sup>62</sup>

How was the state unable to prevent this phenomenal rise of illegal housing and illegal urbanization? Unable to construct affordable housing with appropriate quality of living conditions that would suit most residents, it appears that the authorities preferred to ignore rather than attempt to address the informal sector as it grew, owing in part to the corruption of underpaid local administrative staff. For one analyst who interprets the rise of informality through a 'logic of neglectful rule' by the government, this was further evidence of a 'perennially impoverished state lacking to intervene effectively in its capital'.<sup>63</sup> However, others have suggested the failure or unwillingness of the state to enforce proscriptive laws against unregulated building has been the salvation of informality, to the benefit of many low-income families. Imagine, they ask, what chaos would have occurred if the poor were not allowed to vote with their hands and build their own homes.

Mass demolition and re-housing became impossible as the ranks of the informal swelled into the millions. The authorities were also reluctant to enter into confrontation or use excessive force to prevent the spread of in-

formal urbanization. According to many analysts, the subsequent *de facto* policy response of the government has been risk avoidance, and the avoidance of demolitions that could also ignite community solidarity and reaction.

### Urban narratives: Informality and poverty

To what extent the informalization of Cairo in recent decades is directly linked to rising urban poverty is not clear. It is too simplistic to describe the informal developments as only poverty driven, despite the fact that most of Cairo's income-poor residents live in recently

### It is too simplistic to describe the informal developments as only poverty driven

developed informal settlements, cemeteries and the deteriorated urban core. Research in Cairo, including the SRC/UN-HABITAT data used in this report, illustrates a clear gradient of living conditions from the wealthy to the poor as defined by spatial differences, neighbourhoods and divisions within those neighbourhoods.

The specific and widespread growth of informality in Cairo is a product not only of poverty, but also of other factors: informality was fostered by a combination of specific policy choices, particular market dynamics and implementation of laws relating to rent control, while laws relating to building on desert or agricultural land were not enforced. As mentioned, the phenomenon was also influenced by a sudden influx of external cash from overseas work, and a vast deficiency of public affordable, appropriate housing coupled with

**Table 3: An estimate of the growth of slum [sic] populations in Greater Cairo between 1950 and 2000 Growth of *ashwa'iyat* in Greater Cairo, 1950–2000 (GTZ estimates)**

Year	Area (square kilometres)	Population (millions)
1950	6.7	0.4
1977	45.7	2.7
1991	106.9	6.3
2000	140.1	8.3



*New Cairo is emblematic of the ambitious desert developments. Hospitals, infrastructure, gated residential communities and spacious villas characterise the growth designed to accommodate future generations of Cairenes.*

All images by Chris Horwood

a dramatic rise in the city's population. The rise of high-end luxury accommodation for the relatively thin strata of very rich and the successive decrease in the real value of the middle class's spending power has made the informal housing sector attractive not only to the poor but also to the lower-middle class and army of low-paid government functionaries and even lower-income professionals.

The predominant urban narrative concerning informal areas (both official and popular)

is currently undergoing an important shift. Typically regarded as dense areas of intense poverty, illegality, poor hygiene, unemployment, disease, crime and extremism, informal areas have been characterised as an embarrassing, uncivilised underside of modern Cairo — a characterization that has ignored the fact that more modern Cairenes live in in-

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**The predominant urban narrative concerning informal areas (both official and popular) is currently undergoing an important shift.**

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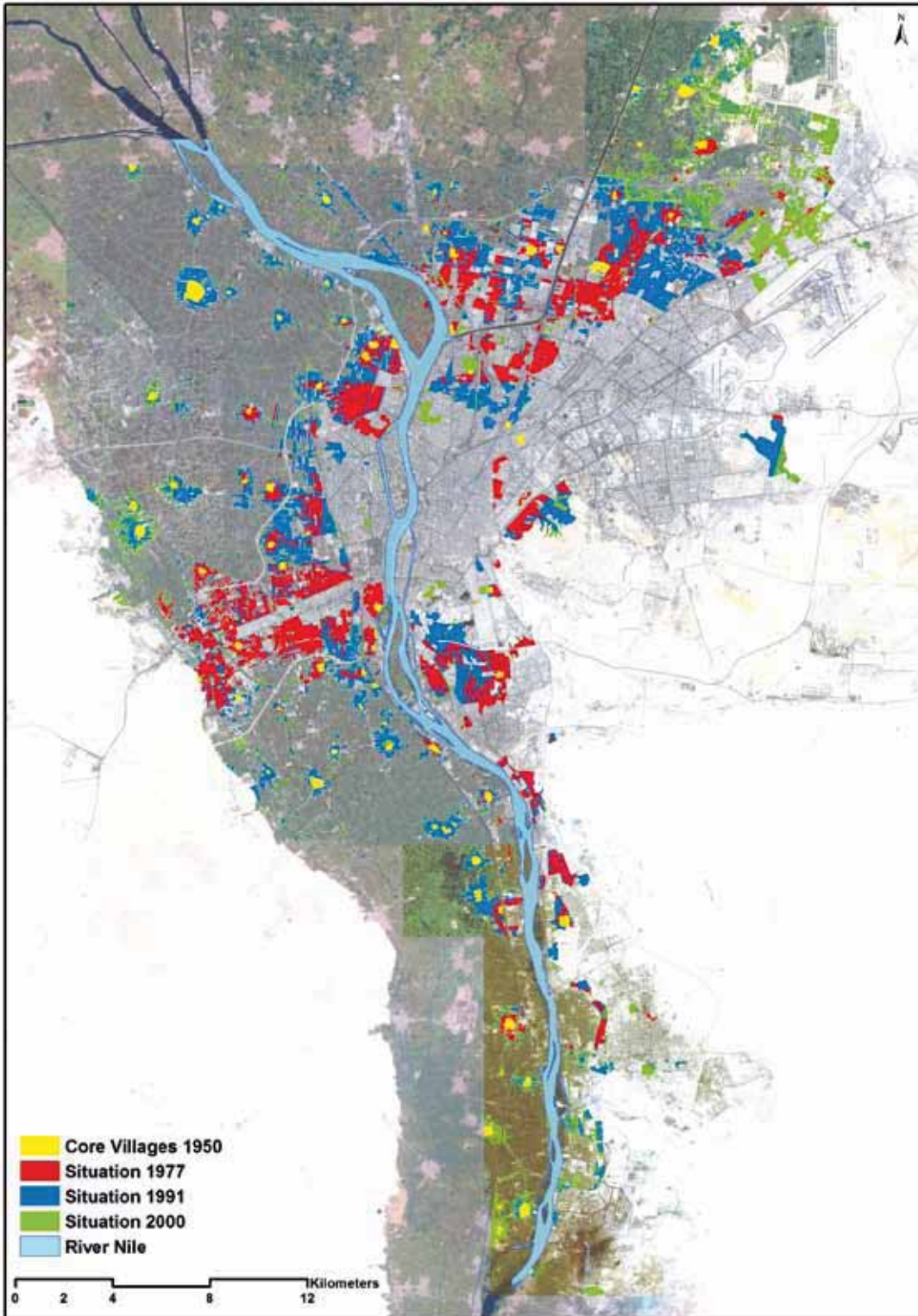
formal areas than any other kind of place in the city. Official data has failed to represent the full scale of informality as officials express their ambivalence by either not being able to keep up with the speed of informal growth, or by remaining reluctant to accept the reality of the growth.<sup>64</sup> The spectacular increase in sales of public land outside the city in recent years has partly been fuelled and legitimized by the discourse that framed Cairo's heart as having multiple negative characteristics that increasingly revolve around notions of chaos, congestion and insecurity. Informality has also been depicted as a 'deviant' phenomenon and stigmatized as unhealthy, un-modern and environmentally unsustainable.

While these perspectives still dominate the discourse, they are being challenged at a popular level by the mere fact that increasingly, people who live and work in the formal areas of Cairo meet and work with, and depend on, people who live in informal areas. The social acceptability of informal areas and those living in them is therefore increasing and challenging the notion of a homogeneous underclass. Also, people increasingly recognize that most informal areas can be assimilated and formalized through limited demolition, upgrading, legal recognition, sufficient service provision (especially waste collection) and increased facilities for health, education and security. The informal city is already dominant in Cairo but what appears increasingly certain



*A store rents wedding dresses in the heart of a major informal area. The quality of apartment, as seen behind the boy, are typical of many informal areas in Cairo.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*



**Growth of the informal areas in Cairo between 1977 and 2000.**

*This map is based on the work and research by the Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP)/ German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).*

*The PDP is an Egyptian-German cooperation project implemented of the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and KfW Entwicklungsbank with financial assistance by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).*

## 'those on top stay on top and the poor get poorer'

*Suzy Ahmad Yehia, who is half Egyptian and half French, was interviewed 31 July 2010 in El Maadi. Suzy works in a small international lifestyle management company as an account executive, earning an entry-level salary. Because of her relatively low income, she does not live a sheltered 'elite' life and must find ways to cope.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

My name is Suzy (Suzanne) Yehia. I'm 25 years old. I grew up in Egypt and was away for six years and moved back eight months ago. I was in different parts of Europe, in Paris and Barcelona studying in university. I lived in Egypt from 1989 to 2003, so all my formative years.

Living in Cairo is quite crazy, especially at age 25. It is different — unlike anywhere — and it was a shock returning here. Even though I am Egyptian, I was definitely culture-shocked. I felt like a tourist all over again. The saying is about New York, but it really is Cairo that is 'the city that never sleeps'. It is very busy all the time, lots of noise. There's maybe only four hours of silence, on Friday mornings!

### Changes and challenges in the city

Verbal harassment is super high in this city. Walking to work everyday I get constant staring, cat-calls and even the police or soldiers [guarding banks, embassies, VIP residences] that sit at their posts on the street all day every day ... even though they see you on a daily basis, they will be watching you and know where you live. It is a part of living here. It is exhausting and it is put onto women to deal with on their own.

Cairo has definitely changed. There are a lot more people and cars, and they are parked all over the place. The mass of the population is becoming more consumerist, and they have more options available. I remember when growing up here, finding sugar in the market was inconsistent. Now there is an array of choices; they have malls and nearly every single Egyptian owns a mobile phone, which was not the case 10 years ago.

There are definitely a lot more compounds being built, building for I don't know who, and then a lot of abandoned buildings. They seem like unfinished projects that once had funding and it stopped or there were problems. Compounds like Katameya Heights, Palm Hills or SODIC or all these areas are obviously building because there is a demand for it. I personally am not a fan of these huge socially segmented compounds, it just seems unusual, not a natural evolution. I don't see these developments as helping the city, especially since they are catering to a very small percentage of Egyptians — second homes for the upper and upper-middle classes — and that is where all the attention is. Dubai from what I know is a small Las Vegas-style city in the desert with a tiny population, and receives so much funding from a ruling Sheikh; in Egypt it is not the same situation.

### Observations on informality and poverty

You see informal housing everywhere, not in one specific area of the city. You sense it as you see [informal developments] and it is a big contrast to the rest; it is very black and white here. In terms of poverty, it is funny because you see it everywhere around you, you see the street children, vendors, beggars, but at the same time it is not clear-cut: your doorman [*bowab*] seems or appears poor and totally dependent on the residents of the building who employ him but you find that he has wealth and could be richer than the average citizen. So it is not so clear-cut. There are different types of poverty in Egypt, like poverty in terms of opportunities and rights and moving on in life. Not the same as in Europe — here it is more visible everywhere in the city, people selling things on pavements, at traffic lights to make money however they



can. In Paris or Barcelona, poverty is in certain specific areas or the public housing done by the government where the lower classes live.

There are certain improvements definitely, in the roads, access to products, but I have little faith in the government, really. It reflects selfishness, greed, egoism and not much for the greater good of the people. No vision or thinking. Those on top stay on top and the poor get poorer.

Highways, improving roads, safety, police are everywhere, but again in certain neighborhoods. I wouldn't say it is for the average person *per se* — more that it is in areas that have expatriate communities and embassies. The improvements are not really for the protection of the Egyptian people. It is for outsiders, not for Egyptian citizens.

The amount of billboards is a phenomenon, too. It is interesting to see the increased consumerism develop here; it is of course increasing all over the world. I have tried to lessen that personally — since I moved back, I found myself trying to consume less, and it is better to live simpler in my view. Maybe it is from seeing so much waste and mismanagement.

For the poor, the main changes have been in increased ownership of TVs, satellite dishes, radio and household durable goods and through these means they are more in touch with the outside world now.

### **Urban development and the future of Cairo**

Cairo could be a better city if they made better use of what is already there, if they pool the resources together more. We are not a poor country. Expanding the city is definitely needed, and they are already doing this, but if they have compounds in the middle of the desert for the rich, then why can't they come up with plans for the poor that work? I was reading a study yesterday where a group of AUC [American University in Cairo] students went to Katameyah Heights in New Cairo to understand their water consumption and discovered that this one compound was using all the water in the area to water gardens and golf course grass. That sort of resource planning or waste is not going to work in the long run. And if they come up with technology to solve that, then why not technological solutions for the poor?

There are nice conveniences of living in Cairo — there is a sense of freedom still. You can walk to places, it's easy to get places in terms of transportation, there is the metro or you can take a taxi, which is not expensive like in Europe yet. Getting around Cairo is not a problem.

The metro in Cairo is brilliant, safe, no hassle, just a bit hot and stuffy sometimes. You go to the beach which is an hour away. My friends complain a lot that there are no [social] outlets in Egypt, but there are; it is up to you to break bad habits and get up and go out there. Personal safety in Cairo is not as much of a problem yet, people just tell me it is unsafe to speak against the government or religion. Obviously you don't have freedom problems like that abroad, but in Europe other safety problems were there. People help each other here.

Pollution in Egypt is on a whole different level. Definitely something should be done about the trash everywhere; it is a shame to see it. It is my city as much as it is anyone else's and people have the right when they leave their homes in the morning to see clean streets and no garbage. Health-wise I don't understand it, either. Keeping up your community is very important, and it is important to increase that awareness. I try to do my part as much as possible, adapting habits that I have from living in other countries, like recycling my trash at home, using less chemicals to clean the house.

Another important point I noticed living in Cairo is the influence on Egyptian culture through either globalization or politics. I read an article recently that made me see this transfer. It was about American culture, their hopes and dreams and how [the American Dream] is very much an illusion, which I found very similar to Egypt these days.

Part of my work is to arrange bookings for accommodation and travel for the wealthy in hotels that the average citizen never sees, and that I myself could not afford. I read the government is going to be building an MGM Grand soon [similar to the entertainment and hotel complex in Las Vegas, Nevada], and that is just horrendous because we don't need anymore of this hospitality infrastructure in Egypt. Who are they building these things for? For Egyptians? No, for tourists and non-Egyptians, which is great for the tourism industry and to promote Egypt as a luxury destination to attract higher-paying customers but it is just exploitation ... so they plan maybe to change the way foreigners view Egypt, but it is not reality. Developments should come naturally, realistically, from needs of the people — from within — and it's not.

The potential for innovation within Egypt is great. We have very talented people, for example, in design, arts and crafts, architecture — people with the ability to use the resources already available in and from Egypt. Many in my generation are trying to take ideas from what they have learnt from abroad and bring it back to Egypt to adapt it. They are trying to make a difference or at least offer something different. It is like a ripple effect: all it takes is one person to say, 'OK, I'm going to do this and take this risk'. It is not the government who supports entrepreneurs, it is more the social network, like friends and family, so it is not as big or vibrant as it could be.

Only a very tiny percentage of people do good for the masses. While there are minute improvements, there is such a long way to go. Enough building hotels. The real change and improvements have to come from within and be based on reviving knowledge and innovation, starting from the education system. And the way of thinking has to be more positive among the rich and poor.

A lot of people my age just really want change. It is easy to sit and complain and exchange this negative energy back and forth. Many are just happy with how they are living a privileged life and working in family businesses. The herd mentality is there — individuality is not encouraged in Egypt, so these are some reasons perhaps for nothing changing. There is a lot of codependency between children and their parents.





Young women train through the waters of central Cairo.

Image: Chris Horwood

is that it will be an immovable and intrinsic part of future Cairo.

## Globalization and the urbanization of inequality

Over the last 30 years, the government has reformed the highly centralized economy it inherited from the post-1952 socialist years. Egypt has a stable economy with continuous growth, averaging 4 per cent to 5 per cent per year in the past quarter century, sometimes reaching as much as 7 per cent. Between 1991 and 2007, economic reform policies were introduced to meet the terms of international institutions, lenders and donors, including wider incentives to increase the role of the private sector in all economic activities.

During the 1990s, a series of International Monetary Fund arrangements, coupled with massive external debt relief, helped Egypt improve its macroeconomic performance. The pace of structural reforms, including fiscal policies, privatization and new business legislation, helped Egypt move towards a more market-oriented economy and, since the turn of the new millennium, reforms have prompted increased foreign investment. As with most IMF Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programs (ERSAPs) that embrace

the World Bank's main economic strategies, the impact of reducing public spending and eradicating subsidies for low-income consumers in Cairo attracted frequent criticism by groups championing the poor.

Egypt's integration into the global economy and adoption of global economic approaches is neither complete nor as far-reaching as other post-colonial nations, but analysts argue that the impact has been profound. Some have voiced fear that beyond the infiltration of western clothing and international television, the popularity of western culture and infatuation with designer brands, it is feared that the very fabric of family

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**Throughout the 1990s, different aspects of the socialist command economy were eventually dismantled.**

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life, culture and social interaction (including commerce) is being affected. One writer describes society as being 'wrenched apart' by the 'neo-liberal' process.<sup>65</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, Egypt's successive waves of economic reforms moved the country from a social welfare mode of organization and regulation to a globalized, market-driven neoliberal approach. The dismantling and privatisation of the large, centralized public sector has had

deep implications for Egyptians; the decentralisation of power became a new political ‘mantra’ and various economic regulations were transformed, increasingly conforming to powerful international regulatory mechanisms that threatened to supersede national authorities and mechanisms. Throughout the 1990s, different aspects of the socialist command economy were eventually dismantled, including the artificial exchange rates, public bank monopolies, some subsidies, and the large public manufacturing sector, which was regarded as largely inefficient. Yet, according to the World Bank, much more remains to be done.<sup>66</sup>

‘At least a quarter of Egypt’s population are poor by any standards and another quarter lives on the margins of poverty’, concluded one study in 1998 ‘Urban poverty appears to have increased more rapidly than rural poverty although the rural poverty rate is still higher than the urban rate’.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, as discussed above, the government reports declining trends in poverty at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

State socialism and post-colonial nationalism championed by Egypt’s second president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, gave way to the increasingly open economic regime under Sadat (1970 to 1981) that was continued and consolidated during the current regime of President Hosni Mubarak (1981 to present). For some analysts, the correct understanding of opposition movements in the last 20 years, along with the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, wealth distribution patterns and urban disparity, derives from ‘the neoliberal agenda of the Egyptian state, within the context of globalization’.<sup>68</sup> Planning for and investing in tourism, for example, may be a realistic way to achieve certain planning goals for the future of Egypt, but it is also emblematic of an outward-looking approach, where the national commodity of great value to the outside world — Egypt’s historical heritage — appears to define national and metropolitan choices. Special Feature 3 examines the ‘Cairo 2050’ megaprojects that relate to this theme.

According to one commentator, by the early 1990s, more than half of Cairo and adjacent

Giza were classified either as ‘poor’ or ‘ultra-poor’.<sup>69</sup> But the 1990s also saw significant changes and growth, the benefits of which were not shared equally. Commenting on the distribution of economic gains during the years of economic reform and expansion, one writer said, ‘While the floor has undoubtedly risen, the ceiling has exploded’, implying that the benefits to the poor are evident but do not compare to the skyrocketing new wealth gained by the higher socioeconomic group.<sup>70</sup> Illustrating these changes, the World

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### **Informality was also a reaction to the galloping speed of rising land prices as the country’s economy became internationalized.**

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Bank reported poverty incidence figures for all metropolitan regions in Egypt at 13.1 per cent in 1995, dramatically declining to 5.1 per cent in 2000. Conversely, one Egyptian economist writing in the mid-1990s showed that the richest urban households (the top 10 per cent), which controlled about 26 per cent of disposable income in 1981 had, by 1991, increased their share to 32.6 per cent.<sup>71</sup> The 2009 UNDP *Human Development Report* indicated that the poorest 10 per cent in Egypt were responsible for 3.9 per cent of the total expenditure, while the richest 10 per cent enjoyed 27.6 per cent. It may be noted that this concentration of wealth is not so negative when compared with income differentials in other developing countries.

Informality was also a reaction to the galloping speed of rising land prices as the country’s economy became internationalized. Consequently, the lives of Cairenes have been reshaped spatially and economically by globalization and neoliberalism in significant ways; they are expected to ‘produce, consume and service this new economy’<sup>72</sup> without benefitting from access to much influence and without feeling they are closer to government and its processes. Some analysts argue from different angles that these changes are increasing stratification, inequalities, hierarchies and differences amongst Egyptians.



Late night shopping is very common in Cairo – a city famed for its vibrant night life.

Image: Chris Horwood

One describes the results as ‘Cairo’s neoliberal spatial political economy’.<sup>73</sup> Part Two will look at these differences in Cairo and discuss how the burdens and opportunities affect different groups of Cairenes, as established in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey.

## How poor is Cairo?

The disaggregation of income distribution reveals that there is a lack of depth and a high compression of the bulk of urban households having low to moderate incomes in Cairo. While there are both critically poor and ultra-rich sections of Cairo, the majority of Cairenes are clustered within a relatively narrow range.<sup>74</sup> This is in contrast to the extremes seen in other parts of the world such as Latin America and Asia, where Gini coefficient measurements indicate very high income disparities that are reflected in a deeper range in income distribution figures.

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey echoes this finding and will be elaborated in subsequent sections. Egypt’s urban areas consistently show much lower incidences of poverty than rural areas, but greater disparities than the national average, especially in the metropolitan governorates of Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez. For example, the official metropolitan poverty level in Cairo in 2005 was calculated by one study to be 5.67 per cent, in contrast with rural Upper Egypt, where 36 per cent of the population was living in poverty.<sup>75</sup>

The analysis of intra-city inequality and poverty in Cairo is partly problematic due to the administrative boundaries between governorates, as mentioned, and the problematic categorizations of *rural* and *urban* areas. Including poorer peripheral areas (some situated in urban Giza and Qalyoubia governorates) in Greater Cairo would change the existing figures for poverty incidence rates in the city.

According to the government’s 2008 mid-point assessment of its performance on the MDGs, ‘Egypt’s commitment to poverty alleviation has acquired clear momentum through the explicit adoption of the goal of reducing poverty to 15 per cent by 2011/2012 in its national Sixth Five Year Socioeconomic Plan (2007-2012).’<sup>76</sup> The report claims the goal

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**...intra-city inequality and poverty in Cairo is partly problematic due to the administrative boundaries between governorates and the problematic categorizations of rural and urban areas.**

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is based on national poverty lines and asserts that Egypt has already achieved its international commitment of reducing to half extreme poverty based on \$1 per day. The government partly ascribes the national increase in poverty between 2000 and 2005 to

distortion in data due to infrequent surveys of poverty. They subsequently increased their survey frequency to identify trends more precisely and therefore, presumably, target interventions in public spending more accurately.

The mid-point assessment found that gains made in reducing the number of those living on less than US \$1 per day (3.4 per cent of Egyptians in 2005, compared to 8.2 per cent in 1990) were countered by gains in the number of people living on just US \$2 dollars per day (42.8 per cent in 2005 compared to 39.4 per cent in 1990).<sup>77</sup> The next section offers a discussion of poverty lines and the value of income/expenditure surveys in urban Egypt.

According to the 2005 Household Income, Expenditure and Consumption Survey (HIECS), estimated per capita poverty lines vary across the regions. Data from a World Bank and Ministry of Economic Development poverty assessment based on comparisons between actual expenditures and the cost of a consumption basket securing 2,470 calories per day per person showed that overall about 40.5 per cent of the Egyptian population is in the range of extreme poor to near poor.<sup>78</sup> Poverty has a strong regional dimension in Egypt and concentrates in the upper region of the country, both urban (18.6 per cent) and rural (39.1 per cent), while metropolitan areas are the least poor (5.7 per cent). The government is now reputedly employing recently completed poverty maps as tool for geographic targeting of public resources.

Another aspect relevant to Egypt as a lower middle-income country is that the income-poor may have various household possessions that in other countries are associated with the non-poor. For example, many families in income-poor areas own refrigerators, stoves, mobile phones, televisions, and in some cases computers with internet connections. In comparison with slum areas in African cities such as Nairobi, Monrovia, Nigeria or Kinshasa, or Asian slums such as those found in India, Bangladesh or Indonesia, the level of visible deprivation found in Cairo is considerably lower. In this respect, the poor in Cairo may be closer to those of Latin American cities, where the standard of living of the urban

poor is less extreme in absolute terms than in other regions. As the following sections illustrate, the level of disparities and inequality *within* Latin American cities, for example, is typically far more extreme than in Cairo, where Gini coefficient measurements are low, but where income poverty is also relatively high. Nevertheless, economic deprivation, low salaries and high living costs were some of the key complaints of the popular demonstrations in Cairo and other cities that led to the resignation of President Mubarak in February 2011.

### Poverty gap ratio

As people in the lowest income decile gradually rise up out of poverty, it is not surprising that the numbers of those on the margins of the poverty line increase. The high compression of lower-income households and poor people in Egypt implies that the challenge of poverty reduction lends itself to faster returns once efficient pro-poor policies are implemented. Economic growth can help to achieve visible progress in reducing poverty. The growth elasticity of poverty in Egypt as a whole is quite high at -3, meaning that 10 per cent growth in real per capita consumption for everyone will reduce poverty by 30 per cent. Sustaining equitable growth of 3 per cent increase in per capita consumption per year over the period 2007 to 2012 will reduce poverty prevalence in Egypt to around 10 per cent, according to the World Bank Egypt Poverty Assessment Update of 2007.

### Gini coefficient for Egypt and Cairo

The Gini coefficient describes income inequality as a measure of distribution, with 0 corresponding to complete equality (everyone in a given population receives the same share of total income) and 1 corresponding to complete inequality (one person has all of the income). The result is expressed as a coefficient ratio. Its use is limited for describing what is going on in a particular context with regard to poverty, economic growth, income and consumption inequalities, and human development, but the Gini index for Egypt testifies to a decline of income inequality both over the historic long term as well as in the recent past.<sup>79</sup>



*Bread has been heavily subsidized for many years. Rising food and commodity prices in Cairo are the household expenditures of the middle classes as well as the poor.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

The 2009 United Nations *Human Development Report* statistics illustrate that Egypt as a whole is ranked as a Middle Development Country, number 123 out of 182 countries listed. However, the Gini coefficient of income inequality for Egypt is low, at 32.1 — in contrast to the United States, for example, which has a Gini coefficient of 40.8, indicating a higher level of income inequality. Additionally, two countries clustered next to Egypt on the UNDP

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### **...the Gini coefficient of income inequality for Egypt is low, at 32.1**

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human development table — Nicaragua and Botswana — both have higher Gini coefficients of 50.5 and 53.7, respectively. Consider also that Burundi (with a Gini coefficient of 35.5) sits virtually at the bottom of the UNDP human development ranking, and Canada (with a Gini coefficient of 32.6) ranks among the top four countries in the world in development, yet both share similar Gini calculations as Egypt. This illustrates that the Gini merely measures distribution and differentials about the sharing of wealth or, of course, the sharing of poverty.

The average country-wide Gini coefficient calculations in Egypt are higher than the rural income inequality measures and lower than the urban levels. Cairo, alongside its concen-

tration of informal areas and urban poor, is home to the most valuable companies and wealthiest families in Egypt and should be expected to have higher Gini measurements than the rest of the country. There is a dearth of systematic analysis on Greater Cairo using the Gini coefficient in relation to income. Some analyses over the years offer indications of fluctuations and, more recently, decline in income and expenditure inequality. One writer using 1991 World Bank figures suggests that the Gini coefficient for Egypt was 32 that year, with urban inequality higher at 34.6 and rural at 29.1.<sup>80</sup> By 1995, the same analyst showed the Gini had risen to 34 for the whole of the country; in 2002, the Gini for Cairo had risen to 38, based on expenditure figures from the World Bank.<sup>81</sup> There are no comparable calculations today to assess the extent of change from the 2002 estimations.

Another analyst quotes a Gini coefficient for Cairo governorate over the 1991 to 1998 period as 33.7 but suggests it should be higher because Cairo governorate on its own misses the wealthy sectors of Giza (Dokki and Mohandisin), as well as at least 40 per cent of Greater Cairo population that would, if included, change the inequality findings.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the coefficient calculations for Egypt and Cairo remain low compared with many other developing, and developed, countries.

## Disputed poverty lines in Greater Cairo

For years, the Egyptian government and other observers have publicized the downward trend of poverty in Egypt and Cairo, but a recent study contests the scope and veracity of these positive changes.

The London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) produced a working paper in 2009 focusing on the issue of poverty lines in Greater Cairo.<sup>83</sup> The report explores the debate around and criticism of poverty lines in Cairo and Egypt, the cost and conditions of living in Cairo's informal areas and what it described as flawed urban data. The report concludes that the 'incidence of poverty is considerably underestimated in Greater Cairo' and cites two main reasons for this. First, the official poverty lines are set too low in relation to the actual costs of basic necessities. Second, and critically, the household survey data that informs poverty line studies represents an under-sampling of people living in informal settlements, while also undercounting populations in these locations.

The IIED analysis suggests that simple income and consumption measurements fail to capture the scope of poverty, and that multidimensional measures are more relevant for capturing the reality of poverty. They assert that using the conventional US \$1 per person per day poverty line<sup>84</sup> in the Egyptian context produces 'misleading and meaningless' figures about poverty.<sup>85</sup> They illustrate this by citing a recent application of this poverty line that leads to a conclusion that just 2 per cent of Egyptians were 'poor' in 2004. External studies also generally place poverty in Greater Cairo at a relatively low level of 5 to 10 per cent. This conclusion would suggest that Egypt has already achieved the main poverty target of the MDGs<sup>86</sup> and that the overall trend in poverty reduction has been positive in recent years. According to the IIED, the fact that a large cohort of the county's poor hovers between the US \$1 to \$2 per person per day, and that the actual necessary non-food expenditure is underestimated, limits the relevance of official data on policy and decision-making. Income

distribution is such that there is a clustering of Egyptian families slightly above the poverty line, so the number of poor is very sensitive to where that line is drawn.

The IIED findings are also critical of other poverty assessments, which use different methodologies, terminology and 'flawed data' that result in unreliable and non-comparable poverty measures in Cairo and Egypt today.<sup>87</sup> The report suggests that such low poverty incidence in Greater Cairo cannot be reconciled with other studies that chart the explosive growth of informal areas and slums in recent decades with the conclusion that just 4.6 per cent of Cairo is officially poor.<sup>88</sup> Equally, if poverty is so low, the authors ask, how is it that a major demographic health survey

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**...the way in which poverty is defined and measured has implications for who is considered poor, what the state's response and policies must be, and how the state's interventions can be judged.**

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identifies malnutrition levels of up to 18 per cent amongst Egyptian children?<sup>89</sup> They also claim that the national Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) consistently undercounts the population of the informal areas, which results in significant distortions of subsequent surveys and conclusions.<sup>90</sup> The reasons they identify for such under-counting include the government's ambiguous relationship with informal areas and those living in them, definitional problems, political motivation, outdated maps, lack of intergovernmental administrative authorities and administrative incapacity.

Clearly, the way in which poverty is defined and measured has implications for who is considered poor, what the state's response and policies must be, and how the state's interventions can be judged. Underestimation and misrepresentation of poverty have the capacity to misinform policymaking and distort wider understanding of Cairo's and Egypt's



Tourism is a major source of revenue for Cairo and Egypt.

Image: Chris Horwood

actual development progress in terms of social welfare, distributive justice and general perspectives of equity.

The discussion of poverty in Cairo, poverty lines, informality and urban dynamics as laid out in Part One of this book is critical to contextualization of the urban inequality debate in Cairo. Increasingly, a multidimensional research methodology is recognized as a superior tool for understanding poverty. Under-reporting, under-estimating and under-sampling of large groups of poor in Cairo distort findings and the subsequent policy debate and reforms. That inaccurate poverty counts in Greater Cairo lead to the develop-

ment of policies that miss the majority of the poor is the central claim of one recent study:

*The informal areas generally have high concentrations of the urban poor, high illiteracy rates, high rates of unemployment or underemployment because of seasonal or daily jobs, a predominance of work in the informal economy, child labour, environmental hazards, widespread illness due to lack of basic services, narrow pathways between buildings, overcrowding in rooms, lack of privacy, unhygienic conditions due to rubbish, insects and rodents and thus much higher infant mortality. Given these general character-*

**Table 4: Conflicting population figures for one squatter settlement alone — Ezbet el Haggana (Haggana)**

Source of population estimation / calculation for Haggana only	Slum population level
1996 census records a population of in Haggana (CAPMAS)	32,652
2006 census finds that the population increased (CAPMAS)	39,432
In the CAPMAS Master List of slums in Egypt (CAPMAS 2001), which lists the names and population figures for all slum areas in all Egyptian governorates	412
Soliman, A. (2004), <i>A Possible Way Out: Formalizing Housing Informality in Egyptian Cities</i> , University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland.	400,000
Ghazaleh, P. (2002), "Two miles into limbo displaced Sudanese in a Cairo slum", <i>Middle East Report</i> 225: 2–7.	1,000,000
El-Gohary, H. (2004), <i>Thaqafat al-Tahayol: Dirasa Maydaneyya Lenamadtheg min al-Tagamo'aat al-Ashwa'iyya bil-Qahira al-Kobra</i> (in Arabic) [The Culture of Manoeuvring: An Empirical Study for types of Ashwa'iyyat in Greater Cairo], Cairo University Social Research and Studies Centre, Cairo.	1,000,000
Masoud, A. and I. Moawwad (2007), 'Ezbet el-Haggana: millyoun faqeer fi intizar al-Rahma (in Arabic) [Ezbet El Haggana: A million poor people awaiting mercy], Al Masry AlYoun, Cairo.	1,000,000
GTZ counted the number of buildings in Haggana using satellite maps from 2007 and GIS techniques. Based on field work they assumed that each of the 8,503 buildings counted had five households with an average size of five people.	212,575 (estimate)
Davis, M. (2006), <i>Planet of Slums</i> , Verso, London.	14 <sup>th</sup> largest slum in world

Source: IIED 2009; study provided all examples in part of its analysis of underreporting and under-sampling as a result of under-estimations.

*istics, a money-metric measure of poverty which fails to reflect these difficult conditions of life in Greater Cairo slums is inadequate. People living under these conditions may have expenditure a few pounds higher than poverty lines, but it is inconceivable to think of anyone living in such conditions as “not poor”.*<sup>91</sup>

The Area-based Physical Deprivation Index (APDI) approach used by SRC/UN-HABITAT tried to meet this challenge, as close adherence to money-metric measures can only provide a partial measure of poverty and inequality. In 2010, Oxford University collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme to develop and launch a new Multidimensional Poverty Index<sup>92</sup> focusing on a wide range of time-specific, contemporaneous deprivations to create a more realistic portrait of poverty amongst the global poor. The same is needed to understand the conditions of the poor in Cairo, which are arguably more dire than statistics suggest. Money, it appears, cannot be taken as a proxy for welfare under the assumption that ‘with sufficient financial resources, households and individuals in Egypt could conceivably purchase better healthcare and better education for their children. With the declining quality of public services, this claim does not hold true.’<sup>93</sup>

## Contextualizing the terminology and understanding definitions

In Egypt, the unofficial vernacular term for slum is *aashwai* (random), a term also used for all types of informal areas. The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) identification of slums is primarily through a legal lens: ‘Neighbourhoods that have been constructed by individuals either on their own agricultural land or on vacant state desert land

under the process of “hand claim” without formal licenses or building documents’.<sup>94</sup>

In 2000, CAPMAS used their definition to identify 76 slum areas in the Cairo governorate with more than 2 million residents accounting for 36 per cent of slum dwellers in Egypt. Nevertheless, this definition has been strongly critiqued in the slum literature in Egypt and has now been superseded by the work of the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF).

In early 2010 at a UN-HABITAT Middle East planning meeting, a senior analyst declared, ‘In Cairo we have no slums: we have informal areas’. Her point was not that Cairo is free of settlements with specific housing deprivations, but that the international definition of the term ‘slum’ needs to be balanced and grounded in contextual conditions, country-

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**In Cairo, the terms informal settlements, illegal settlements, deteriorated areas, slums, squatter areas and *ashwa’iyyat* have been and continue to be used interchangeably without clear precision.**

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specific expectations and national socio-cultural norms. In Cairo, the terms informal settlements, illegal settlements, deteriorated areas, slums, squatter areas and *ashwa’iyyat* have been and continue to be used interchangeably without clear precision. However, with the new work of a dedicated government entity addressing slums — the ISDF — awareness as to what is actually a slum should grow. The APDI used for the SRC/UN-HABITAT methodology is not synonymous in any way with slum definitions, but is rather a measure of the services and facilities different areas of Cairo enjoy.





*The streets of informal settlements are busy with the activities of the informal economy - providing employment for the majority of its working inhabitants.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

Although this book does not offer a slum analysis of Cairo, it may be noted that UN-HABITAT defines slum households as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
2. Sufficient living space, with not more than three people sharing the same room.
3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

The findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey will be examined primarily according to these five criteria in Part Two, in addition to other revealing criteria. When UN-HABITAT's five criteria are used to identify and indicate slum areas (in which more than 50 slum dwellers are clustered together) in Cairo, an ambiguous picture of the city emerges, raising questions as to the efficacy of the formal definition.

For example, virtually 100 per cent of dwellings in the city have access to clean water, even if detailed investigations reveal that areas and neighbourhoods, and households of different incomes, differ greatly in terms of the quality, pressure and availability of their water supply. In terms of sanitation, the cov-

erage is generally poor, but limited upgrading of various informal areas that appear to be slums has given more people access to sanitation. Overcrowding is endemic in Cairo (in terms of inhabitants per area), and the poorer households carry a slightly heavier burden in this regard, but in terms of durable household building materials, the vast majority of poor residents live in solid brick and cement structures, mostly apartments.

In terms of tenure, while most of the poorest residents living in dwellings that resemble slums do not have secure legal tenure, the same is also true for the majority of Cairenes

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### **ISDF's estimation is that unsafe areas comprise 5 to 10 per cent of informal areas**

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who live in the irregular, illegal, informal settlements built in contravention of land laws and building or urban planning regulations (including the unregulated vertical extension of buildings and homes). Despite this, the *de facto* perception of secure tenure by people of all socioeconomic groups is high, indicating a prevailing sense of protection from any serious prosecution by authorities for contravening laws and codes. Cairenes appear to fear actual forced evictions even less.

In the Egyptian government's new classification of settlements as planned, unplanned or

unsafe, those dwellings classified as *unsafe* are also regarded as slums. In this new schema, the Egyptian government has used the UN-HABITAT expanded slum criteria to develop an analysis that identifies 404 areas in the whole country (80 per cent of which are in Greater Cairo) as 'slum' areas. ISDF's estimation is that unsafe areas comprise 5 to 10 per cent of informal areas, indicating their scale in relation to unplanned areas as a whole. These areas may be situated in planned and unplanned urban areas and over the coming years will face demolition, upgrading and resettlement.<sup>95</sup>

## The question of slums

In Cairo, 'slum' was until recently a catch-all term that generally encompassed economic, aesthetic, legal, spatial, architectural and public health notions of undesirable areas of urban development. The term was and continues to be used imprecisely in the vernacular and in the literature. The greatest confusion has been caused by the habit of equating all informal urban areas with slums.

Using the MDG Expert Group slum criteria, which echo UN-HABITAT's criteria but omit mention of secure tenure, and the government's own assessments, slum *areas* throughout Egypt not only increased in number from 1,174 to 1,210 between 2004 and 2006, but the share of urban population living in slums also increased by 3.5 per cent from 2004 to 2006.<sup>96</sup> In its 2008 MDG Midpoint Assessment report, the Egyptian government noted, 'If this trend persists it will limit Egypt's ability to contribute to the MDG target of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by year 2020'. It went on to say, 'Egypt's poor, and those living in slum areas in general, still need access to multiple services, including better education and health provision, better access to water and sanitation services, and, generally, upgraded infrastructure and housing to improve their well-being.'<sup>97</sup> Since 2008, however, the Egyptian government has sharpened its use of the term 'slum' in conjunction with the establishment of the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), and as part of

its compliance with MDG goals and targets. Additionally, the passing of the new Unified Construction Law changed the terms of the slum debate in Egypt.

Recognising the 'abundance and interference of the laws that regulate the real estate business and the available laws connected to it, in addition to the large number of entities engaged in its various stages of implementation',<sup>98</sup> the government passed the Unified Construction Law in 2008. With the new law, the government aimed to increase transparency, fight irregular urban planning and corruption and fill the gaps in the construction sector — gaps that led to the spread of so-called slums in unplanned areas. The Unified Construction Law simplifies administrative procedures and separates service providers and requesters, while also specifically reducing unjustified payments (bribes) to provincial employees.<sup>99</sup>

In the same year, the ISDF was established by presidential decree to specifically address the problem of slums in Egypt. To do so, it revisited the definitional criteria to present a more accurate account of existing slums and categorize them according to the severity of risk they pose to human life and to property, as a means of prioritizing interventions.

Using the authority of the new Unified Construction Law, the ISDF classified urban areas into two main types for interventions and action: 'unplanned' and 'unsafe' areas. Unplanned areas have been developed without applying detailed plans, land division plans or planning and building regulations. Unplanned areas comprise mainly acceptable concrete structures built on privately owned agricultural land which becomes consolidated over time and fed with infrastructure and services. In unplanned areas where existing land uses or building conditions are not suitable, partial or complete redevelopment may be required. Areas slated for redevelopment include planned but deteriorated inner-city slums, squatter shanty towns and the parts of cemeteries used for living purposes. Under the new approach, conditions on the ground dictate whether residents will be relocated or the area upgraded without their relocation.



*Informal settlements have grown up in the shadow of the cliffs of Mokkatam Mountain.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

For example, slum dwellers at risk of harm from rock slides or floods have to be relocated to areas deemed safe for habitation. Furthermore, legal development plans prepared by agreement of local institutions provide the local policy on the future of the city and consequently define land uses. According to the ISDF, decisions about how to manage slum redevelopment have been decentralized to governorate-level stakeholders.

Unsafe areas were redefined by the ISDF according to the UN-HABITAT slum criteria and prioritized for action. In early 2009, the definition of unsafe areas formed the basis of a

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### **Unsafe areas were redefined by the ISDF according to the UN-HABITAT slum criteria and prioritized for action.**

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national ISDF survey, which prioritized redevelopment in areas where at least 50 per cent or more of the inhabitants are affected by the following criteria:

**First Priority:** Buildings in locations that form threats to human life, including areas in danger of rock slides, flooding or train accidents.

**Second Priority:** Buildings that are constructed with recycled or reused material for walls, roofs, floors and the like; buildings of

low resistance to natural disasters and deteriorated buildings.

**Third Priority:** Threats to the health of inhabitants, as in the case of the lack of clean water, improved sewerage, location within the influence zone of high voltage cables or building on unsuitable, unstable soil.

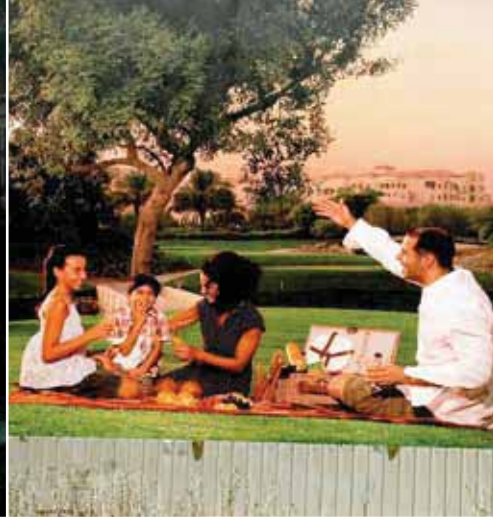
**Fourth Priority:** Threats to stability of inhabitants, such as the lack of ownership or the lack of freedom in dealing with the inhabitants' properties.

The results of the ISDF survey identified just 404 'unsafe' or 'slum' areas in Egypt and provided ISDF with a target and a road map to complete their work within a short timeframe of eight years (2009 to 2017). The results of the ISDF survey have redefined the problematic of slums in Egypt and therefore shown 'substantial discrepancies between previous statistics concerning the size of slums and the more recently produced ones. Areas which are considered unsafe are estimated to contain 1.1 million inhabitants (nation-wide), representing the number of people in great need of immediate action to save lives or improve their living conditions. Such statistics would change the position of Egypt on the world map of slums'.<sup>100</sup> (See Special Feature 5 for more discussion on how ISDF operates and what happens to designated slum areas.)

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Advertisements encouraging people to move out of the city to a better life in the desert developments are common in Cairo. Their target audience is obvious.

## 'my wife is the dearest thing to me in the whole world'

*Ahmad Ibrahim, interviewed 24 June 2010 at his home in Imbaba, on the western bank of the Nile, north of the Mohandiseen part of Giza governorate of greater Cairo. The buildings in this area are not informal. Ahmad's apartment is 40 square metres, with two rooms, a tiny entrance and reception area, a kitchen and a bathroom. Ahmad, like most Egyptians, has worked two jobs: one with the public sector until retirement, and another as a driver for a high-profile multimillionaire and member of the Egyptian elite, for whom he still works to date.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

My name is Ahmad Ibrahim, and I am 62 years old, living in Imbaba. I have been living here for 40 years, since I got married in 1970, and we have four children. The youngest still lives at home with us; the other two are married and live in Mohandiseen. My daughter and her husband were working in the Gulf but have now returned.

Forty years ago, this street was agricultural land and traffic was very slow because the roads were not paved — a lot of free space and empty land plots. Now it's full and crowded. I worked as a driver for 35 years before and during that time. I worked as a public bus driver from 1969 to 1997, and now I'm on pension. My wife is the dearest thing to me in the whole world.

This house I used to rent for EGP 7 [US \$1.25] per month, and then I bought it for EGP 10,000 [US \$1,753] about 10 years ago, so that when my last son gets married he can live in it without having to pay rent. [NB: Traditionally, the father purchases his son's marriage home or apartment.]

There aren't a lot of problems in the building itself except for the water pump engine. Everybody has his own water container or tank and pump-engine at their own expense. There's chaos in the distribution of water and everybody opens their pump whenever they need, on their own good time. Also, everybody disposes of their garbage in their own way. They throw it in the street and then the government trucks pick it up from the street, every two days almost. But of course, the amount of garbage the city produces is unbelievable so you still find a lot of it, even in posh neighborhoods.



### Changes, for better or for worse

Everything will pass whether good or bad, thank god. I struggle a lot at work and gaining my livelihood. Everything I have I give to my son, so he doesn't become envious and look at things with want and desire all the time. I bought him a computer, internet subscription, a mobile phone for EGP 4,000 [US \$700], car for the elder son Mohamed, TVs. What I was deprived of when I was young I don't want to deprive my son of the same. When the father has money he should give it all to his son when he's alive, right now. But there are no real joys in the city here. We go to the beach to my sister's house over the summer sometimes to get away. She is the richer side of the family and has summer homes.

A lot has changed in the past 10 years: the rising cost of electricity, water, the housing crisis; there are no houses available and those available are targeting high-end people and the low end housing that the government often boasts about planning, like the housing ministry for the youth. At the end of the day it is also expensive and hasn't sufficient amenities. Government housing is far from everything, cramped, not even worth it.

I mean, when you pay water, gas, electricity, land-line telephone, mobile phone, food and private lessons for the school kids, then what's left? And of course, the people I work for don't take all these factors to consideration when it comes to my salary.

All my kids needed private lessons because they all went to public schools. There is no way you can pass unless you take private lessons, because the in-class teacher is also the one who gives the private lessons to make up for his low salary. If you don't take private lessons with him your kid stagnates or he says he's stupid. But if you give him money, he's a genius! Either way, the education system is no measure of anything now. So there is corruption in the educational system and funnily enough the school's name is 'The Youth of the Future'.

I've also noticed a lot of changes in my relationships with my neighbors since 10 years ago. Ten years ago we were a more closely knit community, we all knew each other. Now nobody even says hello to the other person. In the past when we used to go to popular areas, there was a warmth and friendliness. It is not the case anymore. Even if I raised a girl and lift her on my shoulders when she was young, now she pretends that she doesn't know me anymore and goes her own way.

There is no familiarity anymore, nor respect between neighbors, because of all the economic pressures, and the process of urbanization annulled the old values and ethics

in big cities. There are a lot of hospitals, but you have to pay for everything. The government doesn't offer any free services anymore for the poor or needy. So the poor people if they get sick or are in an accident are just left to die. And even if you want the body back you have to pay, otherwise it gets sold as organs.

### 'There are huge gaps': Consequences of inequality

Unfortunately 80 to 90 per cent of the population is poor — many don't have enough money to eat! Most of the country is also made up of informal housing, lack of any necessary amenities whatsoever. The government uses these areas during elections, promising empty incentives or blanket or a meal so they vote for whomever they want them to. Even if you ask a member of the house of parliament for any favor or any help, in most cases they do nothing. The poor live in makeshift nests, four to a room or more! Tiny homes for whole families! Then you see families with three or four cars, gardens and several homes while others find nowhere to sleep or start their own family. There are huge gaps, worse than under the king and even worse than when we were under occupation, it was better then! Because back then we were under war fighting but what is the reason now when now we are independent with freedom? So in this case the country can go to hell, occupation was better.

There are public areas in the city with organized systems, cleanliness, lighting, and there are other internal areas that nobody looks at. There are no traffic cops; from Kit-Kat to A'anatir [in the inner city] you won't find a single traffic officer. If the whole world fell down nobody will come to your aid. There are some improvements in some places that have officials in them, like Mohandiseen and Agouza, Zamalek. These areas where the media is or officials are, these people won't let their rights be taken from them, but here who is going to give us our rights? Everybody takes his due with his own hands.

All my kids have higher education but they don't find jobs. If there is no *wasta*, [connections or contacts] then there's no work. The public sector jobs are no good. My older son is married and has no work. The public sector doesn't employ anybody and the private sector has high expectations and they get rid of you anytime. Is it possible that my daughter has an English diploma and she doesn't work? We spent all this money on the language school taking English, Spanish and has no work!? Then my youngest son, when he gets married, where do I and my wife go? I can't afford another home. Forget about having a flat in Imbaba anymore — it's becoming fantastically expensive. So a 60 or 70 metre apartment is now more than EGP 1 million [US \$175,000]. Here, forget it.



## Part Two: The survey findings

The following sections are extensively based on the results of the 2007-2008 SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, but include other survey results and analysis where appropriate. Understanding the particular methodology of the survey is important to fully appreciate the results and how they may complement or compare with other studies (see methodology in the introduction of Part One). Part Two presents an analysis of the SRC/UN-HABITAT data focusing particularly on UN-HABITAT's five key slum indicators: density and congestion, water, sanitation, housing quality and security of tenure. Cairo's indicators of education, health, transportation, solid waste management, employment and household income and expenditures are also discussed in this section, leading to the policy analysis and recommendations in Part Three.

### Introduction to the survey analysis

#### How segregated are the poor from the non-poor?

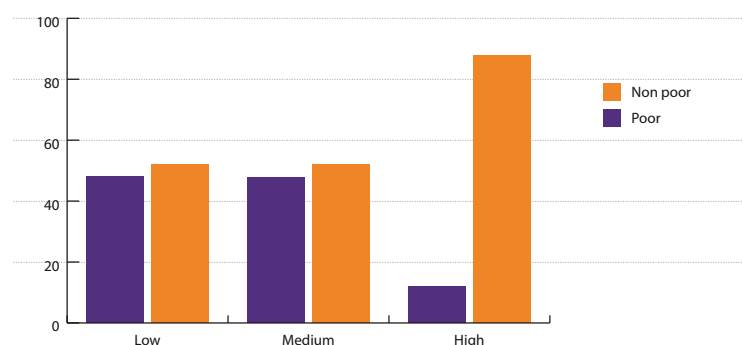
Using the Area-based Physical Deprivation Index (APDI) methodology, the SRC survey took Cairo governorate's some 300-plus *shiakhas* (official census districts) and subdivided some of these to come up with 638 *mantiq* (plural of *mantiq*, or small urban area) that formed the basis of their analysis. These were then categorized as high, medium or low quality, depending on their ranking following the SRC/UN-HABITAT deprivation analysis; 50 *mantiq* were ultimately selected for the household survey.

The survey found a significant level of heterogeneity among poor and non-poor residents of the low- and medium-quality *mantiq* in Cairo. UN-HABITAT recognises that the criteria for classification of medium *mantiq* may be weak in so far as 'medium' often represents

a transition category between low and high *mantiq*. The separation of low from medium may also be questioned in a city where historic diversity, the prevalence of a merchant economy and cultural norms and lifestyle have resulted in an unusually strong spatial integration of mixed socioeconomic groups. This diverse social and urban fabric makes separation of groups into discrete and meaningful categories problematic. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the index used for separation of the area types reflects reality, with many data differentials following a gradient from high to low *mantiq*. The medium *mantiq* reveal characteristics between the two extremes.

In both low- and medium-quality *mantiq*, more than 48 per cent of residents were found to be poor, with just over 50 per cent of the residents being non-poor in terms of the household asset analysis used (Figure 1). In the high-quality *mantiq*, just 12 per cent of the residents were poor, suggesting that in terms of segregation, it is only in the highest *mantiq* where poor and non-poor are not well mixed. These findings concur with other analyses that suggest Cairo is an unusually heterogeneous city with regard to socioeconomic proximity. Income stratification through more modernist city planning has relatively recently replaced the earlier spatial distribution in Cairo, which was based on a

Figure 1: Distribution of households by their poverty level and type of *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



variety of non-income factors. The discussion of Cairo’s informality in Part One and Special Feature 7 on the City of the Dead seek to explain this phenomenon.

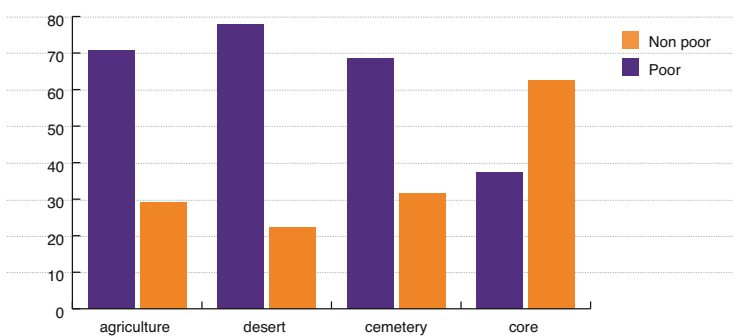
Even in the lowest *mantiq* category, the non-poor are well represented (average 28 per cent) in former desert and agricultural areas (now informal settlements), as well as in cemeteries. In the core and historic areas of Cairo where physical decay, dereliction and dilapidation is most evident along with mixed uses (i.e., commercial and residential), the bulk of the residents are non-poor (62 per cent) despite the *mantiq* categorization as low.

## Characteristics of household members

### Cairene age and gender profiles, by location and status

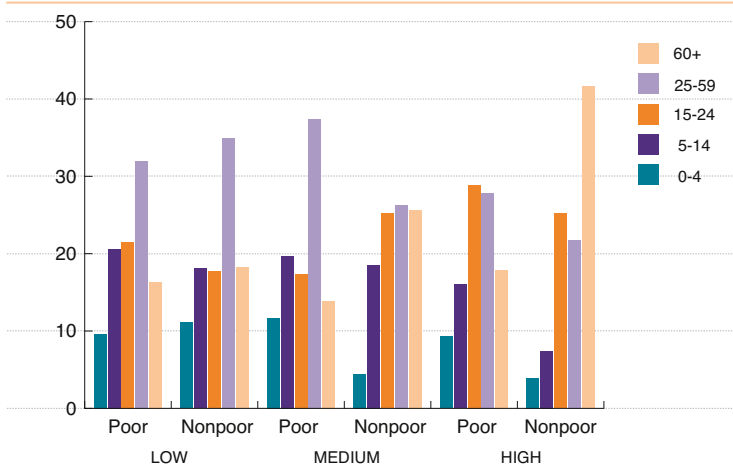
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the age and gender composition of household populations by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level for men and women, respectively. Of the four age group divisions, the dominant age group for men and women in poor and non-poor households is 25 to 59 years old. But the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey indicates that throughout Cairo, residents of high-quality *mantiq* are more likely to be older than residents of the other two types of *mantiq*. The findings from the survey reveal a higher median age among the non-poor in the high-quality *mantiq* compared to the other groups of household populations. The cohorts of children and youth (aged birth to 14) are significantly smaller amongst the non-poor, at 21 per cent of the household population, while amongst the poor, young people represent 29 per cent of the population. Among the poor, young people up to age 24 comprise 50.5 per cent of the population and 44 per cent of the non-poor population. The narrowness of the gap suggests the poor still generally have more children than the non-poor, but the difference is limited.

Figure 2: Distribution of households by their poverty level in low-quality *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 3: Age distribution of male household population by type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

### The marital status of householders

Separation and divorce are uncommon in Cairo across all socioeconomic groups and types of *mantiq*, but women are more likely to be separated or divorced than men.

The survey investigated the marital status of householders aged 18 and older and found on average that 52 per cent of poor people and 59 per cent of non-poor people surveyed were married. Among the male residents of low- and medium-quality *mantiq*, the non-poor were significantly more likely to be married than the poor. Among the female population, only the non-poor in medium-quality *mantiq* were marginally more likely to be married. Being unmarried was more prevalent among the poor than

the non-poor in both low- and medium-quality *mantiq*, suggesting that the costs associated with marriage and setting up a separate home with one's spouse may factor heavily into the decision to marry, in spite of traditional forces that encourage couples to marry early.

Widowhood is rare status among men. Less than 2.3 per cent of all men reported themselves as widowers. In contrast, the proportion of female widows increased relatively according to socioeconomic status, with poor female widows more prevalent (average 16 per cent) than non-poor widows (average 10 per cent) in all three types of *mantiq*.

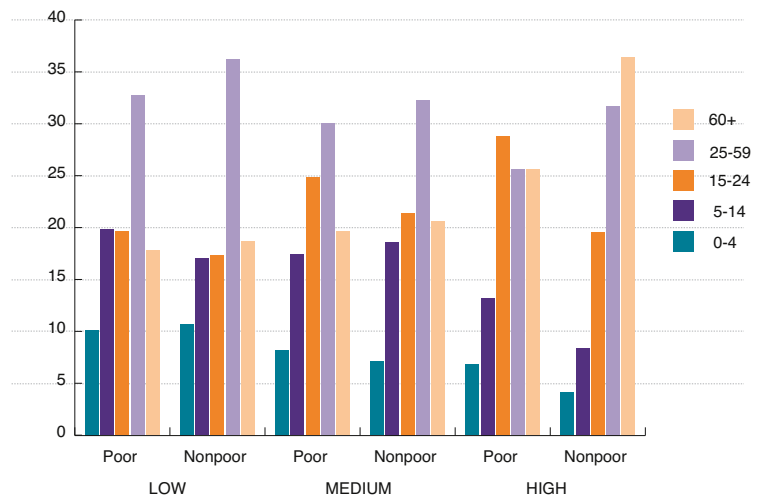
### Household size

The average household size in Cairo based on the data from the current study was 3.9 persons. The data suggests that there were no significant differences among the various types of households in the three types of *mantiq*, except for the relatively lower size of the households in the high-quality *mantiq* (3.4 persons on average).

### Dependency ratios

Many households include members such as young children and old people (relatives) who are dependent on the heads of household in different ways. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey examined the average dependency ratios within the households by the types of *mantiq* and households' poverty level. The findings show a gradient in the average overall level of dependency by the type of *mantiq*. It also reveals that the poor are relatively more likely to shoulder larger burdens than the non-poor in all *mantiq*. For example, child dependency is the dominant type of dependency in all households except among the non-poor in the high *mantiq*, where the aged constitute the greatest dependency burden. The highest child dependency ratios can be observed among the poor in low-quality *mantiq* (at 58 per 100) and the lowest child dependency ratios can be observed among the non-poor in high-quality *mantiq* (19 per 100). While the poor look after more children than old people, the opposite is true for the non-poor. While the non-poor have a high elderly de-

Figure 4: Age distribution of female household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

pendency ratio (at 41 per 100), the poor look after far fewer older people (at 14 per 100).

### Household heads

Female-headed households were observed in 18 per cent of the surveyed population with no significant differences by *mantiq* types. However, there were significant differences according to the poverty level of the households, with poor households more likely to have female heads (average 19.5 per cent) than the non-poor (average 14 per cent), particularly in the low and medium *mantiq*.

### 'Problems' in family relationships

Respondents were asked about the nature of the relationships among family members. The frequency of family problems during the month prior to the survey follow a gradient, with the households in low *mantiq* experiencing the most frequent fights and 'problems'. Families with more than four family problems (internal dramas, fights and the like) during that month were most often found among the poor in medium-quality *mantiq* (20 per cent) followed by the poor in low-quality *mantiq* (18 per cent). About 10 per cent of the non-poor families in both low- and medium-quality *mantiq* reported four or more family fights per month.



*The leafy community of Zamalek in the heart of Cairo – a long established location of the upper socioeconomic groups. Nevertheless, density and congestion remains high.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

When asked about the main reasons for family problems among the household heads, money and child-raising were the most cited reasons, with money mentioned far above all others. The poor were found more likely to argue over money than the non-poor in all *mantiq*, and money problems were least mentioned among the non-poor in the high-quality *mantiq*. Child-raising was a significant source of arguments among the non-poor, particularly in high-quality *mantiq*, followed by households in the low- and medium-quality *mantiq*, respectively.

### **Possessing personal identification and election cards**

Having a personal identification card is important for individuals to gain access to various services and resources offered in their social context. For a long time, women have been less likely to apply for personal ID cards, but there is increasing parity between the sexes in Cairo. According to the SRC/UN-HABITAT data, while an average of 97.5 per cent of men possessed ID cards, only 93 per cent of women had them. While men across the various socioeconomic groups and types of *mantiq* were equally likely to have ID cards, disparities among the women corresponded directly to degrees of poverty. While an average of 96.6 per cent of non-poor women had ID cards (necessary for claiming government subsidies), just 89.6 per cent of poor women had them. According to the National Women Council statistics, however, research in two

rural Ismailia settlements revealed that only 10 per cent of women had ID cards before the intervention of an NGO-initiated upgrading project.<sup>101</sup>

Gender disparities exacerbated by poverty were more evident in the possession of election cards. An election card is an important document that signifies an individual's readiness and desire to actively participate in the political life of Egyptian society. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey showed that having an election card is uncommon amongst Cairenes, especially among women. On average, only 8 per cent of poor women possessed election cards, with the lowest incidence being amongst poor women in high-quality *mantiq* (2.5 per cent). Even among non-poor women, the possession of election cards was low, at an average of 8.3 per cent. Possession of election cards by men was also low but significantly higher than among women. On average, 20 per cent of men from poor households and 21 per cent of men from non-poor households had election cards, despite compulsory voting legislation for men and women in Egypt. The lowest prevalence amongst men was exhibited by the poor in the high-quality *mantiq* (3.8 per cent). The highest prevalence of election card possession among both poor and non-poor was found in the medium-quality *mantiq*, suggesting relatively higher political engagement in these locations than in others. Overall, these results are still low, reflecting the documented absence of widespread political participation in the 'democrat-

ic process' offered in Egypt. The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), that measures and ranks countries according to voter turnout, found that just 28.13 per cent of eligible Egyptians turned out to vote in 2005 — one of the lowest participation rates in the world.<sup>102</sup>

### Sense of security

The level of street crime is relatively low in Cairo and Egypt as a whole.<sup>103</sup> Different contemporary reviews and tourist reports boast of the low crime risks and widespread safety when visiting the country and its main urban centres. Some commentators doubt that the full scale of crime — particularly gender-based violence, sexual harassment or rape — is accurately represented in state and police data, but the general feeling of safety appears to be high.

In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, respondents were asked about their perception of security around their neighbourhood in general. The level of feeling insecure was highest among residents of medium-quality *mantiq* (24 per cent) followed by the low- (20 per cent) and high-quality (10 per cent) *mantiq*. One reason for this may be that residents of low-quality *mantiq* have a sense of community and enjoy mutual public surveillance and residents of high-quality *mantiq* have public policing and private guards, while medium-quality areas, as transitional neighbourhoods, lack these advantages. There were no significant differences by household poverty level.

Length of residence in an area and the age of the settlement factor significantly into residents' perception of security.<sup>104</sup> When asked to compare their current feeling of security to that of five years ago, about 10 per cent of all respondents reported that their level of security has declined, with no differences by the type of *mantiq* or household poverty level. These results are interesting when compared with common perceptions of poorer neighbourhoods, particularly 'slums' and informal areas, portraying them as centres of criminality and violence. Other empirical studies employing complimentary measures of perceptions of safety and security (child play,

children participating in daily shopping, trips to school) reveal the role of the urban fabric, distribution of non-residential uses and community building in safety and perceptions of safety. Residents of newly designed communities seem to harbour the highest levels of perceived insecurity.<sup>105</sup>

Further questioning in the survey did reveal that street harassment and street quarrels were more prevalent in medium- and poor-quality *mantiq* compared with high-quality *mantiq*, revealing a poverty-related social burden of vulnerability borne to a greater extent by the poor. Street harassment was more often reported by residents of low- and medium-quality *mantiq* (46 per cent) compared to high-quality *mantiq* (16 per cent). However, harassment that 'goes beyond the acceptable limits' was reported slightly more often in the low-quality *mantiq*, amounting to 31 per cent compared to 29 per cent in

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### The level of street crime is relatively low in Cairo and Egypt as a whole.

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medium-quality *mantiq* and 8 per cent in low-quality *mantiq*. The eruption of fights is more frequently reported in the low-quality *mantiq* (71 per cent) followed by the medium- (67 per cent) and high-quality (33 per cent) *mantiq*. The same pattern also holds for quarrels that include fist fights, which were reported by 66 per cent of the respondents in low-quality *mantiq*, 38 per cent in medium-quality *mantiq* and 24 per cent in high-quality *mantiq*. Quarrels in which injury-inflicting instruments were used were also reported more frequently by residents in low (55 per cent) followed by medium (29 per cent) and high (21 per cent) *mantiq*. Muggings without force were heard of more often in low *mantiq* (13 per cent) than high ones (3 per cent), but muggings or ambushes where force was used were somewhat more reported in high *mantiq* (18 per cent) than in low ones (16 per cent). These figures strongly suggest a clear social gradient in relation to the differentials listed.

### Social cohesion and cooperation among Cairenes

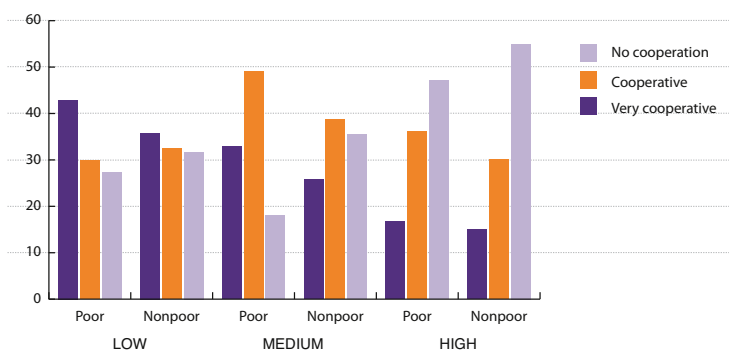
The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey asked respondents about the level of collaboration among neighbourhood residents in two different situations. The first situation was in the case of a utility problem (water, electricity or sewerage) while the second concerned a major problem for one of the residents, such as sickness, accident or death.

For the first situation, Figure 5 shows that residents of low-quality *mantiq* enjoy a high level of cooperation, particularly among the poor (42 per cent among the poor compared to 36 per cent among the non-poor). This trend conforms to other social findings globally that indicate social capital and cohesion is higher among poor and close-living communities. In contrast, residents of high-quality *mantiq* are characterized by reduced levels of cooperation

as reported by both their poor and non-poor residents (47 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively). Residents of the medium-quality *mantiq* are more likely to be somewhat cooperative, with the poor more likely to be involved than the non-poor (49 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively). The tendency to cooperate for service provision in low-quality *mantiq* is aided by social cohesion, but is mainly driven by residents' pragmatic belief that their efforts are the only resort, as they expect no help from government. On the other hand, residents of middle- and high-quality *mantiq* assume that services and utilities are the responsibility of government and it should provide them.<sup>106</sup>

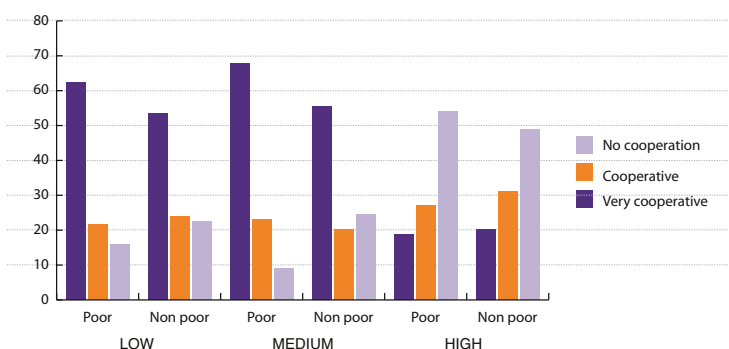
In the second case of a major problem concerning one of the neighbourhood residents, Figure 6 shows that low- and medium-quality *mantiq* are characterized by a high level of cooperation, particularly among the poor. In these *mantiq*, more than 60 per cent of poor respondents reported high levels of cooperation. Among the non-poor, more than 53 per cent reported high levels of cooperation. In contrast, reports of absence of cooperation were more prevalent among residents of high *mantiq*, and particularly the poor. While 54 per cent of the poor in high-quality *mantiq* reported absence of cooperation, the proportion among the non-poor was around 49 per cent. In both situations, the poor living in high-quality *mantiq* suggested that they live somewhat isolated and atomized existences, with few opportunities for cooperation. Often, poor households living in high-quality residential areas are working in the homes of the wealthy as domestic servants and guards, so it is not surprising that they feel more isolation living outside of their own socioeconomic origins. Further data revealed by the survey reinforces this observation.

Figure 5: Residents' cooperation level in case of a utility problem by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 6: Residents' cooperation level in case of major problem to one of the neighbourhood residents by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

## Cairo's urban density in households

Excessive levels of noise, pollution and congestion are common complaints of residents in Cairo, and for many, these have come to characterize the negative aspects of living in a mega-city with a population that has grown



far faster than urban policies or laws have expanded to manage and provide for them. Cairo and Lagos are the only two cities in Africa that have intense population densities that rival the high-density Asian cities at the top of all global density rankings. This is especially true in the informal areas in Cairo, where residential densities are among the highest in the world. In 1998, the average informal

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### **Cairo and Lagos are the only two cities in Africa that have intense population densities that rival the high-density Asian cities...**

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area density in Cairo reached 528 inhabitants per hectare compared to 400 inhabitants per hectare in formal areas.<sup>107</sup> In the informal settlement of Manshiet Nasr, densities of more than 1,500 inhabitants per hectare were recorded in recent years.<sup>108</sup> In 2008, the World Bank quoted even higher figures, stating that some informal areas had in excess of 2,000 inhabitants per hectare.<sup>109</sup> Stated in other terms, while the poorest quintile of Cairo's households had 11.2 square metres of living space per capita in 2008, the richest quintile enjoyed four times that amount of space per person (40 square metres).<sup>110</sup>

Despite the different distribution of age groups within households, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found that the poor and the non-poor together have average household sizes of 3.9

persons with minimal variation among socioeconomic groups. The only exception was found in the non-poor households in high-quality *mantiq*, where the average household size was 3.4 persons. The survey reinforced what other studies have found concerning the average size of households in Cairo and throughout Egyptian urban areas, such as the USAID 2008 study that found the average urban household size throughout Egypt was 4.0.<sup>111</sup> USAID also found that in Greater Cairo, just 6 per cent of households lived in a single room, translating into almost 1 million people (230,000 families in 2008).<sup>112</sup>

One longitudinal study of a working-class area (inhabited by people in the bottom two income deciles) of Cairo's old and historic core reports that single room units house 25 per cent of the households in the area. The same study shows that the average household size in the area in 2003 was 5.2 persons, while in 2009 it had fallen to 4.8 persons. In 2003, 22 per cent of the households had 7 or more persons, while in 2009, only 14 per cent sheltered such large families.<sup>113</sup> This data represents a significant change in household size over a relatively short period.

In terms of living arrangements within households in Cairo, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found that density and congestion increased with poverty and decreased from high- to low-quality *mantiq*. High-density living arrangements, measured in terms of the percentage of households with a density of three persons per room is more prevalent in the

*Residential blocks on the bank of the Nile. Past rental regulation (rental freezes) cause many apartments to be neglected or left empty.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

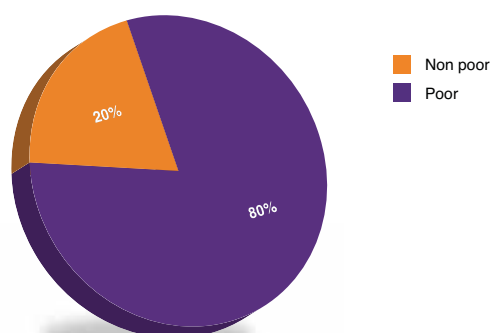
medium (24 per cent) and low (22 per cent) *mantiq* compared to high *mantiq* (9.1 per cent). According to UN-HABITAT international criteria, a dwelling unit is considered a sufficient living area for the household members if fewer than three people sleep in each habitable room (excluding kitchens, bathrooms and halls).<sup>114</sup>

Overcrowding is more common among poor households than non-poor ones. There are two types of congestion and both are significant: household congestion within the housing unit and congestion within the neighbourhood (starting from the residential block to the residential street or alley and then the main streets). As Figure 7 indicates, poor

### Overcrowding is more common among poor households than non-poor ones.

households living in high-quality *mantiq* exhibited the highest proportion of overcrowding, with 49 per cent of them having three or more people per room, followed by the poor in low (31 per cent) and medium (36.5 per cent) *mantiq*. In contrast, among the non-poor, there was a correlation between the proportion of households with three persons per room and the level of deprivation in the *mantiq*. In high-quality *mantiq*, only 3.5 per cent of non-poor households had densities of three (or more) per habitable room.

Figure 7: Households with a density of 3 persons per room by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Investigating sleeping arrangements not only provides further indicators of housing density but also brings up other issues, including the age and sex of household members sharing beds. Table 5 shows that parents commonly slept with their young children in all types of *mantiq*, reflecting cultural habits of child raising. The highest prevalence of adults sleeping with children (up to 6 years old) was found in the medium-quality *mantiq* (60 per cent) closely followed by low-quality *mantiq* (57 per cent) with the least prevalence existing in high-quality *mantiq* (40 per cent). However, differences along poverty lines grew wider as quality of the *mantiq* increased. Overcrowding is more reflected in the percentages of adults sleeping with children older than 6 years as well as in bed-sharing of girls and boys 10 years and older.

Table 5: Sleeping arrangements by type of *mantiq* and household poverty (%)

Low		Medium		High	
Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
Husband and wife sleep with their young children <6 years **					
57.2		60.3		40.1	
62.5	52.1*	71.8	44.4***	97.8	21.7***
Husband and wife sleep with their children aged 6 years and older					
23.1		26.5		14.9	
36.7	10.9***	42.4	15.0*	69.6	8.4**
Girls aged 10 year and older sleep with the boys aged 9 years or less ***					
34.0		33.6		34.0	
41.4	26.0**	49.9	22.6***	62.5	32.4***
Girls aged 10 years and older sleep with the boys aged 10 years and older***					
34.1		28.2		21.1	
40.8	26.9*	44.6	18.0**	81.9	12.4***

\*significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

The highest prevalence of this sleeping arrangement was found among poor households in high-quality *mantiq* (98 per cent) followed by the poor in medium *mantiq* (72 per cent) and the poor in low *mantiq* (63 per cent). Table 5 also shows that, among the non-poor, this living arrangement decreases as the levels of deprivation in the *mantiq* diminish. The greatest contrast between poor and non-poor can therefore be noticed in high-quality *mantiq*, where young children are five times more likely to sleep with their parents if they are poor. This also indicates the likely small and

crowded living areas inhabited by poor households living in high-quality *mantiq*.

The chances of children older than 6 years sleeping with parents are dependent upon socioeconomic status. Parents sleeping with older children were found in almost one-fourth of the households in both low and medium *mantiq* and in almost one-seventh of the households in the high *mantiq*. On average, 21.5 per cent of children older than 6 years sleep with their parents in Cairo, but again this sleeping pattern is more prevalent among the poor than the non-poor, with the highest prevalence observed among the poor in the high *mantiq* (70 per cent) followed by the medium (42 per cent) and low (37 per cent) *mantiq*, respectively.

Young boys were reported to be sleeping with older girls in one-third of the households in all types of *mantiq*. Once again, this was found to be more prevalent (approximately double in all cases) among the poor than the non-poor across the three neighbourhood types.

Girls and boys aged 10 years and older sleeping together was positively related to the level of deprivation of the *mantiq*. These sleeping arrangements are considered more sensitive, and undesirable, as siblings enter adolescence and the age of sexual maturity. Table 5 clearly shows that according to the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey findings, this sleeping pattern is more prevalent among the poor in all types of Cairo's *mantiq*. The most extreme prevalence of this pattern among the poor is in the high *mantiq* (82 per cent) followed by those living in the medium (45 per cent) and the low (41 per cent) *mantiq*. With the average proportion of girls and boys over 10 years sleeping together being 56 per cent for poor households, and 19 per cent for non-poor households, the differentials are clear.

Although cultural practices and traditional familial arrangements need to be understood and appreciated, the findings with regard to density of occupancy and household sleeping arrangements illustrate unacceptable overcrowding, and by UN-HABITAT's criteria, distinguish between poor and non-poor dwellings.<sup>115</sup>

## Housing quality and durability in Cairo

Durability is one of UN-HABITAT's five critical measures of basic, decent urban housing conditions. A house is considered 'durable' if it is built on a non-hazardous location and has a structure permanent and adequate enough to protect its inhabitants from the extremes of climatic conditions. Within this category and definition there are a range of other criteria relevant to Cairo: the dwelling must not be located on a steep slope or in a hazardous location; it must not be in a dilapidated state or need of repair; and it must comply with local building codes and have permanent building materials for the walls, roof and flooring. Finally, the dwelling should not be located in a dangerous right-of-way, such as close to rail lines, power lines or highways.

Some informal dwellings in different parts of Cairo are located in dangerous rights-of-way and as such have been designated 'unsafe' areas by the government in its new categorization of 'slums'. Cairo has other informal areas that are located in dangerous or hazardous en-

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### Dwellings now designated unsafe or slum and identified for upgrading or demolition are few...

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vironments that have also been designated as unsafe/slum areas earmarked for intervention by the newly established Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF). Its most infamous unsafe inhabited area is the Manshiet Nasr settlement, where falling rock from the Muqattam mountain crushed a number of homes and people in September 2008.

Dwellings now designated unsafe or slum and identified for upgrading or demolition are few compared to the millions of dwellings that comprise informal settlements, peripheral urban development or inner-city areas which could be designated as slums by UN-HABITAT standards. Owing to 50 years of





Handsome apartments  
of Cairo's belle époque  
and urban planning  
period.

Image: Chris Horwood

rent control, for example, most of the existing housing stock in medium- and even many high-quality areas of Cairo exhibits considerable decay. Additionally, much of the city's housing stock predates the building codes of 1976 — in some cases, by hundreds of years. Conditions in some quarters may qualify the dwelling as a *slum*, or the household as *slum dwellers* (an important difference) but the term 'slum' has been used so freely by different sources and without reference to set criteria that its currency has been undervalued, leading to some confusion. The reality in Cairo and other parts of urban Egypt is that most people in informal settlements live in durable and solid structures that many commentators suggest may be better built in many cases than housing in formal areas. The USAID Housing Study of 2008 found that 0.1 per cent of urban households lived in 'precarious' units such as shacks and structures unintended for human habitation.<sup>116</sup> Regarding areas as slums merely because they are in informal areas and may have high density, narrow roads and poor hygiene is a misuse of the formal definition and criteria for slums. Some analysts, including the government of Egypt (despite their own new definition) still to almost all informal settlements as slums (therefore more than half of Cairo), while others who understand the specific criteria may claim there are almost no slums at all.

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey explored different aspects of housing conditions and durability in Cairo with close regard to the formal

UN-HABITAT internationally accepted slum criteria. As part of the methodology of the Area-based Physical Deprivation Index (APDI), community surveys divided *mantiq* into high, medium and low quality. Factors that assisted this ranking, amongst others, were the building condition of the areas, construction materials used and presence of environmental risk. As the methodology section explained, the low-quality *mantiq* included settlements in the four categories of residences on former agricultural land, former desert land, cemeteries and core historic areas.

Overall, the survey found there were few socioeconomic differentials with regard to housing conditions and durability and other related factors. The relatively few differences between *mantiq* also reflected the relative homogeneity of building types across the socioeconomic divides. These findings are sig-

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**The relatively few differences  
between *mantiq* also reflected  
the relative homogeneity  
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socioeconomic divides.**

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nificant and point to the unique urban development history of Cairo, which contrasts with that of other large cities in developing countries, where housing conditions and durability are often the defining expression of urban in-

equity. The USAID-sponsored Housing Study of 2008 of all urban Egypt found that 91.3 per cent of households were satisfied with their current housing, while the small remainder were ‘totally dissatisfied’. Interestingly, 41 per cent of all households surveyed for the USAID study characterized their neighbourhood as informal (*aashwa'i*).<sup>117</sup> The data gathered in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey sheds light on why this high level of satisfaction exists in an environment where the fundamental differentials by geography and socioeconomic status are minimal with respect to housing conditions and durability.

Overall, in urban Egypt, the dominant type of building is the small, multi-story apartment block: 88 per cent of all housing units in the survey are apartments in buildings and only 8 per cent are either villas or rural houses.<sup>118</sup> The remainder comprise single rooms in buildings or apartments. Of the 17,852 buildings surveyed for the USAID study, 81 per cent were rated ‘adequate’ regarding their general condition, while 18 per cent were deemed ‘partially adequate,’ and 1 per cent ‘inadequate’. The average age of buildings was established as 38 years.

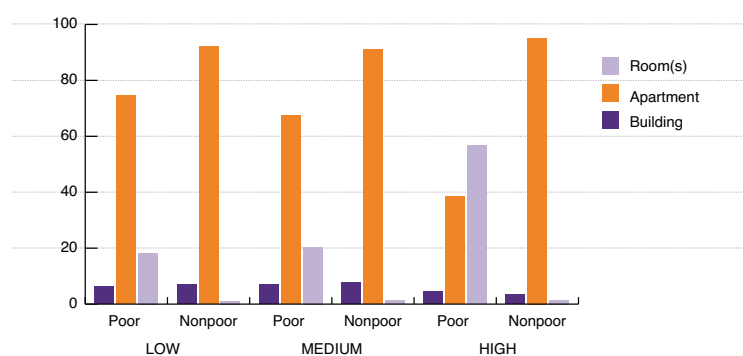
Respondents to the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey were asked to report the type of housing unit in which they live. Figure 8 shows that apartments are the most prevalent type of housing among all surveyed households in all *mantiq*. At least 68 per cent of the households lived in apartments, except for the poor in high *mantiq*. Among those residents, living in single rooms was more common, amounting to 57 per cent. It should be noted that many people also live in rooftop rooms in Cairo. Furthermore, the poor households in all *mantiq* were more likely than the non-poor to live in rooms.

Having a permanent building structure appropriate for the climate and context is important for the welfare of individuals. Figure 9 shows that more than 90 per cent of the households in Cairo in all types of *mantiq* benefit from a permanent structure, made primarily of cement and concrete walls. However, the poor were more likely than the non-poor to have a ceiling made of non-permanent materials, including wood planks (which are not necessar-

ily non-durable). Having an uneven ceiling was most prevalent among the poor in medium-quality *mantiq* (26 per cent) followed by the poor in the high-quality *mantiq* (13 per cent) and poor in low-quality *mantiq* (8 per cent). On average, 5.6 per cent of poor households had holes in the ceiling of their dwellings.

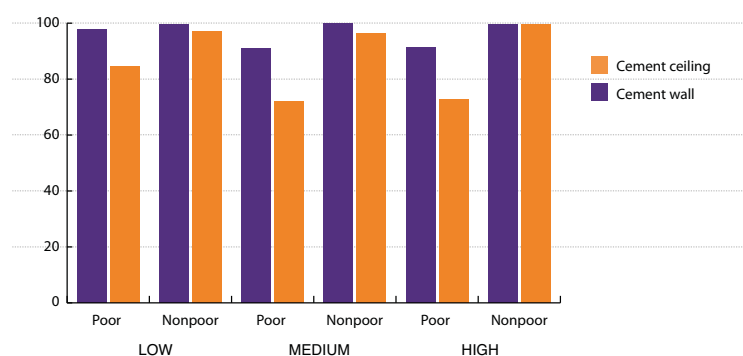
The external aspects of houses were not investigated in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, but observations of Cairo make clear the differences between informal or core historic neighbourhoods and the wealthier parts of the city. While the predominant colour palette of Cairo’s urbanity in the last 25 years is grey and shades of beige and ochre, owing mostly to the city’s high level of air pollution and car exhaust, virtually none of the buildings in the informal sectors are finished with any render, plaster or paintwork. The blocks and bricks that form their construction are

Figure 8: Housing structure by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 9: Walls and ceiling structure of the housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

visible and unadorned, giving the buildings an unfinished appearance, while those buildings in the historic core are characterized by dilapidated, once well-kept buildings, falling masonry, faded paintwork and partial building collapse.

### Housing interiors

Respondents were asked about the material of their housing floor. The most common two types of floor reported by the respondents were ceramic and cement tiles. Table 6 shows that ceramic floor tiles were significantly more prevalent among the non-poor, while cement tiles were more prevalent among the poor in all types of *mantiq*. The use of paint or wallpaper for walls increased with the betterment of the physical structure of the *mantiq*. Furthermore, wall coverings were found to be more significantly common among the non-poor compared to the poor in all *mantiq* in which poor households were represented. The poor in high *mantiq* are the least likely to have wall coverings among all respondents (56.4 per cent).

Ventilation of the house is an important health indicator. Rooms without a window were found more frequently in the medium-quality *mantiq* (14.3 per cent) followed by the low- (11.4 per cent) and high-quality (6.8 per cent) *mantiq*. When correlated with the poverty level of the

household, the poor are the most likely to have rooms without ventilation, particularly those living in high-quality *mantiq* (38 per cent).

Having glass on all windows is common among all households, amounting to more than 90 per cent in all *mantiq*. However, poor households again fare worse in this regard compared to non-poor households, particularly in high-quality *mantiq*. In high *mantiq*, only 71 per cent of the poor households have glass on all windows, compared to 81 per cent and 86 per cent of poor households in low and medium *mantiq*, respectively.

Table 6 shows that good ventilation was reported by more than 90 per cent of all households in all *mantiq* with the poor faring worse than the non-poor in this regard. Again, poor households in high *mantiq* are more likely to experience lack of ventilation (43 per cent) compared to the poor in low (15 per cent) and medium (14 per cent) *mantiq*. The greatest extremes in this analysis were found between the non-poor and the poor in high *mantiq*, where over 38 per cent of poor households had rooms without windows while just 2 per cent of the non-poor lived in the same areas. Again, the socioeconomic differential is most acute between poor and non-poor in high *mantiq* with regard to ventilation: only 57 per cent of the poor reported good ventilation while over 98 per cent of their non-poor neighbours enjoyed the same.

**Table 6: Housing structure by type of *mantiq* and household poverty (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
Type of floor						
Ceramic tiles *	23.3		23.7		54.0	
	7.9	37.6 ***	7.2	38.7 ***	0.3	61.5 ***
Cement tiles **	66.8		63.9		27.1	
	76.4	57.8 ***	76.9	51.9 *	88.2	18.6 ***
Painted Wall						
Painted oil/ wallpaper†	80.9		82.8		89.8	
	65.5	95.6 ***	67.4	97.4 ***	56.4	95.6 ***
Windows and their conditions						
Room without windowst	11.4		14.3		6.8	
	16.2	7.0 ***	19.7	9.2 **	38.1	2.5 ***
Glass windowst	90.4		93.5		93.6	
	81.7	98.4***	86.5	99.9*	71.3	96.7***
Good ventilation†	91.0		89.5		93.1	
	84.4	97.1***	85.9	92.9†	57.0	98.4***

†significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

The reality for many poor people living and working in high *mantiq* in the service of non-poor households is that they are frequently given space such as basements, rooftop structures and ground floor storage areas that were not originally designed for human habitation. This is also illustrated by the findings in the survey concerning electricity access, bathroom and kitchen facility availability, and other criteria mentioned throughout this publication. Overall, the poor in high *mantiq* experience greater deprivation than other socioeconomic groups across all types of areas.

In terms of electricity access, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found that nearly all households are connected to the network: less than 4 per cent of all households do not have access to regular electricity. The group

with the lowest level of access is again poor households in high *manitiq*, but even among that group, 86 per cent are connected to the general electricity network. Regarding power interruption, however, the data showed that almost 23 per cent of households in low *manitiq* experienced continuous power interruption, compared to 16 per cent and 11 per cent in the medium and high *manitiq*, respectively. In both low and high *manitiq*, the non-poor were more likely to report more power interruption than the poor, while in the medium *manitiq*, it was the poor who were more likely to experience power interruption. It should be noted that many poor *manitiq* households may receive their power

**...many poor *manitiq* households may receive their power illegally through tapping into main networks.**

illegally through tapping into main networks. ‘Once settled, slum dwellers try to force state authorities to extend water and electricity to their neighbourhoods by tapping into them illegally. A cursory look at Cairo communities such as Dar al-Salam, Ezbat al-Sadat, Ezbat Khairallah, Ezbat Nasr and Basatin provides evidence of this widespread phenomenon. In late April 1996, the municipality reported that it had cut off 800 illegal electricity lines in Cairo’s Dar al-Salam and Basatin communities in one raid alone’.<sup>119</sup>

This is a problem for power companies (as well as water companies, with respect to cost-recovery for water) and is a problem typical of informal and unplanned settlements throughout the world. Power interruption that lasts for more than half an hour was more common in the low *manitiq*; it was reported by 14 per cent of the poor and 18 per cent of the non-poor in these *manitiq* as well as 15 per cent of the poor in medium *manitiq*.

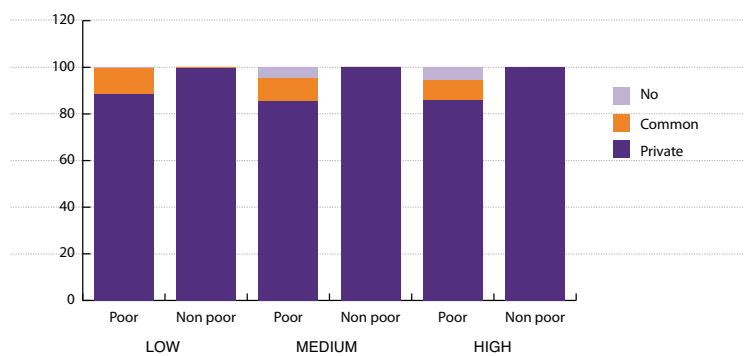
**Bathrooms and kitchens**

Respondents were asked whether they have or use private or common bathrooms. Figure 10

shows that the majority of the households surveyed have private bathrooms. However, some poor households do use common bathrooms in all three *manitiq*; this is relatively rare among the non-poor. The highest prevalence of common bathroom usage can be found among the poor in low *manitiq* (11 per cent) followed by the poor in the medium (9.8 per cent) and high *manitiq* (8.5 per cent). Having no toilet was reported by poor households in medium (4.5 per cent) and high *manitiq* (5.4 per cent).

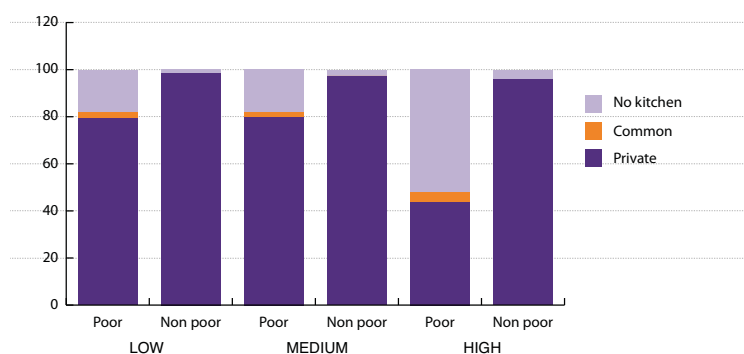
Figure 11 shows that having a private kitchen (non-shared, for family use only) is a common characteristic of all households and all types of *manitiq*. However, it also shows that in low and medium *manitiq*, about 18 per cent of the poor households do not have a kitchen compared to less than 5 per cent of the non-poor households. Poor households in high *manitiq* exhibit the worst situation: 51 per cent of these households do not have access to a kitchen facility.

**Figure 10:** Bathroom ownership by type of *manitiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Figure 11:** Availability of kitchen in the household by type of *manitiq* and household poverty



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



Construction continues  
in New Cairo.

Image: Chris Horwood

## Urban access to improved water

Egypt has already reached the Millennium Development Goals of halving the number of people without access to safe water and improved sanitation by 2015. According to the United Nations Development Programme, with 98 per cent national coverage in 2004, Egypt ranked among the best middle human development countries in the world in terms of providing rural and urban areas with improved drinking water supply. Only Lebanon (100 per cent) and Thailand (99 per cent) scored higher in the same development bracket.<sup>120</sup>

At the national level, Egyptian water sector policies are a collaborative effort by different ministries. The Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation is responsible for ensuring that all users receive enough water. The Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities supervises water authorities, which are responsible for the treatment and delivery of water. The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency is responsible for the assessment and monitoring of water use, while the Ministry of Health and Population is responsible for analyzing water quality. The Holding Company for Water and Wastewater was founded by decree in 2004 and is responsible for financial and technical sustainability of the local governorate-based utilities. In 2006, the Egyptian Water Regulatory Agency (EWRA) was established to carry out economic and technical regulation.

Mains-driven piped water supply between 1990 and 2006 increased from 89 per cent to 99 per cent coverage in urban areas, and from 39 per cent to 82 per cent in rural areas, despite rapid population growth. In the midpoint assessment of its performance on the MDGs, the Egyptian government claimed that access to an improved water source in Egypt is now practi-

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**Mains-driven piped water supply between 1990 and 2006 increased from 89 per cent to 99 per cent coverage in urban areas.**

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cally universal, with more than 99 per cent of urban residents enjoying access, along with 93 per cent of the rural population.<sup>121</sup> USAID's Housing Study of 2008 confirmed that 98.7 per cent of sampled households in Greater Cairo had access to running water.<sup>122</sup>

But the same report admits that the 2006 census revealed a decrease in the proportion of coverage. It found that, 'in spite of continuous government efforts to extend water services to all urban and rural population, the water service does not catch up with rapid population growth, and hence service coverage is worsening'.<sup>123</sup> Though the access level still meets the 2015 target, the challenge facing the government, they claim, is to sustain it. In Cairo, population increase occurs mainly in the informal unplanned settlements which initially, at least, are always poorly serviced.

Behind these positive statistics lie important issues of efficiency, quality, quantity, cost and regularity of the water supply. Areas that suffer most are rural, peri-urban and new urban expansions. According to the government’s National Research Centre, 40 per cent of Cairenes do not get water for more than three hours per day, and some districts do not receive any piped water at all. Other reports suggest that up to 40 per cent of Cairo’s drinking water is wasted as a result of deteriorating supply networks (leakages), with some networks being made of asbestos, and water theft through illegal tapping.<sup>124</sup> According to one analysis, the national average for ‘unaccounted for water’ (UFW) losses is almost 34 per cent, ranging between governorates from 15 per cent to 65 per cent. A significant part of the UFW consists of leakage losses in the supply system and the distribution system. The real levels could be higher; this average UFW loss of 34 per cent is considered too low by many experts since most water connections are not properly metered.<sup>125</sup>

According to news reports and non-governmental agencies working with poorer districts, there may be pipes and stand-pipes nearby, but they are rarely flowing with water.<sup>126</sup> Some residents haul water from privately dug wells and others draw it from the Nile River itself. People complain of weak water pressure and frequent stoppages in the flows. During the summer of 2010, for example, the whole of Greater Cairo experienced water supply insufficiency and regular cut-outs. Some claim the water only flows at night and that they have to use buckets and storage devices and alter their daily programmes to obtain sufficient quantities for their needs. Women and girls in particular may spend significant periods of the day searching for functioning water outlets. ‘When water has been unavailable for weeks, and especially at the peak of the heat in summer, buying water is often the only choice. In entire neighbourhoods in Haggana [informal settlement], for example, from May until the start of winter, water is not available due to low pressure except in the homes of the better off who can afford to install pumps’.<sup>127</sup>

The quality of the water is also regularly questioned, although studies show that Cairo’s tap

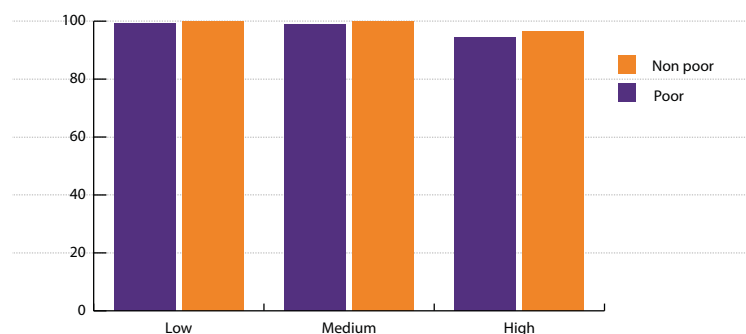
water generally satisfies Egyptian and international drinking water standards and guidelines.<sup>128</sup> Not surprisingly, the worst stories of water deprivation come from unplanned and irregular settlements where the authorities admit they are always playing catch-up. According to some commentators, water condition in some informal or poor areas may be worse than Cairo’s average because it is polluted by sewage or because it flows through

**The difference between planned and unplanned urbanism is most stark when informal cities are compared with the new cities.**

asbestos pipes. By contrast, in the massive construction of ready-serviced, reclaimed desert land being used for new cities and settlements, water and its infrastructure are present long before people start to buy and inhabit the burgeoning new settlements. The difference between planned and unplanned urbanism is most stark when informal cities are compared with the new cities.

The details of actual water provision in Cairo, therefore, suggest a contradiction between official facts and lived reality for some Cairenes. Those who are poorer and living in poorer areas experience this contradiction more acutely than others, as evidenced by the SRC/UN-HABITAT data. Figure 12 and

Figure 12: Fresh water in the households by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 13 illustrate the differentials between the socioeconomic groups with respect to water access. Access to fresh water through the general network was reported by the majority of the households in all *mantiq* (97 per cent) with no difference among the three types of *mantiq*. In all three *mantiq* reports of water connection by the poor were relatively lower than reports by non-poor. The lowest prevalence of water connection was reported by the poor in the high *mantiq* (95 per cent). These differences would not normally be regarded as significant.

The high prevalence of water connections masks some problems that affect the quality and availability of this utility. One of the problems is water cutoff. Clearly, poorer households are not distinguished from non-poor households in their access to the main water network, and therefore Figure 13 only analyses differences by *mantiq*. The findings are that water cutoffs that extend over hours and days are more prevalent in the low *mantiq* compared with the medium and high *mantiq*. In the low *mantiq*, approximately one-quarter of the residents stated that water cutoffs would regularly occur for more than 24 hours at a time. More than double the number of residents in low-quality *mantiq* than in the high-quality *mantiq* were affected by water cutoffs lasting a day or more.

One of the major challenges facing the water sector in Egypt is closing the rapidly increasing gap between the limited water resources and the escalating water demands in the

municipal, industrial and agricultural sectors. Egypt's central source of fresh water is the Nile River. The river supplies 56.8 billion cubic metres of fresh water every year, which represents 97 per cent of all renewable water resources in Egypt. Average rainfall in Egypt is estimated at 18 millimetres or 1.8 billion cubic metres per year. Additionally, Egypt has four different groundwater aquifers. While

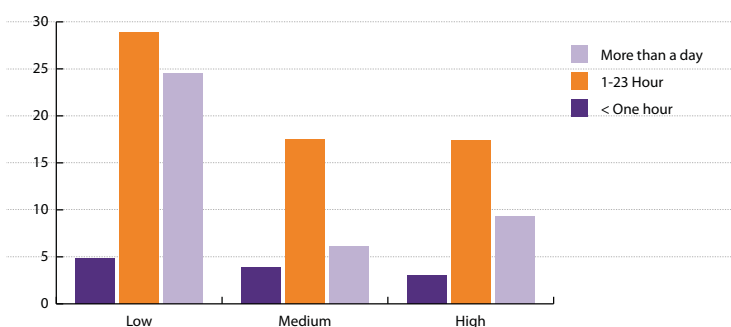
### Egypt's rapid population growth makes it technically water scarce.

apparently water-rich, Egypt's rapid population growth makes it technically water scarce. Since 2005, Egypt has been classified as a water-scarce country, as it has less than 1,000 cubic metres of fresh water per year per capita. Furthermore, it is forecasted that in 2025 the population will reach 95 million or more, which would mean a per capita share of only 600 cubic metres per year.<sup>129</sup>

The Egyptian government is highly subsidising the water sector as the payment fees often comprise just 10 per cent to 25 per cent of the actual costs of delivering fresh water. The country has low cost recovery due to water tariffs that are among the lowest in the world. One comparative study revealed that the average water tariff charged in the United States, for example, was higher than those charged in Egypt by 95 per cent, while the tariff charged across the developing countries exceeded the Egyptian tariff by 66 per cent.<sup>130</sup> Water tariffs, however, have been steadily rising over the last two years. Also, sewage costs are being added to the water bill. One of the main problems in collection is that water meters are distributed per block and not per housing unit.

The government heavily subsidizes the country's 14 public water and sewer companies, even for operating costs. The Holding Company for Water and Wastewater, created in 2004, manages 14 companies that operate water and sewer systems. The two largest cities, Cairo and Alexandria, have four separate companies in charge of water supply and sanitary drainage, however for the two larg-

Figure 13: Fresh water cutoff by type of *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

est cities, investment activities — planning, procurement and supervision of works — are the responsibility of the Cairo and Alexandria Potable Water Organisation (CAPWO). The New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) is responsible for utility investments, operation and management in the new cities and settlements in desert reclamation projects.

Officially connected water costs households an average of 15 EGP per month (US \$2.70). Filling jerry cans of water is much more expensive. Each container-full costs 0.50 to 1 EGP and is most expensive in August, in the height of summer.<sup>131</sup> These infrastructure deficiencies cost the poor much more than money. In terms of ‘sufficiency of income’ to cover water expenses, the differences between the three types of *mantiq* in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey are less pronounced than the differences between the poor and non-poor households. In all three *mantiq* types, 20 per cent more non-poor families than poor families felt their income covered water costs sufficiently. On average, 62 per cent of the poor and 82 per cent of the non-poor surveyed felt their incomes were sufficient to meet water expenses.

## Sanitation in the city

As with developing access to water, Egypt has made significant progress in developing access to improved sanitation, including connections to sewer lines. The 2008 UN *Human Development Report* states that in 1990, just 54 per cent of the population had access to improved sanitation, but by 2004 the proportion had risen to 70 per cent with 36 per cent having connection to sewerage networks. Since 2004, more and more households have been connected as the government continues to invest heavily in the necessary infrastructure. Egypt ranks among the best lower-middle income countries in the world in terms of providing rural and urban areas with improved sanitation. Nevertheless, sanitation is still lacking in some parts of urban and large parts of rural areas. One reason could be that wastewater systems are the most costly among all infrastructure services.

*For most Cairenes the billboards offer unaffordable options in areas too far from their families, their work and the city they still cherish.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

According to the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation by the World Health Organization and UNICEF (of which UN-HABITAT is a member), the following are considered ‘improved’ sanitation: connection to a public sewer, connection to a septic system, access to a pour-flush latrine, or access to a pit latrine or ventilated improved pit latrine. Sanitation solutions that are not considered ‘improved’ are public or shared latrines, open pit latrines and bucket latrines.

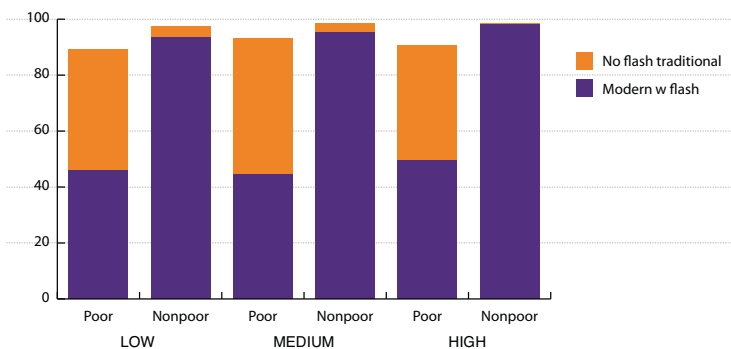




The Holding Company for Water and Wastewater (HCWW) is responsible for treatment of wastewater and operates in 17 Egyptian governorates in addition to the city of Shubra El-Kheima. In 2008, 19 affiliate companies worked under its aegis, comprising approximately 84,000 employees. They operate 187 wastewater treatment plants bringing in wastewater from 4 million subscribers and 29,000 kilometres of wastewater pipe networks. These plants produce 6.9 million cubic metres of treated wastewater every day. According to the company's statistics, these facilities serve approximately 64 million citizens — around 85 per cent of the total population, representing enormous access increases of well over tenfold in the last 15 years.<sup>132</sup>

Various multilateral and bilateral donors work with Egypt to improve its delivery and the sustainability of water and sanitation utilities. The World Bank, for example, has partnered with the government in an Integrated Sanitation and Sewerage Infrastructure Project, which was approved in 2008 and is expected to end in 2014. Its main objective is the sustainable improvement of the sanitation and environmental conditions as well as the water quality in selected drainage basins.<sup>133</sup> KfW (a German financial development cooperation) financed sewage and water networks in two big informal areas (Manshiat Nasser and Boulaq el Dakrou) between 2005 and 2010 as a pilot model for extending such networks in informal areas through a participatory approach.

Figure 14: Toilet in the household by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

The inequity of access to sanitation is greatest between the country's urban and rural environments. Within the city of Cairo, access is, in fact, high with poor and non-poor areas generally well served by sanitation infrastructure. Despite this, areas that suffer from lower access to improved sanitation are the rural, slum areas, peri-urban and new informal ur-

**...areas that suffer from lower access to improved sanitation are the rural, slum areas, peri-urban and new informal urban expansions.**

ban expansions. The formal urban expansions and new cities are well serviced with water and sanitation utilities. While assessing their progress in meeting the MDGs in 2008, the government cited the governorates of Cairo, Port Said, Suez, Damietta, Dakahlia, Kalyoubia, Kafr El Sheik, Ismailia, Giza, RedSea, and South Sinai as having above average sanitation services. All other governorates were found to be below average, with the worst access to sanitation in Assiut governorate.<sup>134</sup>

Despite big gains in recent decades, there have been setbacks. Struggling to keep up with rising population levels, the government reported a slight decrease in the period from 2004 to 2006 in terms of the proportion of urban and rural population with access to improved sanitation. Given these changes, the government of Egypt considers it is unlikely that all governorates will meet their targets by 2015.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, the increase of coverage in sewerage connections and improved sanitation in urban areas has been impressive in Egypt, resulting in almost ubiquitous access in most cities. In Cairo, the 2008 USAID housing study (whose sample included informal areas) found that 98 per cent of all households in Greater Cairo had access to sewerage lines. In Alexandria, 91 per cent of households had the same access, and even in the more marginalized Upper Egypt area, over 77 per cent of households were connected.<sup>136</sup>

The 2006-2007 SRC/UN-HABITAT survey also found that sanitation access in Greater Cairo was high. Most households had toilets and a high number used flush toilets. Figure 14 shows that modern flush toilets were the most common type of toilet in all three types of *mantiq*. However, flush toilets were more common in the high *mantiq* (92.5 per cent) than in both low and medium *mantiq* (71 per cent). These figures mask large differentials among the poor and non-poor. Figure 14 shows that, in low *mantiq*, while 46 per cent of poor households had modern flush toilets, the corresponding proportion among the non-poor was 93.5 per cent. The same pattern is observed for the medium and high *mantiq*.

The second most common type of toilet was the no-flush traditional toilet. The traditional no-flush toilet is effectively an orifice at ground level leading to cess pit/septic tank or sewerage network below. Normally, the orifice is set within a ceramic slab on which the user squats. As the figure reveals, the existence of this type of toilet is more common among poor households, although both flush and non-flush toilets are connected to the sewerage network and both are classified as improved sanitation.

Integral to the issue of improved sanitation is the availability of facilities for proper hygiene. A basic health measure is to have a water source or sink available next to the toilet. Figure 15 shows that according to the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, the poor are less likely to have such a source next to the toilet. The greatest difference between the poor and non-poor is again observed in the high *mantiq*, in which the difference amounts to 22 per cent, compared to 13 per cent and 15 per cent in case of low and medium *mantiq*, respectively. The relatively high number of cases of child deaths from diarrhoea in Egypt (in dramatic decline from the 1980s and 1990s but still relatively high), are linked to lack of hygiene and poor sanitation.

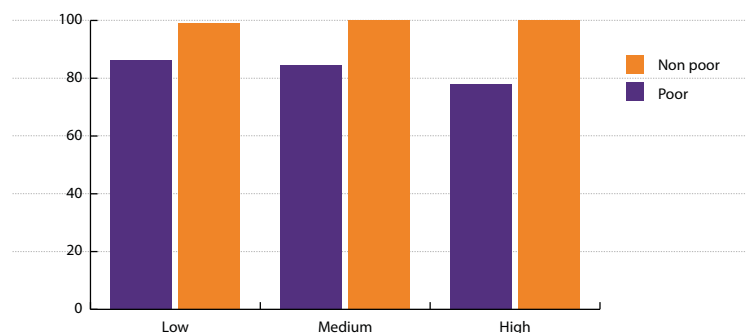
Not surprisingly, there are sections of Cairo's informal areas that are growing at a pace too fast for government infrastructure and upgrading projects to keep up. Many informal

areas untouched by public works nevertheless have multi-story buildings with their own septic tanks and therefore have improved sanitation. In the common case of high residential density, septic tanks are not always emptied regularly enough and street overflow or flooding can be a problem. Connections to the public sewerage networks may still be missing from entire areas; unsafe or slum areas may not have access to improved sanitation at all, so residents instead use trenches and open shared latrines. The 2009 IIED report cites areas in Cairo such as Batn El Ba'ara, Establ Antar and Ezbet Kheiralla and also some parts of Haggana and Manshiet

**...there are sections of Cairo's informal areas that are growing at a pace too fast for government infrastructure and upgrading projects to keep up.**

Nasser where improved sanitation is absent. The IIED study makes the point that poor sanitation has cost implications for the poor, apart from the obvious health risks. 'This means that households have to pay the costs of emptying their trenches on average one or two times per month, depending on their size. The cost of hiring the service truck varies: it was 80LE [i.e. EGP] per time (c. US \$15) in Batn El Ba'ara, and 50–60LE [i.e. EGP] in Ezbet Kheirallah. Costs are either paid by one

Figure 15: Immediate water source next to the toilet by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



A relatively new area of planned urban residential development in Nasr City.

Image: Chris Horwood

household or shared between the households which share the trench.<sup>137</sup>

In some of the poorest unplanned, informal areas of Cairo, the lack of sanitation infrastructure causes people to throw or drain wastewater onto the street or the unpaved track outside their homes. Apart from the health risk of exposed wastewater in populated areas, years of wastewater leaking into the ground has made some buildings and ground unstable. The Manshiet Nasr sub-area of informal/slum shacks called Doweiga was crushed in 2008 when huge rocks fell from cliffs of the Muqattam mountain towering around them. The rockslide, which caused numerous fatalities, was blamed on years of sewage leaking into the rocks of Muqattam from Manshiet Nasr and from settlements on the mountain plateau.

The IIED analysis argues that people living in these conditions may, mistakenly, not be classified as poor because they do not fall below the official poverty line. The authors ask, 'how can people living in such unsafe situations not be considered poor, just because their income is a few pounds above an arbitrary poverty line? The conditions of the areas in which they live must be factored into a multi-dimensional measure of poverty.'<sup>138</sup>

## How secure is land/ housing tenure?

The salient findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey and other investigations into security of tenure in Cairo reveal a high level of homogeneity and equality in both *actual* security of tenure and people's *perception* of security of tenure.

The Housing Study for All Urban Egypt of 2008<sup>139</sup> found that two main tenure types dominate the housing stock in urban Egypt: ownership (44 per cent) and 'old law rent' (27 per cent). The prevalence of rental agreements under the new law is still limited (9 per cent). There are also properties rented or purchased from government stock or provided as in-kind privileges from the government (6 and 2 per cent, respectively) to state employees. Ownership was reportedly more prevalent among households in the first and fifth income quintiles than for those in the

**Table 7: Type of housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
<b>Own house*</b>	18.4		17.6		5.5	
	21.6	15.4*	18.5	16.8	14.5	4.2
<b>Own apartment</b>	18.2		26.2		34.1	
	14.0	22.0***	15.5	36.1**	0.3	38.8***
<b>Rented apartment</b>	57.6		47.0		53.0	
	55.7	59.3	50.3	43.8	35.7	55.5**
<b>Other</b>	5.8		9.2		7.3	
	8.5	3.3*	15.6	3.3**	49.5	1.4***

\*significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

other three quintiles.<sup>140</sup> The housing study also indicated that 85 per cent of urban households live in apartments in walk-up buildings. As illustrated in Table 7, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found a similarly high proportion of ownership in Cairo (40 per cent of surveyed households). As for those households living in apartments — whether rented or owned — the average was 87.1 per cent for high *mantiq*, 73.2 per cent for medium *mantiq* and 75.8 per cent for low *mantiq*. The fact that in low *mantiq* some poor households live in poorly constructed or dilapidated homes or have free accommodation in parts of someone else's house most likely accounts for the lower proportion of rented or owned apartments there. The 'other' category in Table 7 pertains to the case of donation or granting accommodation as part of the work contract. While the average across different *mantiq* is just 7.4 per cent for this kind of tenure, it was found to be highly prevalent among the poor in high *mantiq* (49.5 per cent), indicating that the majority of those households are in the employ of a non-poor household. The low level of poor households renting apartments in high *mantiq* offers further evidence of this trend, as well as of the persistence of 'old rent' law agreements, where families may stay for decades in apartments at a fixed low rent well below market rate.

Whole-building owner-occupancy is generally more common in the low *mantiq* (18.4 per cent), followed by the medium (17.6 per cent) and high *mantiq* (5.5 per cent). Whole-building ownership was significantly more common among poor households than non-poor in the low *mantiq*.

Ownership of apartments is more prevalent among non-poor households than poor in all types of *mantiq*. The differences between the poor and non-poor are relatively significant in high *mantiq*, where only 0.3 per cent reported ownership of their apartment. By contrast, 38.8 per cent of the non-poor owned theirs. Until recently, no mortgage financing has been available to those who are equity-poor. Even under the new mortgage regime started in 2001, virtually all informal housing is excluded, since properties must be registered, and with prevailing interest rates

remaining high (14 per cent per year), the instalment payments are beyond the means of most. The 2008 World Bank study concludes that the new subsidized mortgage schemes for an apartment of 70 square metres would require monthly instalment payments affordable only to families in the highest two deciles of income distribution and therefore remain beyond the reach of the non-poor.<sup>141</sup>

Further investigation of the owners of houses in all *mantiq* revealed some universal trends. The majority of homeowners (average 87.3 per cent) reported living in their house for more than 10 years. There was a slight difference between the poor and non-poor, where 100 per cent of the wealthier households had owned (and resided in) their houses for more than 10 years. The majority of respondents who live in their owned apartment had remained in their flats for more than 10 years. More than 82 per cent of the non-poor residents in the high *mantiq* had lived in their current accommodation for 10 years or more, while among the poor, the corresponding proportion was 100 per cent. In the medium *mantiq*, 75 per cent of the poor and 70 per cent of the non-poor had lived in their homes for more than 10 years.

Whether due to economic necessity, personal preferences, cultural tradition or social-familial cohesion, trends illustrated in data from the survey and other studies confirm the preferences of Cairenes to move far less than residents of other capitals. The survey find-

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**...trends illustrated in data from the survey and other studies confirm the preferences of Cairenes to move far less than residents of other capitals.**

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ings also show that homeowners in the low *mantiq* had moved most often in the previous 10 years compared to those in the other two types of *mantiq* — this was the case particularly among the poor in low *mantiq* (25 per cent had moved). Among apartment owners, more poor households in medium *mantiq*

had moved in the previous 10 years (25 per cent) followed by the non-poor in the low *mantiq* (24 per cent) and the non-poor in medium *mantiq* (19 per cent). Non-poor apartment owners in low *mantiq* were most likely to have moved in the last five years (22 per cent), followed by the poor in the low *mantiq* (16 per cent) and non-poor in medium *mantiq* (11 per cent).

Considering the high density of poorer areas (particularly informal settlements and old Cairo) and the recent explosive growth of informal areas, these levels of mobility are not surprising in low *mantiq*. Other studies have shown that when Cairenes move, they frequently relocate in the same district or move to a neighbouring district to maintain proximity to the social fabric that is often so critical to Egyptian urban life. Also, economic networks of production-marketing influence the maintenance of proximity when moving from one area to the other. One example is the interrelations and movement of residents between old Cairo and Manshiat Nasser informal area, where production for the Khan el Khalili Bazaar takes place. It is this tight social and economic fabric that partly explains why the government's development of new communities in the desert has attracted relatively few new residents from older, more congested neighbourhoods. The survey also revealed that the poor in the high *mantiq* exhibited relatively high levels of moving within the previous 10 years (17 per cent). Considering the inability of the poor to purchase or rent housing in high *mantiq*, the majority of this

mobility is likely a result of shifts in the job market for household help (guards, janitors, cleaners, cooks and the like) that contributes to the flow of new poor families and poor individuals into and out of the wealthier neighbourhoods. However, the decades-long rental freeze has also allowed low-income families

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**...average mobility of all socioeconomic groups in all *mantiq* was low, at 4 per cent for the last five years.**

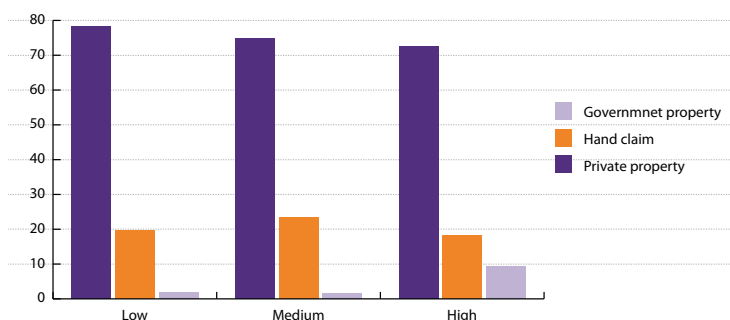
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to remain in wealthier areas that they would not be able to afford at market-rate rents. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey revealed that the average mobility of all socioeconomic groups in all *mantiq* was low, at 4 per cent for the last five years.

Another widespread trend established by the survey was that 73 per cent of all buildings are built on private land owned by the respondent or one of his or her relatives. Private ownership was slightly higher in low *mantiq* (78 per cent), which can be explained predominantly by the large numbers of people living in informal areas built up on private agricultural land in the last two or three decades. As private agricultural land was subdivided and sold, some new owners purchased lots and built on them in contravention of building codes. Others simply took possession of unused properties. The proportion of residents making such 'hand claims'<sup>142</sup> on the land ranged from 18 per cent in the case of high *mantiq* to 23 per cent in the case of low and medium *mantiq*. Those who own buildings on government land comprised 2 per cent in the case of low and medium *mantiq*, and 9 per cent in the case of high *mantiq*. Interestingly, no differences were found between the poor and non-poor households in the three types of *mantiq* concerning land ownership and tenure patterns.

Those who reported that the land was privately owned were asked about having proper land ownership documentation — a critical aspect of formal security of tenure. Figure 17 shows that, except for the poor in high *man-*

**Figure 16:** Ownership of the land on which residence is built by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



Looking across the quarry at the top Mokkatam mountain, and over the compact and congested city.

Image: Chris Horwood

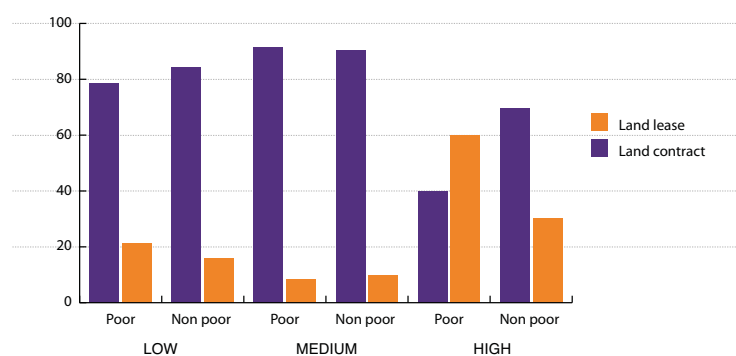
*tiq*, more than 70 per cent of all households have contracts for their property. Land lease was most prevalent among the poor in high *mantiq* (60 per cent) and the non-poor (30 per cent) in the same *mantiq*, followed by the poor (21.4 per cent) and the non-poor (15.8 per cent) in low *mantiq*, respectively.

Homeowner respondents were asked about the manner in which they acquired their building. Five different ways were identified: built it with a license to do so; built it without a license; built it, but the respondent does not know about the situation of the license; bought the building; and acquired it through any other means, such as inheritance. The results indicate that levels of informal or extra-legal property and land arrangements correlate closely with poverty: on average, 44 per cent of the poor built their dwellings with no license while just 17 per cent of the non-poor did the same. Notwithstanding financial constraints, the bureaucratic barriers to licenses and ownership titles are colossal. One analysis showed that, irrespective of unavoidable under-the-table payments along the way, obtaining a plot of desert land for urban development, obtaining a personal building license and formal registration of a property would take 77 separate administrative or legal steps involving 31 different government or private entities and an indeterminate number of months or years.<sup>143</sup> The difficulty of operating in the formal environment partly explains why informality in the housing market (sale, transfer, renting and titling) remains so dominant and attractive to Cairenes. This analysis is part

of the 'dead capital' argument for reform and facilitation to formalize the housing market and benefit from billions of dollars of assets that are 'economically dead' as long as they remain irregular and extra-legal.<sup>144</sup>

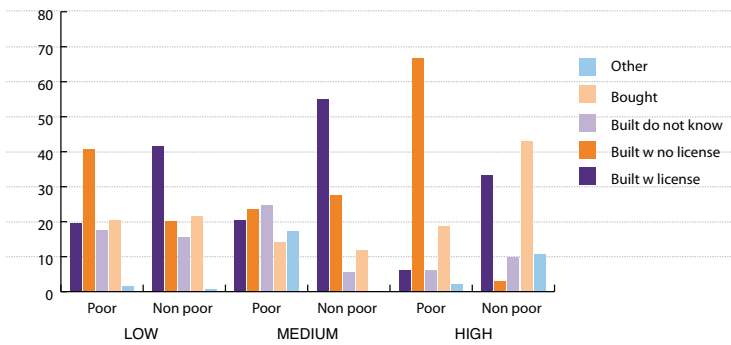
Figure 18 shows the prevalence of different approaches to acquiring buildings across the three types of *mantiq*, in relation to household poverty level. It shows that among the poor in low *mantiq*, building without a license is the most prevalent way of acquiring the building, amounting to 41 per cent of all buildings. The poor in high *mantiq* exhibited the highest prevalence of unlicensed buildings (67 per cent). The housing market behaviour of non-poor in high *mantiq* illustrate that they not only have the ability and preference to purchase buildings (43 per cent of respondents), but also that they can afford to

Figure 17: Documents for land ownership by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



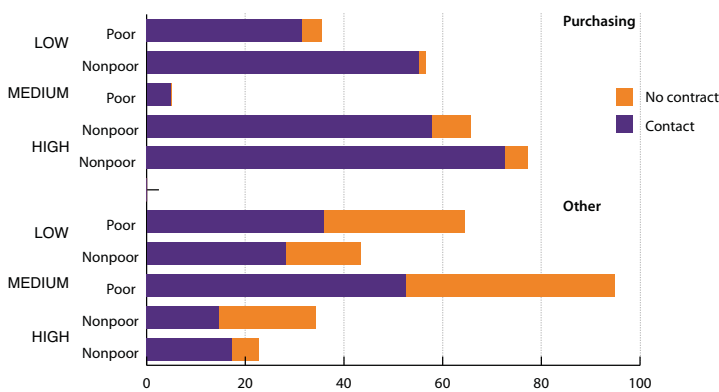
Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 18: Ways of acquiring the building by type of *mantiqa* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 19: Ways of acquiring the apartment by type of *mantiqa* and household poverty level <sup>1</sup>



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

pay the necessary formal and informal costs of obtaining correct licenses before building (33 per cent of respondents). Just 3 per cent of non-poor build property in high *mantiqa* without licenses.

This trend was echoed in the responses of those who were apartment owners and who were asked about the ways of acquiring their current dwellings. Figure 19 shows that, except for the poor in medium *mantiqa*, purchasing the apartment showed a gradient among the various types of households with the lowest prevalence reported by the poor in low *mantiqa* (36 per cent) and the highest prevalence found among non-poor in high *mantiqa* (77 per cent).

Figure 19 also shows that the majority of these purchases are carried out with proper documentation. Buying without a contract was a rare situation, observed in less than 4 per cent of all surveyed households. However, this proportion increases to 8 per cent among the non-poor in medium *mantiqa* and 4.7 per cent among the non-poor in high *mantiqa*, followed by 4.1 per cent of the poor in low *mantiqa*. As illustrated in Figure 19, obtaining an apartment without a contract was found to be far more common in the 'other' category explained below.

A common way of acquiring an apartment is through inheritance, bequest or having the dwelling assigned to another family. The highest prevalence of this type of ownership can be observed among the poor in the medium *mantiqa* (95 per cent) followed by the poor in low *mantiqa* (64 per cent). The lowest prevalence of this type was found among the non-poor in the high *mantiqa* (23 per cent).

Paying property tax is another form of legalizing the situation of the property and adding security of tenure. But remaining informal may have economic advantages for the poor that they trade against any risks of living extra-legally: not having one's building licenses means no property tax is paid. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found that more than 55 per cent of poor living in their own houses in high *mantiqa* did not pay property tax to the government. All the non-poor in the same *mantiqa* paid theirs. In low *mantiqa*, just 64 per cent paid property tax, while 81 per cent of the non-poor in the same *mantiqa* paid theirs. Meanwhile, among those living in their own apartments, not paying property tax is most common among the poor in high *mantiqa* (100 per cent) followed by the poor (52 per cent) and non-poor (47 per cent) in low *mantiqa*. Approximately 30 per cent of the non-poor in high *mantiqa* also reported non-payment of this property tax.

It appears the risks associated with informality and housing illegality are low in Cairo, where applied Islamic or rights-based principles make it unacceptable and even unlawful to evict residents from their homes no matter how illegal their status. Forced evictions are



Historic buildings in central Cairo. Eastern side of the Nile.

Image: Chris Horwood

rare in Cairo and normally only occur in distant peripheral areas, affecting a small group of squatters in dire conditions. The thousands of high-rise and often illegally constructed informal settlement buildings have never been touched by officials. One urban expert states that, 'stress is placed on the inalienable right of an individual to use and benefit from his private property' and that 'both by law and by local authority policy, there is little arbitrary eviction and demolition of resi-

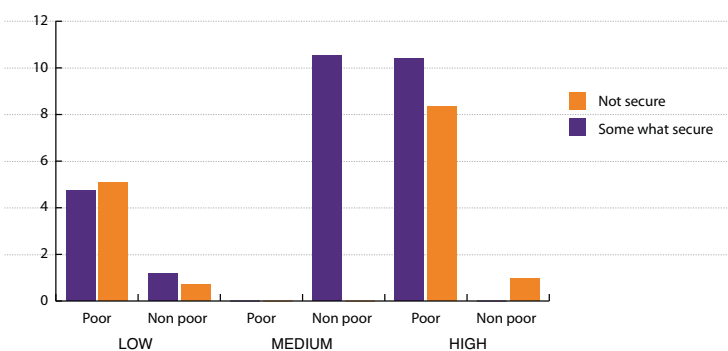
### It appears the risks associated with informality and housing illegality are low in Cairo,

dential property in Egypt....local authorities... see demolition and eviction as no-win headaches, to be avoided if at all possible'.<sup>145</sup> One recent incident happened in early 2010 when the Cairo governor issued demolition orders for several 14-floor housing blocks in Ezbet el Hagana. The national debate the order triggered caused the Parliament to change the ruling, resulting in the demolition being suspended.<sup>146</sup>

If a property is occupied by residents, physical demolition is impossible unless the authorities provide alternative housing. For many commentators it is this non-confrontational and amenable management style that lies at the heart of Cairo's informality that goes beyond housing and urban planning issues.

The above observations may explain some of the factors that result in most Cairenes feeling very secure in their tenure irrespective of their official or formal status. Figure 20 illustrates the proportion of the households in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey that expressed some insecurity about their tenure in their current accommodation. It shows that although the majority of households feel secure, there are differences among the different types of households. The least secure group is the poor in the high *mantiq*, with 8 per cent considering themselves insecure and 10.4 per cent expressing a lack of security and awareness of the possibility of eviction. Some may be responding to the rising awareness of eviction threats in vulnerable areas that are related to the new 'unsafe' areas policy, which potentially affects village cores in Giza and agricultural islands in the Nile, as well as eviction plans for urban renewal projects downtown.

Figure 20: Sense of security of tenure amongst live-in homeowners by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



## 'staying in this neighbourhood is what angers me the most'

*Mohammed and Hossam Ibrahim, sons of Ahmad Ibrahim, interviewed 24 June 2010 at their parents' home in Imbaba. The photo shows Mohammed standing and his younger brother, Hossam, sitting on the bed. On the wall is a photo of Mohammed's wedding, next to a religious poster.*



Image: Pascale Nader

**Hossam Fouad Ibrahim:** I'm 16 years old, a high-school student. I study English, French, Arabic, physical education, and philosophy. I mostly study to be honest ... it's kind of tough. My parents pay for all these private lessons for me to pass and I'm a good student, so I wonder what other kids do whose parents can't afford these lessons. I mostly worry and now I'm scared about the next levels — we hear horror stories. They make exams very difficult; to get 80 per cent you have to study day and night. And for example to get into medical school or architecture school, they ask for a 98 per cent to enter; they want only 100 students each year to each discipline and the rest ...who knows?

I can't really think of anything I enjoy doing in Cairo, for fun that is. I don't enjoy living in this neighbourhood, in my parents' home. I just barely say hi and bye to my

neighbours, and to be honest it is better that way or else they interfere in your private life and set one against the other, or they get greedy and start asking for favors. It's endless — you give an arm and they take a leg, too.

On weekends, we go to the beach to the north coast, Marsa Matrouh and Gamasa [Delta], with my aunt and her husband; they have homes for the summer.

I live with my mother and father in a very small room here. Staying in this neighbourhood is what angers me the most, because of all the shouting, fighting and cursing that I hear all day, the loud noise goes on day and night. Surrounded by bad attitudes and rudeness. No consideration for people who want to study or sleep. There is all this noise from the streets and in the building itself, shouting and fighting. And a lot of unchaperoned



kids in the street below playing football all day that bother people. Salesmen coming and going all the time shouting and selling, honking cars. I don't have any friends in my neighbourhood, just my family. The loud music goes on until two or three in the morning and these kids behave rudely and their parents don't stop or discipline them. During exam times, I have to close up all the windows to concentrate. I shout from the balcony to be quiet — no one listens or cares.

I go to school walking. It's a 15-minute walk. I was accepted to a better school outside the neighbourhood in pyramids area [El Sa'adeyah school in El Haram], but my mother was too scared for me to commute using the public transport there everyday. Because in Haram there are bad roads and major accidents ... well, I think it's the same everywhere.

I think about finding a job, and it seems it is determined by who you know and connections [*wasta*], money — it's like this. I want to go into English and become a teacher. My friends say even if you go to college and graduate you won't find any work. What's the point of going to university for four years if I can't get a job or use my degree? It's something that upsets me a lot.

All my brothers have moved into bigger homes than our parents. One is married and is still unemployed. I want to move into a bigger and better house, but it looks like I will be staying here, and if I marry, my parents will have to leave this apartment and I don't know where they are going to go.

Mohamed Ahmad, 30 years old: I recently got married, so this is a new phase of life for me. I graduated from university studying Business Administration, and I am looking for work now. I'm unemployed at the moment. It is of course a difficult situation to be in especially since I'm married and have responsibilities to a new family of my own. My father has helped me in many ways. He gave me and my brothers our apartments when we got married, bought me a car and has financed many things.

The situation is this way because finding work is as you can see a big problem and even when you find work the salaries are so low, like EGP 700 or EGP 500 [US \$122 or \$87] per month! Without my family's support, I would not be able to move on in life or afford rent, if my father had not bought my house, for example. I cannot wait to find the right job, or work until I make enough money to

buy my own things. I am not sure what kind of work I will find, and this really worries and bothers me. My father has always given me and my brothers all he could give us. In the meantime, I do my best to help the family and to find work, of course.

Of the non-poor in medium *mantiq*, just 11 per cent felt moderately insecure in their tenure but none were entirely insecure. Levels of insecurity in low *mantiq* vary between the poor and non-poor: while 4.8 per cent of the poor expressed moderate insecurity, another 5 per cent expressed total insecurity and fear of eviction. The corresponding proportions among the non-poor were 1.2 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively. Less than 1 per cent of the non-poor in the high *mantiq* reported feeling insecure. These findings translate to an average perception of certain security of tenure for all *mantiq* of 96.5 per cent for homeowners. Concerning owner-occupants in apartments, the sense of security was equally high, at 97 per cent. By contrast, only 77 per cent of those renting in Cairo perceived security of tenure, with non-poor households at 91 per cent and poor households at a low of 63.3 per cent. Evidently, the burden of insecurity and fear of eviction falls more heavily on the poor. It is worth noting that some Cairenes living in unsafe, precarious, often illegal situations and in less durable housing structures, as found in new slums or old dilapidated buildings at the core of the city, have been living under the shadow of the threat of eviction and relocation for years. Some of the data in the survey may be reflecting these concerns as the residents, NGOs, lawyers and the government wrestle with how to address the problem of dangerous or illegal housing. (Special Feature 5 on the Informal Settlement Development Facility discusses these issues in more detail.)

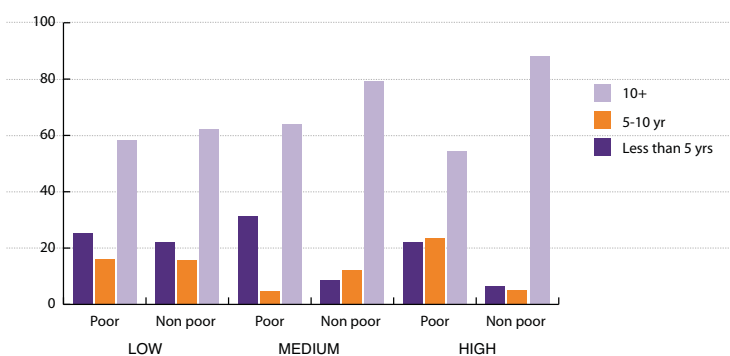
Like Cairene homeowners, surveyed renters tended to stay in place over long periods of time. Across all types of households in all *mantiq*, most renters had lived in their same unit for at least 10 years (Figure 21). This is particularly evident among non-poor households in high (88 per cent) and medium *mantiq* (79 per cent) and relatively less so among the poor in medium *mantiq* (64 per cent) and non-poor in low *mantiq* (62 per cent). Average mobility rates of those who rent were similar to owners, conforming to a gradient where far more poor than non-poor households had moved in the five years preceding the survey.

More than half of all Cairo residents surveyed in the SRC/UN-HABITAT study rented their accommodation. The different types of rent regimes applied in the city reveal some clear differentials. Respondents were asked about the type of rent they have. The four main types of rent currently prevailing in Cairo and used in

### More than half of all Cairo residents surveyed in the SRC/UN-HABITAT study rented their accommodation.

the survey questionnaire are: old rental, new rental, furnished and no-rent apartment. The first type is the most prevalent and is reflected in Figure 22. The old law regime describes the situation of tenants who acquired their apartments before the new rental law went into effect in 1996. It maintains the tenants' right to the apartment for two generations with the rent kept at its contract level for the duration, unless some rent adjustments occur by mutual agreement between the owner and tenants. This secure rental system exists in informal settlements as well as formal residential areas.<sup>147</sup> Old law rents are observed the most among the non-poor in high *mantiq*, capturing 91 per cent of all rented apartments, followed by the non-poor in medium (82 per cent) and low (80 per cent) *mantiq*. Its lowest prevalence was among the poor in high *mantiq* (28 per cent) followed by the poor in medium *mantiq* (43 per cent). By this

Figure 21: Duration of residence in the housing unit by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

analysis, the non-poor in all three *mantiq* are paying the lowest rent.<sup>148</sup>

The second type of rent falls under the new rental law, which came into existence with the implementation of law No. 4 in 1996. This type of rent is characterized by relatively high prices, as landlords base rents on supply and demand in the marketplace and contract with tenants accordingly. New law rents offer none of the earlier protection to the tenant since the rental relationship between the landlord and tenant terminates at the moment the contract period ends. The landlords may resort to setting the contract period at one or two years, thereby giving them the right to raise the rent at the end of the term, as much as the market will bear. However, some research shows that average length of new law rentals is five years.<sup>149</sup>

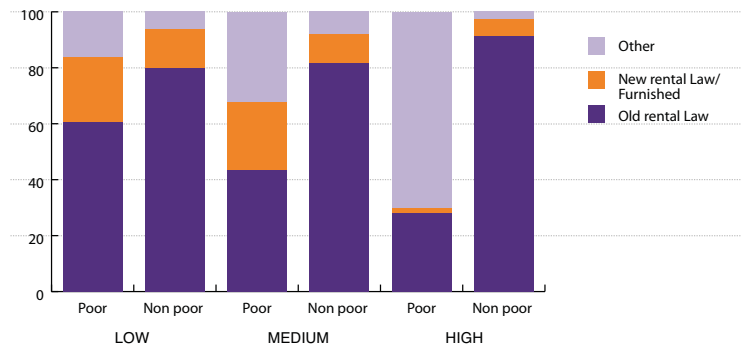
The third type of rent is the furnished apartment, which, to a large extent, is similar to the new law rent with relatively high prices and short-term rental contracts. Figure 22 groups those two types together in one category. It shows that, although this type of rent is not very common (accounting for only 15 per cent of all households), it was observed more among poor residents of low (23 per cent) and medium (25 per cent) *mantiq*. The disappearance of this pattern for the poor in high *man-*

**No-rent apartments, provided either as fringe benefits of a job or as a bequest were found to be most prevalent among the poor**

*tiq* lies in the quality of available housing; their dwelling spaces tend not to be regular housing units, but rather storage rooms in upper-income apartment buildings, on rooftops, basements, garages, and the like. The non-poor in high-quality *mantiq* tend to own their dwellings, rather than rent furnished apartments.

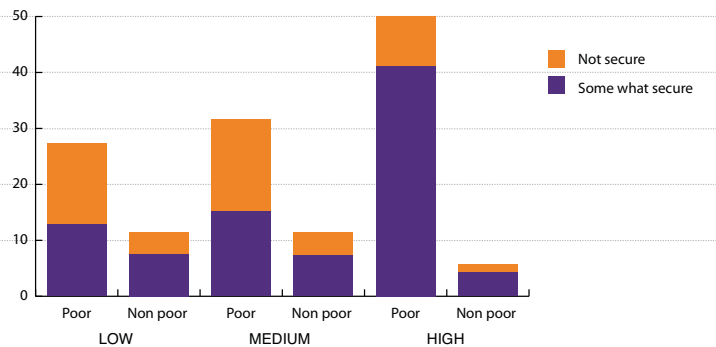
No-rent apartments, provided either as fringe benefits of a job or as a bequest were found to be most prevalent among the poor in general and the poor in high *mantiq* in particular (70 per cent), indicating that this group of

Figure 22: Rent type for apartments by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 23: Feeling insecure in current rented accommodation by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

households mainly works as service providers for the non-poor in those *mantiq*. It was also observed among the poor in medium *mantiq* (32 per cent) and to a lesser extent among the poor in low *mantiq* (16 per cent).

Figure 23 illustrates perceptions of insecurity of tenure among residents of rented apartments. Insecurity is, according to these survey results, far higher among the poor than the non-poor in all *mantiq*. The poor in high *mantiq* report the highest levels of insecurity, at 50 per cent. Among the poor in low and medium *mantiq*, the perception of insecurity is almost equally divided between feeling insecure and moderately insecure.



*One of the most common complaints of Cairenes, wealthy or poor, is the prevalence of refuse. Here, uncollected rubbish spills onto the road in Imbaba, an major informal settlement.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

## Municipal solid waste management

Studies have indicated that the problems associated with municipal solid waste (MSW) management are among the most serious environmental problems in Egypt.<sup>150</sup> Surveys repeatedly illustrate that for ordinary people, public cleanliness is a top priority, and lack thereof is a top discomfort or aggravation in and around Cairo and in neighbourhoods.<sup>151</sup> The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey echoes these findings, illustrating that the issues of waste and refuse rank highly as concerns for Cairenes.

Up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the management method of choice for MSW in Egypt was open dumps and unregulated accumulations of solid waste in public places. The World Bank reported in 2005 that 88 per cent of the collected waste was disposed of in open dumps around urban areas. This uncontrolled disposal and burning of solid waste constituted a major environmental problem and contributed to poor air quality in urban centres such as Cairo.

The development of environmentally sound solid waste management systems throughout the country became an urgent priority of the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA) and its executive institution, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). This challenge was met for the first

time in the year 2000 with the development of The National Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Strategy, which comprised a series of strategic plans, operational programs, practical guidelines for integrated solid waste management, training programs, and the implementation of relevant demonstration projects in partnership with various stakeholders.

Remarkably, until the 1980s, there was no formal system of waste collection in Cairo. All collection was performed by the Zabbaleen — an 'army' of up to 90,000 informal solid waste removers.<sup>152</sup> The Zabbaleen traditionally performed this service cheaply or for free, making a living by collecting and sorting waste materials and becoming outstanding recyclers and re-users. Waste food they collect is fed to pigs, which have not only been critical to their community's nutritional needs but also a key source of income. An adult pig can fetch between US \$100 and \$200 on the market. Other materials, such as steel, glass and plastic bottles are sorted by hand and sold as raw materials. Some items are repaired or reused while some material is burnt as fuel.

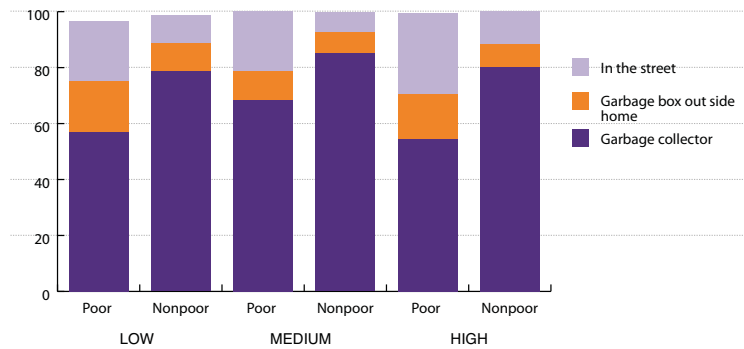
By 1980, as the levels of solid waste rose with the rapid population growth and expansion of informal areas, the collection needs began to overtake the Zabbaleen's capacity. Uncollected refuse began to build up, overwhelming the municipality and causing a health hazard in Cairo's streets. After first trying to force the Zabbaleen to modernize by switching from donkey-pulled carts to pick-up

trucks in the 1980s and 1990s, the municipal government took a new and controversial approach: it started to enforce a new rubbish collection policy that privatized waste management, bringing in European companies (currently Spanish and Italian) to do the job. The cost recovery was enforced by a small fee (between 3 and 5 EGP per month, or about US \$1, but can be double that in some areas) added to household electricity bills, raising an impressive annual fee of around US \$500 million for the government.

The municipality's effort to replace the Zabbaleen with modern waste collection and disposal methods has not worked smoothly. The new collection service has also been criticized for being unable to recycle as much of the waste material as the Zabbaleen. While the Zabbaleen recycle more than 80 per cent of all waste, the companies are required to recycle just 20 per cent — the rest is crushed and compacted and then dumped. Media commentators and development workers have argued that the municipality should instead have provided the Zabbaleen with the resources to expand and modernize their unique services to the whole city.<sup>153</sup> This issue remains contentious and is further discussed in Special Feature 2.

After years of having their rubbish collected from their door by Zabbaleen, Cairenes have adapted poorly to the new regime, which requires them to dispose of rubbish themselves at collection sites or in bins that are allegedly not always accessible, are often insufficient or could not be found. In effect, the systems of the formal outsourced MSW collection and disposal and the informal Zabbaleen systems operate in parallel and in competition. Although most solid waste is collected and disposed of under the existing *de facto* arrangements, many of Cairo's streets, and especially the far-reaching informal areas, continue to be blighted by mounting and spreading rubbish. Waste collection rates in Greater Cairo do not reach more than 50 per cent in certain areas.<sup>154</sup> The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey findings (see Figure 24) show that 65 per cent of respondents in low-quality *mantiq* witness rubbish accumulation 'sometimes' or 'frequently'. On average, city-wide, only

Figure 24: Disposing of garbage by type of *mantiq* and household poverty



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

52 per cent of households said there was no rubbish accumulation irrespective of *mantiq* ranking, but the low-quality *mantiq* were much more affected than the middle and high *mantiq*.

Some critics suggest the reasons and causes behind the limitations of the current MSW management system are technical, administrative, legal and financial. Some analysts point to the opening of 'new socio-political spaces for conflict between multi-national companies and the Zabbaleen's traditional system' and how 'Cairo's waste materi-

**In Cairo, this informal rubbish collection system remains a core part of the city's solid waste management.**

als have been subjected to new claims and conflict' being regarded as a 'commodity' by global capital entrepreneurs and multi-national corporations' as opposed to a source of livelihood by the sizable 'disadvantaged and marginalised Zabbaleen population'.<sup>155</sup>

In Cairo, this informal rubbish collection system remains a core part of the city's solid waste management that in 2010 struggles to deal with 14,000 to 15,000 metric tonnes of MSW per day, 50 to 60 per cent of which is estimated to be organic. The Zabbaleen con-

## 'life for most Egyptians has become just a story of problems'

*Heba Mohamad lives in Ard El Lewah ('the military General's land'), a five-minute walk from Mohandiseen. The area is full of tall apartment buildings under construction. Until construction is complete, landlords rent the units out to lower-income tenants who need a convenient temporary location. The rent is EGP 400 (about US \$70) per month. Heba currently works informally as a house cleaner wherever she can find work and gets paid EGP 30 to EGP 50 per day (US \$5 to \$9), once or twice per week. She apprenticed and used to work in a women's hair salon before she was married.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

My name is Heba Mohamad. I'm 32 years old and have three children: Abdallah, 9; Abdelrahman, 7; and Habiba, 4. I've been living here for less than a year — about nine or 10 months, since last Ramadan. We moved here because I had problems with my husband's family near to whom we were living. My husband and I chose to live here instead. We chose here because it is close to public transport, and also because my family is a bit close to here (they are in Imbaba). There are schools around the area and the apartment is more spacious.

In the building it is just us, another family and the manager or landlord of the building. I have a lot of problems in the building, of course. Water for example, stops from 10 in the morning until about nine at night, then it starts again. So all day there is no water, and when there is water, the pressure is weak. Here we don't have a meter for electricity, no formal connection.

Rent prices are going to be more expensive in a while, in two or three years, as the buildings are completed and as people know more about the area. Right now, people



don't know much about this area, because in the past they were afraid to live here. It was all agricultural land; there were thieves and drug dealers, and it was a bad area no one considered living in. Now after they built the *mihwar* [Twenty-Sixth of July extension], more residents have come now and as they know more about the area, it gets more crowded. You saw with the garbage, everyone in the area throws the garbage in the street of surrounding areas or empty lots, and then every once in a while people in the area burn it. There is no government management here at all yet. When I first moved here, I saw a government truck removing garbage once, but not again since I've been here.

### **Changes and challenges in the city**

The city world has become crowded. Prices are getting higher. But otherwise I don't see any changes. Housing areas look the same, no improvements. Except for these new buildings coming up and agricultural areas that are now being used to construct high buildings, in a small way allows anybody who has financial and family problems, have a place to live for one or two years. Before the new law that came out that allows this, you needed big money and connections to find a place to live in a decent area like this. So maybe this is a sort of improvement. But of course, we are totally in a temporary state, we are not consistent. I have children in school and I don't have the consistency in my life to say they will continue in this school for the next two to three years or have to move again. I don't know if I will stay here or have to move.

What I see is for a very long time now, the poor are increasing in poverty and the rich are increasing in wealth. A long time ago, there were the lower, middle and high social levels, now this middle level has more or less disappeared. You are either poor or very rich. There are not a lot of people who are living at a satisfied level that is simple and comfortable. It's common for the man to have two jobs and his wife works for money with him and they still barely make enough to cover house and children's expenses. Or on the other side, God opens up for them, or they are corrupt — who knows what they do, usually wrong things for lots of wealth. People are either up very high or down very low. You see these differences in homes, neighborhoods, what they buy. Life for most Egyptians has become just a story of problems. I think it is at every level of society. That has become all people think about: their problem or two or many! Economic problems affect us all. It is a sacrifice on us, because people just cannot think of anything else. No developments.

Men work at least two jobs if not more; until three in the afternoon someone might be a government employee then a taxi driver, then at night a security guard anywhere. It's no wonder they sleep during the day, usually at their government job. This is usual. At first, my husband was working with the Misr Bank, an accountant, then it was sort of going through privatization and they closed parts down three or four years ago. My husband was working with them for 14 years of service and got no

firing compensation. He stayed home jobless for about four months. Then he started working in a small clothing factory which lasted a few months, then he was home jobless again for three months; it went on like that. He worked as a security guard a bit. He has a commercial business degree, he is an accountant with 14 years of experience in this field. But he couldn't find work in his field again for some reason. Now he works in a company called ACC that does construction of villas in new Cairo areas like Sheikh Zayed, Sixth of October, in their warehouse. Just a job. He is very unhappy. He goes from 6 a.m. and comes home only at nine at night every day. All day long he is out in the desert; it's remote and they have nothing, no bathrooms, water, he and his colleagues suffer, I think. Over the years and especially now my husband is a different person, we fight a lot and sometimes in front of the children.

Now my husband has left our home here, he is not financially supporting any of us. I have to pay the rent here alone, children's education and food and clothing for all three of them. Everything will be on me. I still can't find steady employment and work odd days here and there.

Good things are that to some extent in Cairo you can manage on even the smallest budget. You can still eat and drink all day. Koshari, fowl and falafel ... things that don't cost much and we survive on. While the children are still young and don't understand yet, I can manage.

But society is far apart from each other and fragmented. The only thing that will bring us closer together is that if government distributes services and amenities and rights of more equal level to rich and poor. But I don't see that happening when they are not even planning for us yet.

### **Personal aspirations**

I am trying to get child support from my husband and going to government authorities; I don't have money for a lawyer and so I don't want to lodge a case against him, but I just recently visited the Center for Women's Rights and they have been helpful in getting me a lawyer for almost free. I am optimistic, but who knows? Until now I have to get support from my family and siblings, besides the work I can find of course. I also don't want my kids to go through seeing their mother suing their father. But at the same time, they and I need some stability and continuity in our lives.

I would love to find a good job, a secure job where I can make a monthly salary so that I can plan my life and commit to a lifestyle that suits my earned salary. The other thing is to have an apartment where I can afford to stay long term. Somewhere stable where no one can throw us out. Right now I have no security. At any day I and my three children can be put out of this place, where do we go then? This apartment is very nice, but too expensive for us. I take it step by step, my dream is to get a good job first and take responsibility.





*Zabbaleen at work at night – collecting refuse, to be recycled and sold, from a central commercial district.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

centrate their collections on wealthier areas of the city, and up to the year 2009 were estimated to remove up to one-third of all solid waste. Typically, they do not serve the poorer communities of the city such as the fast-expanding informal settlements, where the streets are characterized by decomposing, dumped and often burning rubbish, and where the foreign companies fight to fulfil their contracts in intensely high-density sectors. Three other systems continue in such areas (like Boulaq el Dakrou, for example): the traditional Zabbaleen collect from some areas, the private companies cover main streets only, and the governorate contracts out solid waste collection, in some neighbourhoods, to Egyptian local companies, which also struggle to provide the service.

Asserting the need to act preventatively, Egypt destroyed all pigs belonging to the Zabbaleen in Cairo in early 2009 in response to fears over the spread of the H1N1 virus (otherwise originally known as 'swine flu'). The government slaughter of up to 300,000 Zabbaleen pigs seriously disrupted the Zabbaleen interest and ability to collect and dispose of organic matter. Some Zabbaleen have been further impoverished by working with the solid waste management companies for low wages — lower than their meagre earnings when working freelance. These changes come at a time when their existence and livelihood are further threatened by the government's intention to relocate the Zabbaleen from Muqattam slum and informal areas to Cairo's eastern desert settlement of Qattamiya, 25 ki-

lometres away. The proposals are part of the rehabilitation and upgrading of the Manshiet Nasser informal settlement project initially designed in 1982.<sup>156</sup> Some suspect that the authorities and real estate interests have designs on the Manshiet Nasr land the Zabbaleen currently occupy and find their unhygienic way of living and working inappropriate and out-of-place in their vision of a modern Cairo.

In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, respondents were asked how they dispose of their rubbish. Figure 24 shows that most households have access to a private (Zabbaleen) or governmental rubbish collector (contracted companies) in all *mantiq*. About 68 per cent of the households in low *mantiq* and 77 per cent in medium and high *mantiq* depend on rubbish collectors, with the poor less likely to employ the rubbish collectors than the non-poor. By contrast, the proportion of households that leave their rubbish in the street declines according to the quality of *mantiq* surveyed. Poverty level of the household also plays an important role in this behaviour. Almost on 21 per cent of poor households in low and medium *mantiq* and 29 per cent of the poor in the high *mantiq* reported throwing their rubbish in the street, compared to less than 12 per cent among the non-poor in all *mantiq*.

The survey also asked questions about the new policy of charging households through utility bills to cover the costs of contracted waste disposal companies. Figure 25 shows the responses of those who reported paying

this extra charge in relation to the perceived impact of the companies on rubbish collection services. An average of 22 per cent of the low and medium *mantiq* residents reported a positive impact of the extra charges on rubbish collection services. The corresponding proportion among residents of high *mantiq* did not exceed 13 per cent. The majority in all cases judge the system not to have had a positive effect.

As illustrated in Figure 26, when households were asked about accumulation of rubbish in the streets, more than 42 per cent of the residents of low *mantiq* said that rubbish frequently accumulated, compared to 17 per cent and 14 per cent among medium and high *mantiq*, respectively. In contrast, those who reported no rubbish accumulation amounted to 64 per cent and 56 per cent in high and medium *mantiq*, respectively, compared to just 35 per cent in low *mantiq*.

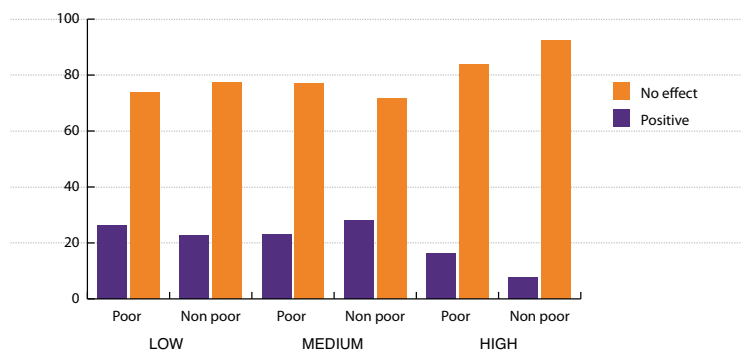
The gradient for other services such as street sweeping shows a similar disparity among the high, medium and low *mantiq*, with the poorer *mantiq* receiving less attention of municipal sweepers. Figure 27 shows that low *mantiq* were less likely to have their streets swept regularly, compared to both medium and high *mantiq*. Only 57 per cent of the residents of the low *mantiq* reported having a

**The gradient for other services such as street sweeping shows a similar disparity among the high, medium and low *mantiq***

street sweeper at all, with just 29 per cent reporting that the streets are being swept every day. By contrast, in high *mantiq*, 90 per cent reported having a street sweeper, with 64 per cent noting that the streets are being swept every day.

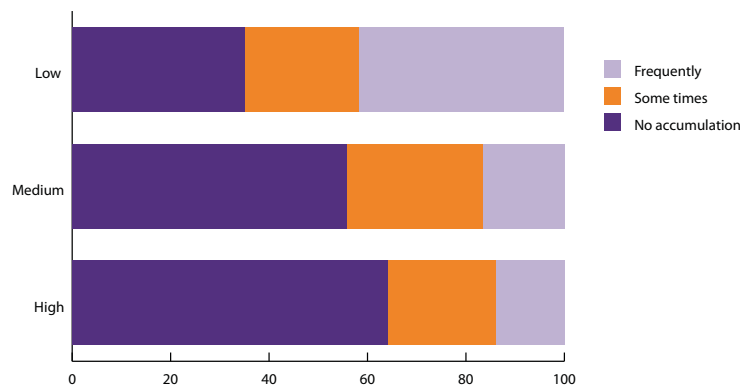
In another part of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, residents were asked to list their priorities for services in the neighbourhood. All *mantiq* listed street cleanliness, street paving and street lighting as their main priorities, but

**Figure 25:** Perceived impact fees on rubbish collection service by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Figure 26:** Accumulation of garbage by the type of *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

to different degrees. Of those living in poor *mantiq*, 46 per cent listed street cleanliness as their top priority, whereas only 27.5 per cent of respondents in medium *mantiq* and 23.7 per cent of those in high *mantiq* prioritized cleanliness. These findings were echoed in a detailed survey of Boulaq Al Dakroul conducted in 2008.<sup>157</sup> Residents complained that the lack of cleanliness was the greatest tangible nuisance and the most disagreeable aspect of living in the informal area. ‘Worst streets’ in the neighbourhood were always those listed with excessive garbage and pollution (as well as traffic). In this survey, the strong perception amongst the residents was that the cleanliness that existed (mostly in the residential streets as opposed to the main streets where uncollected rubbish accumulates) was due to residents and shop keepers themselves cleaning the streets. Only 16 per cent attributed



Rubbish stored on roofs in the informal settlement dominated by the Zabbaleen, in the sprawling Manshiet Nassr settlement.

Image: Chris Horwood

garbage collection and street cleaning to district or municipal authorities.

A longitudinal study that examined a sample of households in Old Cairo (low-quality *mantiq*) showed some changes in residents' treatment of rubbish between 2003 and 2009, as illustrated in Table 10.<sup>158</sup> While more households were using the services of a rubbish collector and taking advantage of street bins

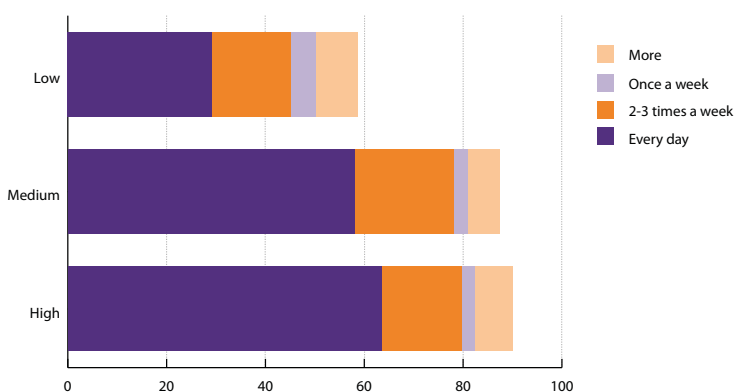
in 2008, fewer were relying on a contracted municipal waste company and nearly as many were still throwing their rubbish in the street. The results indicate a missing link in waste removal services in low-quality *mantiq* in Cairo, where the accumulation of waste is troubling to residents but alternatives to tossing rubbish in the street are not always more practical or attractive to them.

## Educating Cairo

### Educational attainment throughout Cairo

Egypt maintains a free and compulsory education system that was established after 1952. However, it struggles to achieve universal enrolment and prevent significant dropout rates despite recent improvements. According to the government's own findings, low educational attainment and continued high illiteracy rates are heavily correlated with poverty.<sup>159</sup> However, the government recently claimed that the net enrolment ratio in primary education increased from 86 per cent

Figure 27: Frequency of street sweeping by type of *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Table 10: Longitudinal study results concerning rubbish collection in Old Cairo (low *mantiq*)

	Rubbish collector	Contracted municipal company	In street bins	Abandon in street	other
2003 responses	18.1	10.7	36.9	28.9	5.4
2008 responses	30.2	3.4	37.6	28.2	0.7

Source: Shehayeb 2009b. *Educating Cairo*

in 1991 to 94 per cent in 2006. The results of the 2005 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) indicate that 91 per cent of children 6 to 15 years old (92 per cent of males and 90 per cent of females) were attending school (public and private), and that around 96 per cent of children 8 to 10 years old (98 per cent of males and 95 per cent of females) were in school in the 2004-2005 school year.<sup>160</sup> Some argue that these official statistics do not account for irregular drop-out and school-leaving behaviour, which may be proportionally higher among poorer segments of the population.

Although most children between the ages of 6 and 15 attend public schools, the government recognizes an increase in enrolment in private schools in recent years. Statistics show that in 2005, 7.8 per cent of children between 6 and 15 were at private schools, compared to 5.7 per cent in 2000. Private school attendance is evidently more common in urban areas and among males.<sup>161</sup>

A dissenting view claims that in Egypt today, 'anyone who can afford to avoid the public education does so'.<sup>162</sup> Private schools have increasingly developed in informal settlements as a general response to the perceived absence or deterioration of public educational services in Egypt. A two-tiered system of social services, including education, now exists, whereby the poor use degraded public services while the better-off buy private education.<sup>163</sup>

According to some observers, the quality of school buildings and educational infrastructure, teaching standards, overcrowded classrooms and the emergence of a parallel private tutoring system all bear witness to this deteriorating quality.<sup>164</sup> Some writers claim that the widespread emergence of private tutoring has occurred to compensate for the decline in real wages of teachers, and to compensate for overcrowded classes and the deteriorating quality of education despite cost-recovery strategies that were introduced to improve quality.<sup>165</sup> Efforts aimed at regulating private tutoring by the Ministry of Education through the introduction of *majmu'at* (after-school classes at set prices under the school's super-

vision) have become the norm throughout the educational system.<sup>166</sup> The expectation of private tuition adds an extra burden on the poor; in Table 9, tutoring is classified as 'private lessons'. On average, only 29 per cent of poor households in all three *mantiq* sampled in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey said their income was adequate to cover the *majmu'at* costs. Income from *majmu'at* is distributed to the teachers and the administration, so it has become a *de facto* official policy to generate additional income for those providing education, and adds incentives for those involved to expand the *majmu'at* system.

The findings of the 2006 census indicate that among the population aged 6 to 18 years throughout Egypt, 10 per cent (around 2.1 million) have never attended school and 4 per cent (around 0.9 million) attended but then dropped out of schooling (compulsory education is from 6 to 15 years only). The SRC/UN-

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**A two-tiered system of social services, including education, now exists, whereby the poor use degraded public services while the better-off buy private education.**

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HABITAT survey found that (of all age groups, including those 6 to 18 years) 20.4 per cent of poor household members in Cairo have never been to school, while only 4.8 per cent of the non-poor have never been to school.

Apart from the income, consumption and expenditure data that shows steep gradients between the poor and non-poor, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey exposes critical educational differentials among socioeconomic groups in the city. The non-poor have superior levels of educational attainment than the poor irrespective of the type of *mantiq* they live in. Considering the presence of a wide range of private and public schools in all middle and higher *mantiq* (as well as in, or near, most low *mantiq*) the results suggest that factors beyond access and proximity define educational outcomes. The wealth elasticity of education-



A new private educational establishment emerges in the desert on the road to the new city, 10<sup>th</sup> Ramadan. Behind it more construction of apartments are visible.

Image: Chris Horwood

al attainment appears high despite the government's high-level investment in universal education. The 2006 census figures also show that 1,085,745 out of 5,623,654 individuals who are older than 10 years in Cairo governorate cannot read and write. This is close to 20 per cent of the population. A longitudinal study focusing on the poor area in the core inner city area of Al-Darb Al-Almar between 2003 and 2009<sup>167</sup> showed that basic educa-

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### ...the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey exposes critical educational differentials among socioeconomic groups in the city.

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tional attainments gradually improved as the number of illiterate men decreased by 5.5 per cent and illiterate women by 2.5 per cent over the six-year period. Illiteracy is prevalent among the older population (45 years old and above), and especially among women; 29 per cent of the surveyed population in this part of historic Cairo was completely illiterate in 2009. In the same areas over the same time period, the proportion of girls dropping out of preparatory school declined from 13 per cent to 7 per cent.

The Egyptian Ministry of Education indicates that 1.6 per cent of males and 1.2 per cent of females dropped out of primary school in the 2006-2007 school year. Dropout rates are slightly higher among the preparatory school

population (around 2 per cent for both males and females in 2006-2007).<sup>168</sup> The higher figures from poor urban areas in Cairo suggest different outcomes than those found nationwide by the government.

Table 8 illustrates the findings on the educational attainment of the household population according to the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey.

At its extremes, the data identifies at one end that amongst the non-poor in high *mantiq*, just 10.9 per cent of males and 12.8 per cent of females are likely to have only had primary education, or less, or none at all. Meanwhile, at the other end, amongst the poor in the low-quality areas, 51.2 per cent of men and 59.5 per cent of women have only had primary education, or less, or none at all.

In non-poor groups in high-quality areas, males are seven times as likely to have received a university education (or more) than poor residents in low *mantiq*. Meanwhile, females in high-quality areas from non-poor families are nine times more likely to have received a university education (or more) than poor females in low-quality areas.

The gender bias differs quite significantly by education stage. For example, 29 per cent of poor women in low *mantiq* had never been to school, while less than 16 per cent of poor men in the same *mantiq* had never been to school. An average of 21.3 per cent of poor

**Table 8 : Educational attainment for household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non poor	Poor	Non poor	Poor	Non poor
<b>Never been to school</b>						
<b>Men †</b>	10.9		12.6		6.0	
	15.9	6.0***	20.0	5.41***	25.3	3.1***
<b>Women **</b>	18.8		15.1		7.9	
	28.9	9.3***	23.5	7.9*	35.5	3.6***
<b>Primary &amp; less</b>						
<b>Men ***</b>	27.4		27.6		10.1	
	35.3	19.8***	33.8	21.5	25.2	7.8*
<b>Women ***</b>	25.8		27.9		11.7	
	30.6	21.4***	36.3	20.7	27.9	9.2***
<b>Preparatory</b>						
<b>Men**</b>	12.0		12.4		4.4	
	15.9	8.3***	17.0	8.0	17.6	2.5***
<b>Women **</b>	11.3		15.4		4.7	
	12.6	10.1	17.7	13.4†	12.7	3.4
<b>Secondary &amp; Equivalent</b>						
<b>Men **</b>	23.3		22.3		10.2	
	22.0	24.6	21.6	22.9	20.3	8.7***
<b>Women ***</b>	24.0		17.6		13.7	
	19.8	27.9 *	13.0	21.6*	8.7	14.5†
<b>University and above</b>						
<b>Men **</b>	26.4		25.2		69.3	
	11.3	41.3***	7.6	42.3*	11.6	77.8***
<b>Women***</b>	20.1		23.9		62.0	
	8.2	31.2***	9.4	36.4†	15.2	69.2***

†significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

males in all three *mantiq* types had attained secondary education or the equivalent, while the same is true of only 13.8 per cent of females from poor households. But, as Table 8 shows, the percentage of poor females who had attained primary and university education in medium and high *mantiq* has exceeded that of poor males in the same *mantiq*. However, in the low *mantiq*, poor women consistently fare worse than poor men in their educational attainment. Government-presented data illustrates that 12.9 per cent of Cairo's population between 6 and 17 years has never attended school. By contrast, figures from Suez city using the same criteria are as low as 3.3 per cent, while Luxor has the highest levels of unschooled youth, at 14 per cent.<sup>169</sup>

According to the SRC/UN-HABITAT research, poor women generally attain less education than men at all levels, irrespective of the type of *mantiq* they live in. There are some exceptions to this general gender bias: 15.2 per cent of poor females attain a university education or more in high *mantiq*; in contrast, just 11.6

per cent of poor men in high *mantiq* achieve a university education. The findings in this case contrast with the high incidence (35.5 per cent) of females living in high *mantiq* who never go to school, suggesting an extreme dichotomy: one-third of poor women living in high-quality areas may never go to school, while almost one-sixth go on to achieve a

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**...poor women generally attain less education than men at all levels, irrespective of the type of *mantiq* they live in.**

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university education. Poor women in high-income areas usually work as servants in the homes of the non-poor. Skipping education is mainly motivated by potential employment, even at the earliest age of enrolment at primary education.<sup>170</sup>

Studies that examine unemployment rates in comparison with educational status show

**Table 9: Sufficiency of income for all educational expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
<b>Schools fees**</b>	37.0		43.3		73.6	
	25.6	45.4***	36.7	48.1	43.9	77.6***
<b>School related expenses**</b>	35.3		37.0		70.7	
	22.3	45.2***	31.5	40.8**	42.6	74.6**
<b>Private lessons for school*</b>	32.1		36.3		70.0	
	20.2	41.5***	35.2	37.1	32.9	75.1***
<b>Aiding material for school work*</b>	33.6		35.1		70.5	
	21.5	42.8***	30.1	38.6	44.5	73.9**

<sup>†</sup>significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

that the most unemployed in Egypt, by far, are those who have attained an intermediate or secondary education. According to one analysis in 1998, 70 per cent of all unemployed people fell into this category, while just 1 per cent of illiterate people in the workforce were unemployed. At the same time, 18 per cent of university graduates were also unemployed.<sup>171</sup> This points to the ubiquitous and accessible nature of the informal sector to absorb those without education but also casts light on educational returns. If large groups of people with intermediary levels of educational attainment remain unemployed, parents who can ill-afford secondary or even primary education may choose to save themselves the cost. However, it is also true that those employed with secondary or university education find themselves better paid than the poorly educated and often have an upward trajectory in terms of annual increases in income; meanwhile, the informal sector normally offers minimal or subsistence wages without security from being laid off, and without possibilities of future wage increases or protection from generalized food and commodity price rises. The 2010 UNDP *Egypt Human Development Report* highlights falling returns on education, concerns about the quality of state education and the mismatch between education and the job market. 'Egypt continues to be saddled by an education system that produces a large number of degrees with limited value in the private sector labour market. ... Educated young people are now relegated to jobs in the informal economy, jobs they could have probably obtained with much lower levels of education'.<sup>172</sup>

Households in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey were asked about the sufficiency of their income to cover their educational expenses. Table 9 shows a clear gradient in households' ability to meet educational expenses based on the type of *mantiq* they live in. Poor households are less likely to be able to cover all their educational expenses compared with non-poor households, particularly among those living in low and high *mantiq*. Nevertheless, the poor in the three *mantiq* types do not equally struggle to meet educational expenses: significantly more poor in the medium and high *mantiq* are able to afford to educate their children. In the case of the high *mantiq*, almost double the number of poor find they have sufficient income to pay school fees and related expenses.

One of the main indications of the differential ability of households to meet their educational expenses is the average number of expenses totally covered by the household. Significant differences emerge among the three types of *mantiq* and by the household poverty level, particularly among low and high *mantiq* residents. The average number of educational services totally covered by household income among the non-poor is almost double that covered by the poor in the low and high *mantiq*. When linked to the educational attainments of different socioeconomic groups in the different *mantiq*, the correlation between the data sets suggests income is an important factor determining educational outcomes, and therefore future differentials in income and employment and living conditions.

The sufficiency of income for educational expenses, which fluctuate with demand, is surprisingly low among the non-poor in low and medium *mantiq*, indicating that aspired education is beyond the means of almost all Cairenes. Educational costs place a particularly heavy burden on the poor in Greater Cairo. The actual costs of education are simply not included in the poverty lines, as discussed in the 2009 IIED analysis. 'The non-food component of the lower poverty line is 429 EGP/year (c.US \$78) and for the upper [official] poverty line is 897 EGP/year (c. US \$163). This is the amount which is allowed for *all* non-food essentials.'<sup>173</sup> Using actual examples from two informal areas included in the IIED fieldwork — Haggana and Batn El Ba'ara — this means that the costs of education for every single secondary school student are significantly above the costs factored into official poverty lines.

Additional expenses associated with education include daily transportation costs for many children, as well as uniforms, shoes, books, bags, stationery and daily food or snack allowance. Safety is also a concern for parents of young children, who may have to travel long distances in urban areas either alone or without adult escorts to get to school. One researcher visited households and added up the costs incurred by families. She found

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**With two or three or more school- or university-age dependents, the costs for transport alone add a considerable burden to already tight family budgets.**

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that at an average of 2.5 EGP (approximately US \$0.45) per day, a return bus trip to school for one secondary-level child could add up to 450 EGP (approximately US \$80) over a single year. For tertiary education, the average transport costs are double that amount.<sup>174</sup> With two or three or more school- or university-age dependents, the costs for transport alone add a considerable burden to already tight family budgets. Clearly, the burden of transport costs, in particular, falls more heavily on the poor than the non-poor in terms of

education. Not only are additional trips a burden on their already stretched incomes, but poor families often live far from government services such as schools. In Ezbet El Haggana, a large informal settlement of roughly one-quarter to half a million inhabitants, there are just two public primary schools and no secondary schools. Another informal settlement, Boulaq al-Dakrou, with an estimated 1.5 million residents, is short 40 schools, according to the chief of the government's General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP).<sup>175</sup> The children consequently are forced to travel into adjacent areas to find schools with space to absorb them, resulting in massive overcrowding. According to the German development agency GTZ, in a particularly striking example, class crowding in Boulaq el Dakrou surpasses 100 pupils per class.

When transport costs are added to other associated educational costs listed above, and including the *majmu'at* private tutoring costs, the same researcher found that in two sample informal settlements the cost of secondary education for one child was between 1,000 EGP and 1,370 EGP per annum (approximately US \$180 to \$249).<sup>176</sup> It is relevant to note that when calculating poverty lines in Cairo, the annual non-food component of the lower poverty line (429 EGP) and the upper poverty line (897 EGP) are both well below these educational costs, which are one of many non-food costs facing households and individuals. These under-calculations of the real costs of education to households contribute to the underestimation of poverty in the capital city, and elsewhere.

The high value of education in breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty cannot be overstated, yet many children drop out of school at the primary or secondary level because of the associated costs. Cairo's dropout rate is one of the highest in Egypt, with 5.7 per cent of those between the ages 6 to 17 who have dropped out of primary school.<sup>177</sup> These children end up helping in their households, playing in the streets of their neighbourhoods or starting work early. Because of its dependency on available income and other factors, education can be used as a revealing and relevant proxy for poverty in Egypt.<sup>178</sup>



## Transporting Cairenes

In response to the rapid rise in population, recent decades have seen continuous development of major road infrastructure projects in and around Greater Cairo including bridges over the Nile, urban motorway viaducts, underground carriageways and underpasses, ring roads and radial motorways. Despite the development of infrastructure, such as the Cairo Metro, to facilitate the mobility of low-income residents and the liberalisation of the surface public transport network with private operators and price controls, many of these services are not accessible to those who need them in the urban environment because of cost and access: affordability and availability are the two critical factors that supersede preference as the drivers of transport use in Cairo.

The expense of transport as a proportion of household budget and how it influences strategic decisions on how family members live varies considerably between the poor and the non-poor. The poor are overwhelmingly dependent on public and private transport for everyday survival. Transport issues (predomi-

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**Transport issues (predominantly cost) shape the choices and options of the poor, with respect to education, employment, housing location, business activities and recreation.**

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nantly cost) shape the choices and options of the poor, with respect to education, employment, housing location, business activities and recreation. The wealthy typically have private alternatives and the resources to cater to their preferences.

Transport in Cairo comprises an extensive road network, rail system, subway system and maritime services for the 15 to 18 million inhabitants and daily commuters in the city. A new Cairo Monorail has been proposed on the east side of the city, while plans are underway to continually expand the metro rail

network. An extensive road network connects Cairo with other Egyptian cities and villages. Cairo is the hub of almost the entire Egyptian transport network, and in particular major urban corridors to Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and industrial and new urban developments south of the city.<sup>179</sup>

The past three decades have witnessed some major changes in the way Cairenes move around the region. Apart from the huge increase in car ownership (both in proportion and in absolute terms), increased mobility, together with the sharp population increase, has resulted in a 'spectacular increase' in the number of trips according to the World Bank.<sup>180</sup> These factors have also contributed to a marked increase in congestion levels and travel times. In recent years, the market share of motorised transport modes has changed dramatically. For example, while cars and taxis absorbed 13 per cent of the market share of motor transport uses in 1971, by 1998 it had risen to 26 per cent. The Metro, which didn't exist in the 1970s, absorbed 20 per cent of people's motorized transport mobility in 2000. With a liberalization of government policy allowing privately operated microbuses, by 1998 this mode absorbed as much as 26 per cent of the market share.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the new ring road that circles the city, and which provides access to almost every Cairo district, Cairo's traffic continues to have a reputation of being highly congested and noisy. Traffic continues to overwhelm the city, whose planners could hardly have envisaged the current and growing number of private cars and buses necessary to meet the needs of a rising population. Amongst the most significant bottlenecks are the six bridges over the Nile that link Cairo and Giza and which are overloaded during the rush hour commute. There are numerous new flyovers and bridges, such as the Sixth of October bridge, that were designed to allow direct and efficient means of transport from one side of the city to the other.

There has been a dramatic increase in private car ownership in Cairo in the last quarter century. Even though the proportion of the population that can afford a car remains lim-



*After work rush-hour  
in central Cairo.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

ited, the absolute number of owners in Cairo has risen sharply with population, resulting in increased traffic. This trend is also allegedly due to the availability of cheaper Chinese-made cars on the market. In the 2007 SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, 26.1 per cent of all households surveyed owned cars. Those who can afford cars often have more than one to meet the educational and employment needs of different family members. A World Bank analysis in the year 2000 indicated that the market share of taxis and cars used for trips had doubled between 1971 (13 per cent of trips) and 1998 (26 per cent of trips).

In 1983, more than 530,000 vehicles were on Cairo roads, but by 1997, the total had surpassed one million.<sup>182</sup> A comprehensive transport survey carried out in 1987 found variations in car ownership and income by zone. Average car ownership at that time was about 0.053 per head (about one car per 20 people), or 0.017 per household (about one car per five households).<sup>183</sup> Some claim the ratio is 114 cars per 1,000 people,<sup>184</sup> which suggests that as many as 1.8 or 2.0 million cars are at large on Cairo's roads. It is not clear what the exact statistics were in 2010, but almost 18,000 cars were purchased in Cairo in January 2010 alone. Strong sales are expected to continue in the coming years. A recent report by Business Monitor International predicts that total automotive sales will increase from US \$9.48 billion in 2009 to US \$23.54 billion in 2014, an increase of 148 per cent.<sup>185</sup> If January 2010 was a typical month for the

year, then a possible 200,000 new cars would be added to Egypt's army of private cars in 2010 alone, many of which would end up on Cairo's roads.

Despite the rise in car ownership, the use of private cars for urban trips is predominantly a choice and habit of the wealthier socio-economic groups. A World Bank study in the year 2000 cited statistics showing that 7 per cent of very poor households (earning

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### **There has been a dramatic increase in private car ownership in Cairo in the last quarter century.**

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less than 300 EGP per month, or about US \$55) used private cars, while 57 per cent of those who were classified as wealthy (earning more than 2,000 EGP per month, or about US \$364) and 39 per cent of those ranked as affluent (earning between 1000 EGP and 2000 EGP per month) used private cars for their urban travel. As Table 13 illustrates, the urban poor predominantly walk or use public buses and private minibuses. Mass transportation is owned and operated by the public sector and is, by any standards, overloaded. In response to this problem, privately owned shared taxis or minibuses began to flourish since the 1980s and more frenetic private microbuses started in the late 1990s. Public

buses are the cheapest, most crowded mode of transport; the minibuses and microbuses are more expensive, and passengers cannot crowd on board.

Cairo Transportation Authority (CTA) is the operator of mass transit within Cairo, and the largest operator in Egypt. The government controls its passenger prices to increase low-income affordability. CTA operates buses, minibuses, river buses, trams and a surface metro rail. Greater Cairo Bus Company (GCBC) is a subsidiary of CTA and operates more than 3,000 buses, 950 minibuses and 40 Nile ferries. With more than 37,000 employees, it offers transport services to more than 3.5 million riders a day.<sup>186</sup> Despite its resources, the public bus service is overwhelmed by the numbers of users, and with-

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**Despite its resources, the public bus service is overwhelmed by the numbers of users, and without designated bus lanes they struggle to provide a regular, rapid and efficient service.**

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out designated bus lanes they struggle to provide a regular, rapid and efficient service. Most people prefer to use the more expensive but faster minibuses that also react faster to market demand by providing services to more remote locations and at more hours of the day and night. Statistics from 1998 show that 66 per cent of the very poor and 56 per cent of the poor use either the public or private bus services, with the majority preferring to use private minibuses (see Table 13). At the other end of the socioeconomic scale, only 11 per cent of the wealthy and 21 per cent of the affluent said they use buses, with the majority also choosing minibuses.

Traditional black Cairo cabs now compete for customers and fill the streets, with newer yellow cabs and the newest white cabs reflecting the city authorities' efforts to urge the private taxi services to modernize. White cabs all have electronic meters with contemporary pricing that dispense with the need for bargaining. Meters start at 2.5 EGP (US \$0.45) for the first kilometre and add 1.25 EGP per kilometre after that, plus 0.25 EGP per minute of waiting time. Nevertheless, these prices are beyond the reach of the poor, who rarely use taxis. In 1998, just 2 per cent of the very poor and 4 per cent of the poor (with household incomes between 300 and 500 EGP) said they used taxis, while 13 per cent of the wealthy and 11 per cent of the affluent said taxis were their transport mode of choice in the city.<sup>187</sup> The Cairo Metro in Egypt is Africa's only functioning network metro rail system, with 53 stations along 65 kilometres of track. It became operational in 1987 but was conceived of in the 1950s. The system currently consists of two operational lines, with a third under construction and three more proposed. The ticket price is 1 EGP (US \$ 0.18) for each line regardless of distance. The price has been static and low since 1997, offering low-cost transportation that compares well with other modes in terms of affordability, speed, safety and congestion. Women can opt to travel in specially designated cars if required. The trains are most used in the metro corridor, which is directly available to 30 per cent of the population in Greater Cairo located within 1 kilometre on either side of the line. The metro is the most democratic mode of transport in Cairo since it is used by all social classes, with the exception of the wealthiest 2 per cent of the population, who opt for private cars. As Table 13 indicates, on average 17 per cent of the travelling population used the metro in 1998.

Affordability affects decisions to use transportation. The cost of travelling to a hospital or school, to a supplier or a workplace can be

**Table 11: Sufficiency of income for transport by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

	Low mantiq	Medium mantiq	High mantiq
<b>Poor</b>	42.5	45.4	44.8
<b>Non-poor</b>	62.3	71.6	87.3
<b>Average</b>	52.9	59.2	82.5



*Despite new high-ways and fly-over developments in recent years, the traffic congestion remains a headache for Cairenes and planners.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

prohibitive, leading most people to choose residences close to facilities and services, and close to friends and relatives. The wealthy may make lifestyle choices to move out of Cairo's congestion, pollution and noise to the gated communities surrounding Cairo or an exclusive development in the new cities, but for the poor, transport emerges as a critical factor in terms of hours spent travelling, availability of regular and convenient access, and the costs involved. These factors around transport, not to mention the paucity of services and facilities in many areas and the relative isolation of new communities, have often been cited as critical reasons why Cairo's overcrowded low-income population has resisted the government's incentives and persuasions to move to new desert settlements. It is widely viewed that the launch of the new cities was handicapped by the absence of fast public transport links that the poorer classes could afford. As a result, these new cities are increasingly populated by fairly wealthy social classes with cars.

Sufficiency of income to cover transport costs was examined in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey. As Table 11 illustrates, only 44 per cent of the poor, on average, felt they had sufficient household income to cover their transport costs. By contrast, an average of 74 per cent of non-poor households felt their incomes were sufficient to meet these expenses. The gradient of sufficiency rose commensurate with rising *mantiq* levels from low to high. Generally, poor people do not own private

means of transport. The 2009 IIED study on underestimating and misreporting poverty in Cairo concluded that in relation to the poor, 'Their daily costs for transportation are extremely significant and these costs are not adequately factored into the non-food allowance of poverty lines. An affordable and functional public transportation system in Greater Cairo would decrease the poor's living expenses significantly.'<sup>188</sup>

**Table 12: Perception of transport availability by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

Indicator	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
Average number means of transportation***						
	2.23		2.12		2.51	
	2.08	2.38***	1.97	2.27***	2.47	2.51***
Neighbourhood has easy or reasonable access to means of transportation						
	84.3		90.0		91.5	
Reasons for complaining of the difficulty of the transportation						
Transportation available outside the neighbourhood						
	41.5		30.9		31.5	
	41.3	41.7	38.8	25.8	70.0	27.6***
Roads to neighbourhoods are unsuitable for use by transportation means						
	39.3		57.2		53.9	
	43.9	34.5	54.3	59.1	70.0	52.3
Other reasons related to crowdedness and violence in the transportation means***						
	52.2		24.8		39.7	
	52.2	52.3	25.0	24.7	15.0	42.2

<sup>\*</sup>significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) <sup>\*</sup>significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) <sup>\*\*</sup>significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) <sup>\*\*\*</sup>significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

## 'our country is the best country in the world'

*Khairi, interviewed 5 July 2010, lives in a new construction area called Madinat Rokn Helwan El Gideed. It is a five-minute drive along the corniche El Nil from El Maadi, in the direction of Helwan (south of Cairo). Maadi is a high-end residential area of Cairo, inhabited largely by expatriates and diplomats. Madinat Rokn Helwan El Gideed is a new construction area filled with expensive towers, up to 15 or 18 stories tall, on the corniche, all facing the Nile.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

I am Khairi, my wife is Suzanne, my son Sameh is an architect and lives with me in the house, and another son who is a third-year law student, Abuel Ela Sultan, also lives with us. My daughter Marwa is married and lives in Zeitoun.

My work as a taxi driver is in Maadi. I start at 9 a.m. and work until 6 p.m. or 7 p.m. My son who is in law school takes the cab and works with it from 6 p.m. to 12 midnight after school. He helps in paying his own college tuition, his clothes, whatever he needs. I taught him how

to drive and taught him how to work so that he can pay for things himself, because we are practical people and I want to instill values of hard work into him now instead of him straying this way and that. We value work like our eyes. For example, now I am 47 years old; I don't like to sit and do nothing, even my wife is a top-notch housewife, bless her.

We now live in Madinat Rokn Helwan El Gideed. Is a 90 square metre apartment. Before, we lived in 40 square metres. This flat I'm in right now is good, the area is filled with towers. I'm renting — I pay EGP 250 [US \$44], and this is very good for me!

This taxi I drive I bought with a loan. I have car payments; it is EGP 790 [US \$139] per month for the car installment to be honest. My monthly income is about EGP 4,000 [US \$700] from my taxi work. I have four years left on car payments.

The community where I live in Madinat ... everyone is into his own self, people are very respectful, the area I'm staying in is still new and clean. They are good people because no one approaches you, no problems. They don't mix with each other, and I like this style, so do my sons. My wife also likes this calmness, quiet. She doesn't like to mix with the neighbours; they are no problems whatsoever, thank God. Everything is fine, but the electricity hasn't reached us yet — we are taking it from an external 'flying' outlet [tapped illegally], and we pay a fine of EGP 340 [US \$60] every two months. It's a lot, but you know they fine us and we go and pay the fine at the electric company's *mabahas kahraba* [intelligence/police unit].

There is no electricity, what can we do? When it comes in the company's own good time, we will pay. Apparently for this area, the electricity hasn't opened yet. Why? We don't know! So, we told them, OK, when you open the system, hook us up. For us it's better to have a formal line, with a metre instead of paying all these fines and sums of money. With the metre it will be much cheaper.

The water is not connected yet, but we have no problems with water, either. We have a central water pump for the whole building which I helped in setting up and organizing with the rest of the neighbours, because the landlord trusts me. There is familiarity and warmth with the neighbours here and we can help each other anytime, but we don't go to each other's houses.



### **‘The best country in the world’: Urban advancement**

Our country is the best country in the world — look at the weather, look at all these towers on the Nile, look at the Nile right in front of you. If you want an apartment here, I can get you a deal, I swear. Before, this was all poultry farms and farming land. They built these towers about five years ago. Look at all these towers and skyscrapers: they are beautiful.

There are changes for the better. In our case for example, thank God, we had a decrepit taxi that didn't get us a lot of money. The government has given us a new cab, and they made the car run on gas so it doesn't pollute the air, and it's economical, too.\* Yes, thank goodness there are a lot of good things, the country is moving forward big time. Not like before, it was all informal and chaotic sprouting of buildings, now look! I showed you the towers when we were coming in, there are no towers like this even in Maadi! But the traffic is horrendous, not the number of cars only, but the traffic rules and police themselves. There is no logic and no rules. The police checkpoints cause all this traffic — they check every car, take licenses causing a queue of cars, God knows what for.

There are people who are doing well and still there are people who are suffering from dire conditions, because there is high unemployment and slowing down and stagnation in the economy. Even though anybody can work in anything, you don't need to have a certificate; look at me for example, my son has a degree and he is now working in the airport collecting tickets at the entrance cashier and his degree is in computer programming. He only gets EGP 700 [US \$123] per month.

If you can't find work in your own field that fits your credentials, you can just work in anything; you have to manage. Unfortunately, there is a lot of youth who just sit it out until work comes to their feet; this doesn't work. The country is full of work to be done.

I like living here, it's very good. For me nothing is difficult, I get over all difficulties with my will; as long as there is will you can overcome many obstacles. Now I'm 47 years

old, but I have the capacity to dig into rocks to get money. I have the capacity to do anything to get money, but always *halal* [clean] ways. Otherwise, no.

### **Informal areas and poverty**

Here, there are a lot of areas they call informal areas, like Manshiet Nasser, an *a'ashwai'yat*. I cannot go into there at all. And a place called Ezbat Kheir Allah, a very bad area, in old Cairo; the area has gathered all the thugs of Egypt in one place. Allies and narrow streets and no signs and unknown cities, it is impossible to navigate. The government has no answer to this problem, I think.

There is a lot of poverty. What has happened is that there are people high up in the sky completely and others buried beneath the ground; there is no middle level anymore at all, just rich or poor. Before there was a middle class, but it has been cancelled now. This is what is tiring out society and the people as the situation today. A person gets used to what they are paid and adapts. People themselves have the solution; either a person makes it more complicated or solves their own issues. I don't understand people who say the government does not do this or that? What do you and I and the government have to do with one another? Oh, that I die working and make money! Egypt is full of work to do, search and you will find, I say, but others see it differently. Is it a shame to be a garbage collector, or to pump gas? Not at all — at least they work.

Another thing is I live within my means, I don't ever take loans. To me, what you buy is pound for pound with your money only. Interest is expensive; we plan out our purchases. You see this fan, two refrigerators, computer, two washing machines, all bought with our own money. We see which shops and when to purchase, the right time, the right prices.

I have been working since I was 8 years old; I'm not educated, only six years of schooling. Life is not perfect. You have to take it with humor, too. When I was with the company, I saw that on the payroll tape one day that my paycheck was EGP 5 for some reason! I got so upset I had a heart attack and had to have medical help on the expense of the company. Since then, I take everything as it comes.

\* Part of the government's anti-pollution program in early 2000 included incentives to turn in old cars to receive a new Hyundai assembled in Egypt. The program was subsidized by the government in part, and the rest was paid by the taxi owner through installments with a bank; there have been complaints about the contractual terms and product quality of the new cars.

Many informal settlements on the outskirts of Greater Cairo are not adequately served by the public bus network and the metro. Due to the origins and nature of their existence, they are also not well-served by schools, clinics, official offices or police and hospitals — a fac-

**Many informal settlements on the outskirts of Greater Cairo are not adequately served by the public bus network and the metro.**

tor that increases transportation costs for the poor. Therefore, to get close to the public bus network or to the affordable Greater Cairo Metro (underground), those in many informal

settlements normally use minibuses and in some cases have to change lines more than once, adding to the cost of their journeys. 'In 2008, minibuses cost around 1.25 EGP per journey [about US \$0.20]. The overhead of going to work for a day or going anywhere not within walking distance of the informal settlement is thus a minimum of 2.50 EGP [about US \$0.50]. Many people spend much more than that, if they have to change to another microbus or get on the public transport network once they reach it, or take a bus from the underground to their destination.'<sup>189</sup>

Motorized three-wheelers (tuk-tuks) and mini-trucks are used within informal areas that often stretch on for miles and include a network of narrow unpaved lanes. The tuk-tuks are not cheap and are often used to shift

**Table 13: Use of transport modes by income and type of residence (%)**

Level of income of the household per month	Under 300 EGP	300 - 500 EGP	500 – 1000 EGP	1000 – 2000 EGP	In excess of 2000 EGP	No answer
Income-based social classification	Very poor	poor	middle	Affluent	wealthy	
Distribution throughout Greater Cairo	22 per cent	32 per cent	23 per cent	6 per cent	2 per cent	15 per cent
District or housing type	Spontaneous, informal, near centres of activity or wealthy districts	Informal, poor, old, near centres of activity	Working class planned districts, within 10 km of activity centres	Planned districts, good quality housing, suited for using private cars	High quality districts, villas, sometimes distant and even unplanned in agricultural areas. Suited for private cars	-
Mobile by foot	46 per cent	39 per cent	31 per cent	21 per cent	12 per cent	-
Mobile by shared taxi (microbus and minibus-private)	38 per cent	33 per cent	24 per cent	14 per cent	8 per cent	28 per cent
Mobile by CTA bus	28 per cent	23 per cent	15 per cent	7 per cent	3 per cent	20 per cent
Mobile by Metro	16 per cent	19 per cent	19 per cent	14 per cent	7 per cent	16 per cent
Mobile by private car	7 per cent	13 per cent	25 per cent	39 per cent	57 per cent	20 per cent
Mobile by taxi	2 per cent	4 per cent	6 per cent	11 per cent	13 per cent	6 per cent
Mobile by bicycles/motorbikes	1 per cent**	0	0	0	0	1 per cent
Main modes of regular travels (respondents can include more than one)	Walking, bus and metro* for short distances, train* for short and long distances	Walking, bus and metro* for short distances, train*	Bus for short and medium distances if comfortable, metro* and train* for short and medium distances, shared taxi for short distances	Metro*, Shared taxi, private car	Private car, taxi	-

Source: 1998 household survey (SYSTRA-DRTPC)

(\*): if available under existing transport condition as cited in World Bank (2000) World Bank Urban Transport Strategy Review The Case Of Cairo EGYPT Ref: 3018/SYS-PLT/CAI/709-00 Edition 3 – Nov. 2000. Amalgamation of two tables by author.

(\*\*) The World Bank analysis suggests the low use of bicycles and motorbikes was due to safety concerns in an environment of often chaotic and high-accident road use.

<sup>t</sup>significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

merchandise while people either walk or use outdated and unlicensed mini-trucks. A 1998 World Bank study (see Table 13) indicated that 46 per cent of the very poor and 39 per cent of the poor (see categories listed in the tables) travelled mostly on foot. Only 12 per cent of the wealthy and 21 per cent of the affluent moved around on foot. The character of Cairo and Cairo traditional life is community-based insofar as people enjoy working, eating, shopping and socializing in a neighbourhood, and street culture and activity are much enjoyed as part of the fabric of life. It is important to contextualize the data because the fact that people in poorer households walk is not only a function of affordability

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**‘Walkability’ has also declined in high *mantiq* because sidewalks have disappeared as streets have been widened by encroaching commercial activities, waste and car parking.**

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of transport but also preference and lifestyle choices — ‘liveability’ in their neighbourhoods. ‘Walkability’ has also declined in high *mantiq* because sidewalks have disappeared as streets have been widened by encroaching commercial activities, waste and car parking. Two to three decades ago, walking in areas like Zamalek, Garden City, Dokki and Down Town was a common and valued experience by Cairenes.

Looking specifically at availability of means of transport, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey revealed that affordability divided people socioeconomically much more than actual access to transport. Table 12 shows how people in different households and different *mantiq* perceived the availability of transport in their neighbourhood. Residents of lower *mantiq* reported fewer available means of transportation serving their neighbourhood compared to those in the other types of *mantiq*. Furthermore, poor households are more likely to report less access to different types of transportation than non-poor households. While the poor in low *mantiq* report access to

an average of 2.1 public means of transportation, the non-poor reported 2.4. The corresponding average was 2.5 means for both poor and non-poor in high *mantiq*.

When asked about their perception of the ease of access to various means of transportation, high levels of satisfaction were reported by all respondents. Table 12 shows that 84 per cent of respondents from low *mantiq* reported satisfaction with the transportation available to them, compared to 90 per cent and 91.5 per cent of residents of both medium and high *mantiq*, respectively. No significant differences were found by the poverty level of the households in any type of *mantiq*.

When attributing difficulties in accessing various modes of transport, residents of poor *mantiq* first identified crowdedness and violence as the top problems. This was followed by problems of availability and unsuitability of the roads. In the medium *mantiq*, unsuitability of roads, followed by availability and then crowdedness and violence were reported as reasons for difficulty in relation to their transport requirements. In high *mantiq*, the unsuitability of the roads was the first reason given, followed by crowdedness, violence and lack of local access. It is interesting to note that in the high *mantiq* the poor and non-poor have a very different perception and experience of violence and congestion. Over 42 per cent of non-poor respondents associate violence and crowdedness with modes of available transport in their high *mantiq*, while just 15 per cent of the poor in the same area listed such difficulties.

Factoring in the household poverty levels in each *mantiq* revealed significant differences only among the poor and non-poor in the high *mantiq*. A tangential survey question asked in relation to transportation concerned road accidents. When asked about exposure to accidents, no significant differences were found among residents of the different types of *mantiq*. The only significant differences existed among the poor and non-poor in the high *mantiq*, where the poor are more likely to be affected by accidents.

Although no statistics were offered, a 2000 World Bank analysis found that women com-





*Floating restaurants and pleasure-cruisers that serve tourist and leisure sectors line the banks of the Nile – providing formal and informal employment to thousands of Cairenes.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

prised a small share of the population using public transportation in Cairo, compared to the proportion in Western countries. In a mixed context of modern cosmopolitanism and tradition with conservative Islam, women in Cairo used motorized means of transport much less than men (mobility ratio levels of 0.64 as opposed to 1.16<sup>190</sup>). The World Bank research found that women walk more than men, and for shorter distances. When they use motorized transport, they prefer means that offer seclusion and minimize contact with non-family males, such as shared taxi, minibus, metered taxi and coaches reserved for women in the metro. Women tend not to use the bus if other modes of public transport are available.

As illustrated in the table below, the use of various modes of transport is strongly linked to the level of income of the household and

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**...the use of various modes of transport is strongly linked to the level of income of the household and associated closely with the residential areas where people live.**

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associated closely with the residential areas where people live. Urban consumers, whether wealthy or poor, create a strong link be-

tween transport means and housing as they make tradeoffs to meet their needs for both services. Table 13 shows that the poorer socioeconomic groups opt for informal housing in proximity to centres of activity or to wealthy districts where employment (formal or informal) can be found. The wealthier classes tend to opt for good-quality housing in an environment where they can use their private cars, but in quieter districts that are increasingly remote from Cairo. This analysis provides insights into why the new, less accessible or transport-affordable settlements around Cairo are more attractive to the wealthy than the poor.

## Employment and informality

Cairo is the economic centre of Egypt, generating two-thirds of the country's gross national product. Over 25 per cent of the population resides in the five governorates that constitute Greater Cairo. The annual rate of economic growth for Egypt has been between 4 and 7 per cent for many years and is projected to continue at a similar rate. It has significant natural reserves of oil and gas, as well iron ore, phosphates, manganese, limestone, gypsum, talc, asbestos, lead and zinc. Egypt's major industrial output is in the areas of food processing, textiles, chemicals, petrochemicals, construction, light manufacturing,

iron and steel products, aluminium, cement and military equipment. In 2009, the estimated gross national product was US \$188 billion with per capita GDP at around US \$5,650.<sup>191</sup>

The tourism industry is also a major source of revenue for the country, along with weapons sales and Suez Canal tariffs. The majority of Cairo’s workforce is employed in service sector jobs today, especially in government, financial services, and commerce. A new emerging service is information and communication technology (ICT): in 2009, Cairo broke into the top 10 of the world’s emerging outsourcing cities for the first time.<sup>192</sup> The strong state presence in governance and state-owned companies means the government employs approximately 5.7 million civil servants and 1.3 company employees — 28 per cent of the whole Egyptian workforce of approximately 25 million.<sup>193</sup> Many of these state employees are based in Cairo.

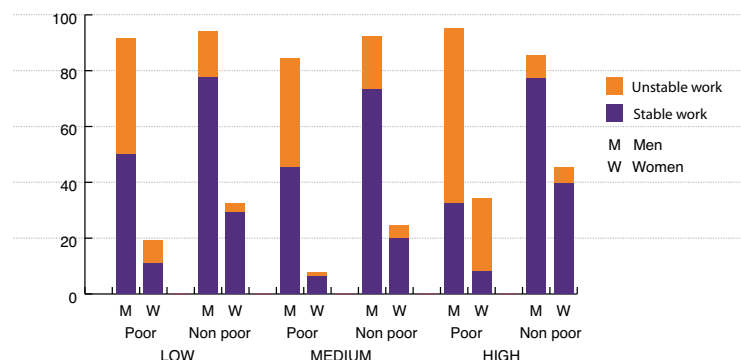
Although government subsidies help keep Cairo’s cost of living relatively low, the average Cairene still struggles to make ends meet, often holding down two or more jobs, or going overseas to find work and send money home. In extreme situations, the poorest are forced to send their children to work as early as 8 or 9 years of age, often in ‘sweatshops’ producing manufactured goods, although the majority of Egypt’s child labour occurs in the agricultural sector outside the capital. Previous sections of this publication described how *informality* characterizes the bulk of residential living options in Cairo; this section investigates how informality also characterizes working conditions for millions of Cairenes.

In 1996, the labour market in Egypt was broadly divided into thirds among the agricultural sector (31 per cent), the public sector (32.6 per cent) and the private non-agricultural sector (36.4 per cent). Egypt’s private sector consists mainly of the informal economy, which accounts for 80 to 90 per cent, according to some studies.<sup>194</sup> Most of the urban poor work in the informal sector; the urban middle class and other non-poor workers are generally employed in the formal sector. Those whose priorities are day-to-day survival do not tend to identify their work as

informal, casual or extralegal, but millions of Cairenes work in conditions that are typical of the informal sector worldwide. In the widely diversified informal economy, some successful entrepreneurs thrive, but the vast majority are wage workers who suffer from instability or exploitative work conditions, have little protection under labour laws and receive merely subsistence incomes. The 2009 IIED study on poverty lines in Cairo argues that, ‘While informality does provide opportunities for people to remain alive, it also contributes to the perpetuation of poverty’.<sup>195</sup>

Figure 28 illustrates the stability of work among men and women across the types of *mantiq* and levels of poverty, derived from SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data. The findings show that the majority of adult men (at least 84 per cent) are currently working, with marginally significant differences among the different types of *mantiq*; poor men, however, are much more likely than non-poor men to have unstable work, particularly in the high *mantiq*. These observations confirm findings discussed in the education section, which illustrated that low educational attainment was not necessarily a barrier to employment and household income-generation, irrespective of whether the income is from formal or informal sources.

Figure 28: Adult (25-59) labor and work stability for household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Clearly, work stability measured in terms of having a regular job or a work contract is far more common among the non-poor compared to the poor in all types of *mantiq*. For example, among men in the low *mantiq*, the proportion of workers who do not have fixed employment or a work contract among the poor (41 per cent) is more than two and half times the proportion among the non-poor (16 per cent). The same pattern pertains for women. The proportion of unstable work conditions among poor women in low *man-*

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**...work stability measured in terms of having a regular job or a work contract is far more common among the non-poor compared to the poor in all types of *mantiq*.**

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*tiq* amounts to more than 2.5 times the proportion among non-poor women in the same type of *mantiq*. In medium and high *mantiq*, the difference in work stability among poor and non-poor individuals is more pronounced for both men and women. It is poor men and women living in high *mantiq* who have the highest levels of instability, and therefore informality, in their working relationships. In this category, the poor without stable jobs (more than 60 per cent of men and 25 per cent of women) easily outnumber those with stable work (33 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women).

Figure 28 also illustrates the striking differences between the proportions of men and women in the workforce in Cairo. Most employed women are non-poor from the high *mantiq*; these women are also more likely to hold stable jobs than their peers from poor communities. The smallest cohort of women workers are poor women in medium *mantiq*. Government data indicates that in 2008, only 21 per cent of the Cairo workforce was female, while the national rate was 22.4 per cent.<sup>196</sup> This phenomenon is the outcome of diminishing government and public sector jobs as the government continues to reduce public employment in favour of private sector

management, following a reform agenda that started in the early 1990s. The government has been a major job provider for women. Meanwhile, the private sector, whether formal or informal, seems to have a bias against hiring females for several reasons linked with marriage, childbearing and the need for maternity rest and other related rights. In addition, women have tended to achieve lower levels of education than men.<sup>197</sup>

A major report from the Minister of Finance in 2003 concluded that Egypt and Cairo had a 'large and vibrant extra-legal economy'. It found that the nation's entrepreneurial class numbered 1.7 million people with 82 per cent operating in the informal, extra-legal sector. The study also found that this informal, private sector employed 40 per cent (8.2 million people) of the entire workforce. In Cairo, the study estimated that the asset value of the 1.4 million small extra-legal businesses they identified was US \$6.5 billion in 2003.<sup>198</sup> Table 14 illustrates the sectors in which these businesses work, and in what proportion.

**Table 14: Extra-legal business activities in Cairo**

Sector of informality	percentage of total
Manufacturing and processing	18.5 %
Wholesale & retail & repair of vehicles	55.0 %
Restaurants & hotels	5.0 %
Transport & Storage & Communications	3.7 %
Property Activities & Business Services	4.6 %
Health & Social Work	3.7 %
Social & Personal Services	6.7 %

Source: Adapted from Annex 1 of *The Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies (ECES) and Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) (2003) The Extralegal Economy: Where the Majority of Egyptians Live and Work*. Guided by Medhat Hassanein

The 2003 study focuses more on the potential value of bringing extra-legal employees into the formal economy and seems to cherish their presence and future prospects. The approach is closely aligned to work the government sponsored from the late 1990s looking at informality in housing, assets and labour as *dead capital* that needed to be 'brought to life'.<sup>199</sup> The same policy discourse shifted the perception of the informal econ-

omy as illegal and unregulated by the state to poverty-alleviating, entrepreneurial micro-enterprise entities that are central to national privately powered economic growth plans.<sup>200</sup> However, some argue that not enough efforts are being made in this direction. The Social Fund for Development, which is supposed to offer micro-finance for emerging and existing small enterprises and businesses, is arguably not sufficiently effective in offering an alternative to the informal economy or supporting the regularizing and formalising of the sector.

Employment remains a major problem for youth in Cairo and Egypt. In 2005, 33 per cent of Egyptians were under 15 years old. As elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East,

**Employment remains a major problem for youth in Cairo and Egypt.**

Egypt faces a so-called ‘youth bulge’ with the largest cohort of adolescents (aged 10 to 19) in its history. Some commentators argue that young people are being left on the lower rung of the socioeconomic hierarchy, as most are unemployed.<sup>201</sup> Apart from the missed opportunity of engaging the youth in the economy, the potential social unrest it may ferment was born out in different street demonstrations and political unrest that began in various North African and Middle Eastern countries.

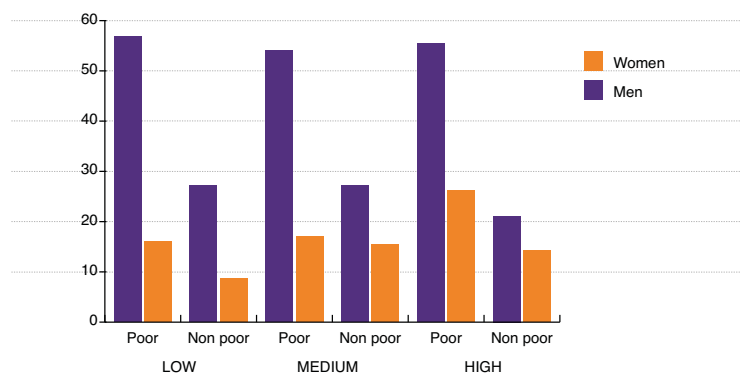
In 1995, while the total unemployment in Egypt was 11 per cent, unemployment amongst youth between 19 and 25 years old was 34 per cent. Informal employment is a reality for roughly two-thirds of economically active youth in urban Egypt — a reality that has been correlated with poverty, poor working conditions and few opportunities for advancement. A study in 2008 looking at the returns on qualifications for youth showed that formal public and formal private employers tended to reward those with formal qualifications, such as diplomas and degrees, while employers in the informal economy tend to reward informal qualification mechanisms, such as skills, work experience or personal connections.<sup>202</sup> In Figure 29, SRC/UN-HABITAT

data shows that not only are men and women in the 15 to 24 age group more likely to be out of work than those in the 25 to 59 age group, but also young poor men are more likely to have work than their non-poor peers. Dissatisfaction with an authoritarian regime that was corrupt and nepotistic while failing to provide sufficient opportunities to the youth were some of the key complaints and social mobilizing drivers of the mass demonstrations in January / February 2011, which led to a sudden regime change.

Other studies in Cairo have found that the unemployment rate is higher among workers with intermediate education: 55 per cent of the unemployed were individuals with intermediate education in 1998, for example.<sup>203</sup> This could be explained by three factors: first, government hiring of university and secondary school graduates declined rapidly over the last two decades; second, the low skill level of labour market entrants limits their chances of finding work in modern private sector companies; and third, young men from poorer households and with poorer educational attainment may prefer working in the informal sector, though the work may be more menial, insecure and even hazardous.

Figure 29 shows that the proportions of working youth differ by the type of *mantiq*, household poverty level and gender. About 55 per cent of young poor men in each type of *mantiq* were working. The smallest proportion of working male youth was found among the

Figure 29: Youth (15-24) employment by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



A construction worker in New Cairo. New desert developments offer casual employment to many thousands of workers from informal areas – often those with the lowest educational attainment.

Image: Chris Horwood

non-poor in high *mantiq*, where only 21 per cent held jobs.

The situation for young women was similar in all *mantiq* and household levels. The proportion of working young women ranged from 8 per cent among the non-poor in low *mantiq* to 27 per cent among the poor in high *mantiq*. The findings also revealed that the proportion of young working poor women in high *mantiq* is almost double the same proportion among the non-poor in the high *mantiq*.

### Child labour

Poverty is the chief factor that drives child labour. In recent years, Egypt has fought to reduce the number of children involved in

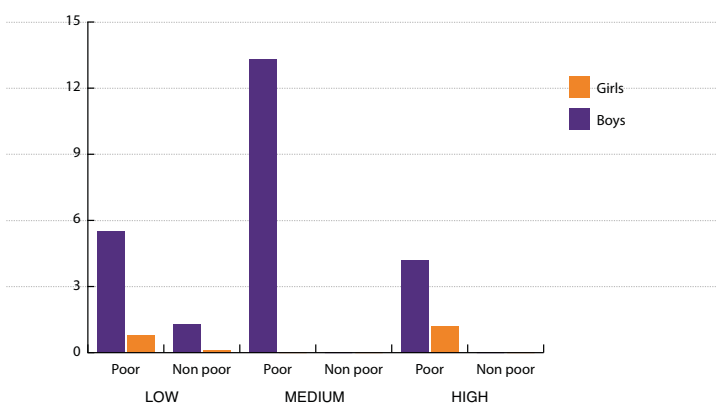
the workforce. In 1993, 16.5 per cent of children in urban areas between the ages of 6 and 14, and 40.4 per cent of children in rural areas, were found to be working according to an International Labour Organization (ILO) report.<sup>204</sup> In a 1998 report, the Egyptian government estimated that of 10.9 million Egyptian children between 6 and 14 years

### Poverty is the chief factor that drives child labour.

of age, 1,309,000 or 12 per cent were child workers.<sup>205</sup> Children work as apprentices in auto repair and craft shops, in heavier industries such as construction, in brick-making and textiles, and as workers in tanneries and carpet-making factories. In 1998, the ILO found that children constitute about 25 per cent of the labour force in the leather tanneries of old Cairo.<sup>206</sup> An earlier ILO study noted that the average age of children working in the leather tanning industry was 11.7 years old, and they worked 12.8 hours per day.<sup>207</sup>

Some success has been achieved in curbing child labour, despite the persistence of an environment that tolerates the practice, owing to tradition, culture and economic necessity. The universal and compulsory enrolment of children in primary school has played an important part in the reduction of child labour, but, as the SRC/UN-HABITAT data indicates, the problem persists at unacceptable levels.

Figure 30: Child (6-14) labour for household population by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

In the household survey, individuals aged 6 years and older were asked about their work status within the last six months.

Figure 30 shows the work status of children aged 6 to 14 by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level. The findings suggest that child labour remains prevalent in urban Cairo with distinct differentials between the poor and non-poor. The highest prevalence was found among poor boys in medium *mantiq*, accounting for 13.3 per cent of all boys in this age bracket, followed by poor boys in low *mantiq* (5.5 per cent).

Among the poor in high *mantiq*, 4.3 per cent of poor boys were working. None of the non-poor boys in either medium or high *mantiq* reported any work, while among residents of low *mantiq*, only 1.3 per cent of the non-poor boys were reported to work. Employment of girls was far less prevalent and was only found among poor girls in high and low *mantiq*, with very low prevalence (1.2 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively); only 0.1 per cent of non-poor girls in low *mantiq* were working.

UNICEF offices in Cairo claim that these findings are clearly reflected on the ground. They argue that a visit to any industrial neighbourhood of Cairo will quickly confirm that children are a significant part of the country's workforce. Most of the work done by children today is confined to the informal sector, with children employed as street vendors, or as seasonal workers in agriculture, casual labour on construction sites, or domestic workers. A large part of child labour is seasonal. Over 1 million children are hired each season, for example, to bring in the Egyptian cotton crop. UNICEF states that working children usually come from large, low-income families and that the wages of working children represent almost one-quarter of total household income. The informality of children's work has allowed them to be treated worse than their adult co-workers. Children face long work hours, averaging from nine to 11 hours, and are frequently roughly treated, low-paid and exposed to dangerous conditions.<sup>208</sup> Schooling and education also suffer when children work. Studies suggest that children

who try to work and go to school don't do as well at school as other children, but also that almost half of paid child workers simply do not go to school at all.<sup>209</sup>

## Unemployment

The International Labour Organization's Labour Force Survey of 2009 presented data indicating that 9.4 per cent of the national workforce was unemployed. The average unemployment rate between 2003 and 2010 was 9.85 per cent of the workforce. However, the details reveal that in 2009 just 5.2 per cent of males in the workforce were unemployed, while 22.9 per cent of female workers were unemployed. Concerning women, the 2010 Human Development Report for Egypt states that, 'Because of different expectations about gender roles in Egyptian society and a highly gendered labor market structure, these transitions are highly differentiated by gender. While nearly all young men eventually transition into employment, less than a fifth of young women do, a figure that has unfortunately been declining with time as employment opportunities for women in the government dry up.'<sup>210</sup>

Government data from CAPMAS suggests 12 per cent of the labour force was unemployed in 2009. The invisible nature of much of the informal sector, the ability of workers to have multiple jobs and different sources of income, and the limited coverage of dense informal settlements by government surveys makes

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**In 2006, well over 80 per cent of the unemployed were under the age of 29 and 82 per cent of the unemployed had never worked before.**

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data gathering problematic. Without good data deeper analysis of workforce dynamics is also problematic. According to the 2010 United Nations Human Development Report for Egypt, youth unemployment is the dominant form of unemployment in Egypt. In 2006, well over 80 per cent of the unemployed were

under the age of 29 and 82 per cent of the unemployed had never worked before.

The unemployment rate for youth aged 15 to 24 in Egypt was 24.5 per cent in 2007. This compares to a global average of 11.9 per in 2007 and an average of 23.8 per cent for all of North Africa, the world region with the highest unemployment rates. The Egypt Human Development Report, however, cites data that shows lower rates of youth unemployment: 'The Egypt Labor Market Surveys (ELMS) of 1998 and 2006 and the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) of 2009 suggest that there was a significant decline in the youth unemployment rate from 1998 to 2006 and then relative stability from 2006 to 2009, if the standard definition is used. According to this measure, the unemployment rate for those 15

to 29 year olds has declined from 25.6% in 1998 to 16.9% in 2006 to 16.7% in 2009'.<sup>211</sup>

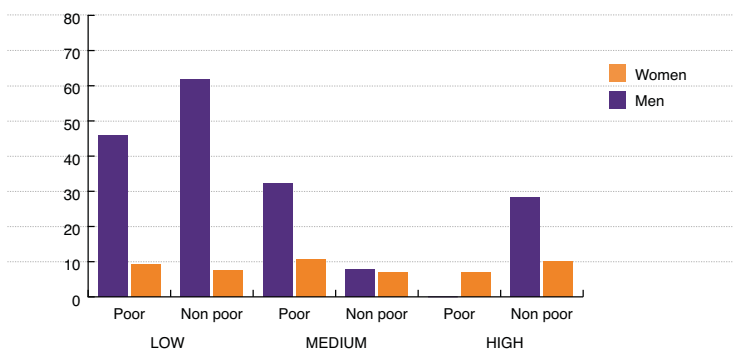
In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, Cairene adults aged 25 to 59 who were not working at the time of the survey were asked whether they wanted work and whether they were looking for work. Figure 31 shows that the proportion of non-working adults who are seeking work is highest among non-poor individuals in the low *mantiq* (62 per cent), followed by the poor in the same *mantiq* (46 per cent) and poor in medium *mantiq* (32 per cent). The lowest level of unemployment was observed among the non-poor in medium *mantiq* (8 per cent). None of the poor men surveyed in high *mantiq* reported unemployment, suggesting that their presence in high *mantiq* is predicated upon employment.

Women are less likely to report seeking work than men, but they are also less prevalent in the workforce overall. Among unemployed women, the highest proportions were found in medium *mantiq* (11 per cent of poor women) and high *mantiq* (10 per cent of non-poor women). The lowest level of unemployment among women was 7 per cent, exhibited by non-poor women in low and medium *mantiq*, and poor women in high *mantiq*.

Figure 32 reveals that working in old age remains common among men, with the burden of needing to continue to work into old age falling on men from poor households. While the proportions of older men from poor and non-poor households who work in the low and medium *mantiq* are roughly the same, in the high *mantiq* a disproportionate number of older men (88 per cent) continue to work. The average proportion of older poor men working (approximately 46 per cent) is almost double that of non-poor older men (approximately 26 per cent). Overall, more than one-quarter of men age 60 and older continue to work. The highest prevalence of working older adults can be observed among the poor in high *mantiq*; this may reflect the kind of work available there, such as caretaking, gardening, house guarding, parking supervision, and the like, in the households of wealthier families.

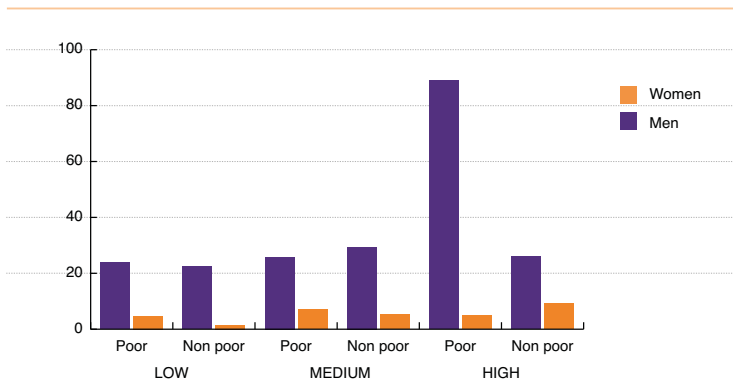
Significantly fewer older women are still working at age 60. The highest prevalence of work-

**Figure 31:** Unemployment among non working adults (25-59) for household population by gender, type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Figure 32:** Older Adult (age 60+) labour by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



*Men relax in a tea shop in the City of the Dead, an area home to thousands of families and one of the oldest in the city - possibly threatened by the Cairo Vision 2050.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

ing older women can be found among non-poor women in high *mantiq* (9.3 per cent), followed by poor women in medium *mantiq* (7.1 per cent). In contrast, the lowest prevalence of older women working is among the non-poor in low *mantiq*, at just 1.5 per cent. These findings may be surprising and counter to common expectations, but the low prevalence of paid work by older women across all *mantiq* cannot be interpreted as an absence of activity in the household economy (child-rearing, doing chores, cooking, cleaning, and the like). It also shows that, despite the poverty evident in low-quality *mantiq*, these areas often have high levels of social solidarity and social capital, through which elderly women in families are valued and cared for.

Several factors other than age have significant impacts on employment and livelihoods: distortions in the labour market created by nepotism, corruption and informality; the virtual absence of effective trade unions; and the low level of the minimum wage contribute to inequality and distributive injustice in Cairo, and the country as a whole.

One aspect of informality in the employment market is pervasive corruption and nepotism. Complaining about the necessity of connections needed and unofficial fast-track employment options for certain people is not uncommon in Cairo, where merit alone may not secure employment. This is, allegedly, most prevalent in the public sector, where approximately 5.7 million civil servants and 1.3 million workers in state-owned compa-

nies find work, representing 28 per cent of a national workforce of 25 million.<sup>212</sup> 'Kosa' is the Arabic word for zucchini or courgette, but it is commonly used in Egypt to denote a person in power who can open doors to jobs. Someone's 'kosa' may be using his or her influence to assist a friend or relative in finding work, or may expect to be paid for finding someone work. Government jobs are low-paid, but they are in high demand in part because of the opportunities they may create for supplementary income.

Transparency International (TI), the Berlin-based agency tracking international corruption and accountability, claimed in March 2010 that major corruption loopholes were jeopardising Egypt's attempts to combat the 'kosa' problem, despite the existence of a broad range of anti-corruption laws and regulations. In contrast to the World Bank's high ranking of Egypt as one of the top 10 reforming countries in its 'ease of doing business' index, Egypt's level in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) remained constant in 2008 and 2009 at the low level of 2.8 out of a score of 10. 'In Egypt, the essentials for good governance are in place but in order to uproot corruption, existing rules and regulations need to be applied and legal provisions enforced,' said Omnia Hussien, Programme Coordinator at Transparency International at the press launch of their report.

Economic deregulation over the last two decades has led to an increasingly flexible and casual labour market and is seen by some as



## 'I will wait for marriage'

*Sultan, interviewed 5 July 2010, is a law student and lives with his parents in Madinat Rokn Helwan El Gideeda.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

My name is Sultan. I will be 22 years old soon. I'm finishing my third year in law school; one more year to graduation, then two years of training, and then I can open my own practice. After school in the morning and afternoon, starting from 6 p.m., my main work as a taxi driver is in Maadi but I can go out to any governorate,

too. There are a lot of not nice things about the work but it's the kind of work that anyone can do. I got my license a year ago. My dad taught me how to drive and handle his taxi. But in terms of roads and traffic, it has all increased a lot. On Thursdays, I can't even go out of the Maadi area. The congestion stops me from working with the taxi. You can get stuck for two hours on the ring road.

When my dad had his old Peugeot 1977, I couldn't take it out because it would be complicated to fix in case it broke down out in the city somewhere, but because this Hyundai 2009 is a new type of car, I can deal with flat tires or simple problems, but if something happens to the motor I couldn't deal with it.

Since my father has so many expenses, I don't want to burden him. Most of my friends are like me, too. Their work is harder though, like working in a car showroom from morning to 8 p.m. — that's hard to fit into the studies. Most of us who work stop working some days before the exams to cram it all in.

Being with friends, going to the cinema, cafes or *azhar* area in Cairo are great to do for fun when I have the time. There are a lot of amazing places in Cairo, Sakkara, the Nile; my foreign customers tell me it is more beautiful here than abroad. The new cinema-plex in the new mall on the Maadi Corniche, next to new Japanese embassy, is unbelievable really — it has more than five screens. We have more things to do here than in other countries. Most Egyptians will not see the cinema and malls maybe, but somehow there is something for everyone to enjoy.

### Informal areas and government intervention

Yes I know and see them, especially around old Cairo. There is no alternative, no solution for informal areas. I mean if you say you want to do away with *a'shwaiyat*, where will these people go? The government has no place or houses to put these people in.

The government really has its hands tied. The government has no resources or money to fix the problems. With the recent economic problems, where will the government get financing to help the poor or to renovate housing and informal areas? I mean if America is going through economic crisis, then what do you think Egypt is going through? I see it as an economic problem.

I think the government invests in what they see is valuable. The housing problems are there too. The new cities like Rehab, Katameya in the desert — these are not for the



poor, of course. It's very expensive. Youth housing projects by the government are not good. The payment terms are good and affordable, but it's not for everyone — it is for a certain level of people. Maybe not for me.

### **Getting by in the city**

You know this whole marriage idea, I am not thinking about too much right now or when I graduate. My father will plan for an apartment for me, but you know I want to try and see for myself what I can make and afford. To do that I will wait on marriage. Most important is to find a nice, well-mannered girl. Girls today are different than before. I don't want too many difficulties. Someone who understands, thinks well, can bring up children well, educated ... and cooks well, of course!

After graduating, I will work in law but not on its own. The life of a lawyer takes awhile, like 10 years to build a name. I need something to make a living, so I'm planning to do law with business on the side. I would like to study commerce, too. Reality is something else than studies, especially law. Of course, I would like to use my degree directly and work in what I have studied and been trained in, but it is not the reality. All my friends get depressed about this. You see those who graduated sitting in the cafes, for me I know I have to work at anything, keep up and plan for my future. Since I was young I was taught to work tirelessly. It is a must. So I can see that I have to suffer to gain experience for about 10 or 15 years. After this I won't have a problem building myself up.

A lot of my friends also think about immigration, and this is something I don't like at all. I mean for me, going abroad will not solve the money problem. Again, America is going through an economic and job market problem, so ... ? I feel they want to immigrate just for the change and that's it. I don't think they will find work abroad. Also, the educational system and systems are different. I think they have more experience abroad. My heart and family are here. I mean, I think that if I work hard in Egypt and start a company and am successful I will be of much more use to the country and the people around me will benefit, too — it's more productive that way. I can hire others, create jobs, provide a service ... what will I do to solve Egypt's problems being abroad? Even my tiny part; if 100 people do the same, a lot of problems get solved.

My parents always encouraged me to work hard, to experience things, to be realistic, and that money doesn't just come to me automatically. Also, they taught me the importance of saving the money you earn and investing

it. I think managing and planning your life is so important — to have goals and accomplish them.

I don't mind living in this neighborhood with my parents. I am grateful for whatever they do for me. I don't think this area is very nice, though. To be honest with you, I don't like these very tall towers. They look awkward. It is not pleasant to see. There are laws in good parts of the city where you can't build higher than five stories for any construction, and it seems the law is mostly enforced. But look here, they are building at least 15, sometimes 18 stories ... right on the Nile, and it suffocates the views and flow of air. I personally don't like it or think they are good.

## 'It doesn't seem like the city can keep up'

*Ehab AbdelShahin, interviewed on the evening of 24 June 2010 in the informal area of Imbaba.*



*Image: Pascale Nader*

### **Profile**

My name is Ehab AbdelShahin, I live right up this alley here in Imbaba, I've been living here for 35 years. It's a long time and I've lived outside the neighbourhood sometimes, with good memories here of course. What can I say? I grew up here and my friends are in the neighbourhood and I know mostly everyone around here; it is nice. I own a shop in another part of town. I'm on my way there now.

We experience some typical struggles, like the rises in prices, that's all. Important issues are the things we have to deal with in the educational system — that is the most concerning thing right now. I mean, 90 per cent of students are taking private lessons. That is really a main struggle for me: if I want my children to honestly and really learn something in what we call their education, I have to pay all this money for lessons and tutors. It's the most difficult thing about living in Egypt now.

There are changes happening in Cairo. In some areas there are more roads, pavements, things you would expect the city to start having — improved bridges maybe — but that is it. Obviously, the number of people living in and moving around the city has really increased. It doesn't seem like the city can keep up with that.

When it comes to housing, those who have some money manage in some way to find something at the end of the day, but most people are poor and they definitely have problems in finding homes. I'm a simple person, and feeling and seeing so much poverty affects me psychologically for sure. It's not a good thing for us. I hope there will be changes about this in the near future. There are poor everywhere in the world but here it is high percentage of the people. I don't know if there will be changes, God knows. If I were in charge I would try my best, but I'm not.



*The results of the construction and land speculation boom of the last decade – numerous empty and unfinished apartment blocks on the periphery of the city, and beyond.*

All images by Chris Horwood

one of the main reasons for increases in urban poverty and vulnerability.<sup>213</sup> As the section on household expenditures will show, the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey revealed that in comparison to the non-poor, the poor experienced fewer income increases from year to year, while their expenditures increased continually. Evidence suggests that, in Cairo, in the free labour market wages are increasing for skilled labour, as employers are finding it difficult to find qualified staff for the businesses. They become willing to pay more to find reliable staff who will stay in the job. Most of the urban poor in Egypt work in the informal economy, and many at the most cas-

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### **The casual labour is the most important source of employment for poor males.**

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ual end. According to the 1996 *Egypt Human Development Report* (EHDR), 48 per cent of the urban poor live in households whose heads are casual and marginal workers with no specific occupation in the informal sector. The second highest proportion of the poor was in households headed by a construction worker. The report also found that casual labour is the most important source of employment for poor males.

Casual daily wage workers suffer from strenuous working conditions, as well as the insecurity of having to find work every day and surviving on low earnings. Physically demanding work that can be done easily by young people, such as carrying, loading and construction, gets harder as workers get older. Injuries and health complications can mark the lives of many in the casual labour and informal employment markets. Severe competition and not enough jobs mean that wages are always extremely low. IIED fieldwork in 2007 and 2008 suggested people's wages were not increasing, despite high inflation rates. Their research revealed that unskilled labourers were earning 10 to 35 EGP per day. As examples, they identified supermarket delivery labourers who earned a fixed wage of 10 EGP per day plus tips from their

deliveries, with a total income averaging 20 to 25 EGP per day; those working in the construction sector were earning 25 to 35 EGP per day.<sup>214</sup>

More importantly, the insecurity and variability in income experienced by daily wage workers have irreversible consequences, perpetuating the inter-generational educational differentials that lie at the root of many socioeconomic inequalities. The authors of the 2009 IIED study on poverty in Cairo observed that in these conditions 'children drop out of school and, even when income becomes available again, they do not go back to school. When assessing poverty, the conditions of people's work must also be evaluated in a multi-dimensional measure of poverty.'<sup>215</sup>

### **The minimum wage and trade unions**

The formal minimum wage in Egypt has not changed since 1984: it has been set at 35 EGP (US \$6.50) per month since then, despite continual inflation and significant price increases in essential consumables. Clearly, the minimum wage is also well below the international poverty line of a dollar (US \$1) per capita per day. When bonuses, incentives and annual increases are included, the minimum monthly salary of government employees and public sector workers reaches 289 EGP (US \$53), just below US \$2 per day. Some private sector employees earn much less, and informal and casual sector workers earn even less. In relation to the national per capita gross national product, the minimum wage effectively decreased in value from nearly 60 per cent in 1984 to 19.4 per cent in 1992 and fell further to 13 per cent in 2007. A study issued in June 2009 by the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies (ECES) concluded, 'When the ratio of minimum wage to per capita GNP is compared to other countries, it appears amongst the lowest'. Egypt's minimum wage is just 13 per cent of per capita GNP, the study reported. By comparison, the rate is 26 per cent in Spain, 51 per cent in France and 78 per cent in Turkey.<sup>216</sup> Egypt established the National Council for Wages (NCW) in 2003 to ensure that salaries are aligned with the cost of living. The council has the power to set a minimum wage, but

has been 'rendered toothless by internal divisions and the lack of political will'.<sup>217</sup>

Many analysts cite the absence of effective unionization in Egypt as a major contributor to wage stagnation. The unionization rate is largely limited to workers in state-owned enterprises. However, the active role of trade unions in negotiating or setting wages is almost nonexistent. According to one study, 'Union membership in private sector companies is minimal and of no economic, or social, or political consequences. The falling real wages reflect the missing contribution of the trade unions in defending the worker's right for a decent wage and living'.<sup>218</sup> The right to form and join trade unions has been heavily curtailed in law. According to a report by The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) first Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights in 2007, there is a minimum membership requirement of at least 50 employees in the same enterprise, and unions can only operate in Egypt if they join one of the 23 industrial federations. All of these have to belong to the only legally recognised trade union centre, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), which has close relations with the NPD, the ruling party. The ETUF has the power to control the nomination and election procedures for trade union office. Following the mass demonstrations against NDP leadership and the resignation of President Mubarak in early February, numerous workers' groups felt emboldened to come onto the streets to demand better wages and working conditions.

## Access to health

Like education, health outcomes are important lenses that shed light on socioeconomic differentials. Social determinants of health outcomes are closely linked to household wealth, information, behaviour and education.

Egypt has an extensive network of health facilities, ensuring easy access to basic health services for its population. This is particularly true in Cairo, where the country's foremost health facilities and professionals are based. In 2008, most of the population had easy ac-

cess to health care, with 100 per cent of the rural and urban populations covered through access to local health services, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>219</sup> Egypt has more than double the regional average number of physicians, nurses and midwives per capita, and 95 per cent of the national population lives within five kilometres of a primary health service facility. Experts suggest the health service is facing different challenges, however; over-employment in the public sector in a context of rising health costs, lack of funding and low remuneration have led to low morale and variable service. The government is not the only provider of health services; a growing number of private, voluntary and religious-based health facilities fill a busy and thriving market sector.

Management of the health system is highly centralized through what some regard as the overstuffed Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). Different public entities (MOHP and the Ministries of Higher Education, Defense and Interior), the Health Insurance Organization (HIO), private practitioners and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in managing, financing and provid-

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### **Egypt has outperformed neighbouring countries on different health development indicators.**

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ing health services, but, according to WHO, they do so without performance assessment mechanisms or quality assurance. The HIO covers only 45 per cent of the population, and there is a growing unregulated private insurance sector. In 2007, the national health expenditure represented 7.3 per cent of the government budget — the equivalent of US \$42 per person in the same year. While Egypt's per capita expenditure on health was higher than the regional average in 2000, by 2006 it had fallen below other countries in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean region.

However, Egypt has outperformed neighbouring countries on different health development indicators. In life expectancy (longevity),

healthy life expectancy (longevity with good health), maternal mortality rates and under-5 mortality rates, Egypt conforms to global averages (and performs significantly better than its neighbours), and in specific areas of HIV and tuberculosis prevalence, Egypt is dramatically below regional and global averages. Health outcomes have been enhanced with access to improved water sources for the majority of the rural and urban populations as well as (but less successfully) increased access to improved sanitation. Communicable diseases have largely been controlled in Egypt; with high coverage rates for routine immunization, vaccine-preventable diseases have shown a remarkable decline in the last decade. For example, Egypt has been considered a polio-free country since 2006; more than 95 per cent of the population is immunized against measles; and the neonatal tetanus incidence rate is rare, at 0.06 per 1,000 births.

Noncommunicable diseases are on the rise, however. Neuropsychiatric disorders and digestive system diseases are leading causes of morbidity, accounting for 19.8 per cent and 11.5 per cent of serious illness respectively, followed by chronic respiratory diseases (6.9 per cent). Nationally, lifestyle-associated disorders are growing, too, with smoking, substance abuse, lack of exercise, overconsumption of fatty and salty foods, and road deaths responsible for a significant proportion of morbidity and mortality. In 2007, WHO indicated that an average of 47 per cent of Egyptian females were obese and 29 per cent of males smoked.<sup>220</sup>

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey in Cairo found strong social determinants for smoking habits, particularly in low *mantiq*, where approximately 37 per cent of men in poor households reported smoking compared to 28 per cent of men in non-poor households. In high *mantiq*, 34 per cent of men in poor households and 20 per cent of men in non-poor households reported smoking. Among Cairene women, smoking prevalence is very low overall, but the pattern is the opposite of that for men: the highest prevalence of smoking among women was found in the non-poor households in high *mantiq* (6 per cent), followed by women in poor households in low *mantiq* (3 per cent). Smoking by

children and adolescents was higher in poorer areas, with child smokers only reported in the low *mantiq*: among young people between the ages of 6 and 14, 2 per cent of those in poor households and 1.5 per cent of those in non-poor households smoked.

Ensuring the health of mothers and children remains a challenge for Egypt. Maternal and infant mortality rates in the country remain high according to WHO standards, but both have declined impressively over the last two decades and are low in relation to regional comparisons. From 1990 to 2006, the registered infant and under-5 mortality rates de-

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### ...national averages mask differences among regions and disparities between socioeconomic groups.

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clined by 49.5 per cent and 56.1 per cent, respectively. Egypt fully expects to meet the MDG targets in these health outcomes, decreasing the incidence of infant and child mortality by 66 per cent by 2015.<sup>221</sup> Acute respiratory infections have now become the first cause of infant mortality and under-5 mortality. Diarrhoeal disease remains, according to the report, a 'major problem' in Egypt and was responsible for 14 per cent of deaths of children under age 5 in 2007.

As the government admits, national averages mask differences among regions and disparities between socioeconomic groups. The differentials around access to health, relative household expenditure on health, frequency of disruptive ill-health and protection (insurance) against the financial costs of ill health were examined in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, and the findings are discussed below.

### Access to healthcare

According to some analysts, public healthcare in Egypt has deteriorated, and this has increased the vulnerability of the poor. The system is allegedly overused and underfunded, doctors and specialists are rarely available,



Women in Imbaba informal settlement – home to well over a million Cairenes.

Image: Chris Horwood

equipment is lacking or faulty, hospitals are unhygienic and medication and nursing are rarely available so people have to provide for themselves or find alternatives.<sup>222</sup>

In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, respondents were asked what procedure they normally follow when a member of the family becomes sick. Options included consult a physician, check with the pharmacist and 'other'. The 'other' category included using previously used medicine, consulting a friend or using traditional medicines. An average of 23.3 per cent of poor respondents used 'other' methods in contrast to an average of just 12.3 per cent of non-poor respondents. Furthermore, the adoption of 'other' procedures was highly prevalent among the poor in the high *mantiq*, accounting for almost 39 per cent of the households. This may be because few low-price formal medical alternatives are immediately available to poor households in the high-quality *mantiq*. These findings are corroborated by a study of a major informal area in Cairo — Boulaq Al-Dakrou — where 'local private initiatives seem to compensate for the shortage in government support' and where people claimed they used clinics provided by NGOs and mosques in the area as well as taking emergency cases to the district hospital.<sup>223</sup>

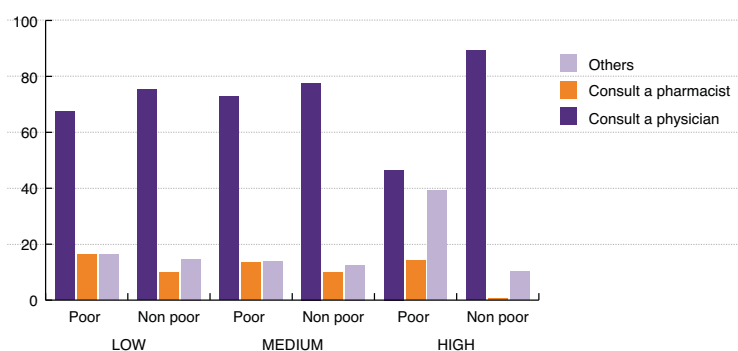
Figure 33 shows that although consulting a physician is the most common procedure among all households, it is less common among the poor in all three types of *mantiq* compared to the non-poor. The differential is particularly stark in the high *mantiq*, where

just 48 per cent of the poor visit the doctor and 89 per cent of the non-poor do the same. However, one explanation maybe that these poor households have economic ties with the non-poor population they serve and the curiously higher percentage of 'other' forms may well include resorting to this population for advice and medical supply. Furthermore, consulting a pharmacist or resorting to the other procedures was found to be higher among the poor than the non-poor in all *mantiq*.

### Relative household health expenditure

In the late 1990s, the government health service was free of charge. Today, people have to pay user fees. Prices of drugs, both locally produced and imported, have also increased with the Egyptian currency devaluation. Domestic

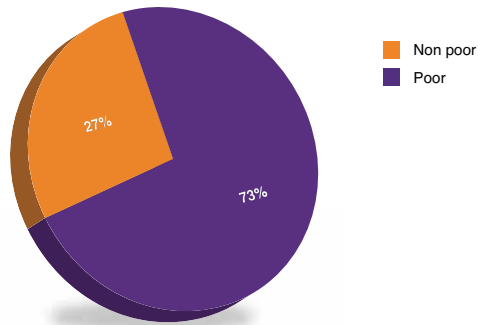
Figure 33: What household members do when sick by type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



**Figure 34:** Receiving governmental medical expenses exemption by type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

drug production in Egypt largely depends on imported chemicals, and the production of drugs absorbs a substantial part of the health budget. Proposals for privatizing the health-care system are being considered.<sup>224</sup> They include requiring partial payment for health services, increasing subscription fees for health insurance and converting the health insurance system from universal to limited.

Although there is a commission system that grants waivers for payment for medicine and inpatient care for the poor, the process to access it is argued to be cumbersome, and it allegedly exposes the poor to unpopular bureaucratic hurdles, humiliation and delays when obtaining the necessary signatures. This may account for the low number of respondents who reported receiving waivers in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey. Figure 34 shows that fewer than 20 per cent of respondents from any given socioeconomic or *mantiq* group had received governmental exemptions from medical expenses. Recipients tended to be poor

and living in low *mantiq*. While 19 per cent of the poor in low *mantiq* received governmental medical expenses exemptions, the comparable figure among the non-poor was only 8 per cent. In contrast, in high *mantiq*, only 8 per cent of the poor and 3 per cent of the non-poor had benefited from the exemption.

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey also reported on the sufficiency of the households' incomes to cover medical expenses. It exposed a clear gradient by the type of *mantiq*, with significant differentials between poor and non-poor households (Table 15). The poor in all *mantiq* are less likely to meet all of their medical expenses, with an average of between one-quarter and one-third reporting that their incomes were sufficient to meet their needs. Three-quarters to two-thirds, therefore, found their incomes insufficient to pay for medical expenses. By contrast, only half to one-quarter of the non-poor, depending on where they live, found their incomes insufficient to meet this range of medical costs.

It may be noted that in a context of limited household income, the poor will logically triage their health requirements and only attend to the most essential needs. The health bill represents a certain proportion of the total but cannot be fairly compared to wealthier households, which can afford to spend much more in absolute terms to meet their family health needs.

Another survey of a poor neighbourhood in Old Cairo — the Al-Darb Al-Ahmar longitudinal study comparing findings from 2003 and 2009 — found that health expenditures were the fourth highest household costs in 2003, absorbing 7 per cent of total household budgets. In 2009, household expenditures for health had doubled to 14 per cent, representing the second highest expense after food costs (51 per cent) for poor households.<sup>225</sup> However, it is important to note that the same sample that returned higher proportions of health expenditures also reported a considerable decrease in ailments in 2009 compared to 2003.

The calculation of the prevalence of poverty in Cairo may be unrealistic insofar as it does

**Table 15:** Sufficiency of income to cover medical expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
<b>Doctor's visit*</b>	35.8		40.6		74.6	
	24.9	46.4***	25.8	55.5†	34.8	79.0***
<b>Medicines**</b>	34.7		40.8		72.8	
	24.0	45.2***	27.1	54.4†	32.4	77.4**
<b>Medical tests*</b>	36.2		38.8		74.4	
	26.1	45.6***	23.3	52.6†	35.1	78.6***

†significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

not include medical bills as part of the non-food costs. According to the World Bank (2007), the non-food monthly allowance for a household of seven is less than 250 EGP to be considered poor, between 250 EGP and 523 EGP to be considered near poor, and above 523 EGP to be considered non-poor. When the real cost of children’s education, transport costs for working parents and school children, rent and medical expenses are considered, the non-food allocation for the categorization of poor and non-poor appears unrealistic. The IIED study asks, ‘How is it possible that a family which cannot afford healthcare, has one child that may have dropped out of school, that lives in sub-standard housing conditions in an informal settlement, not even be considered below the upper poverty line?’<sup>226</sup> The same study claims that the rate of untreated illnesses among the poor is very high, so many households’ healthcare needs are not being met at all.

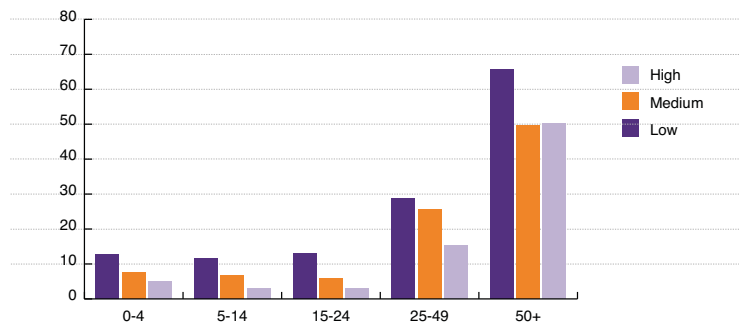
### Frequency of sickness

Environmental conditions are a major determinant of health. Overcrowding, contaminated water, insufficient sanitation, abandoned and rotting garbage in residential areas, and air pollution in Egyptian cities have concerned public health experts for a number of years. The worst conditions are directly linked to poverty, and in particular the environmental conditions in ‘unsafe’ and informal urban areas. The Ministry of Health has confirmed that ‘slum populations’ are a group considered among the most vulnerable to environmental health

**...‘slum populations’ are a group considered among the most vulnerable to environmental health hazards.**

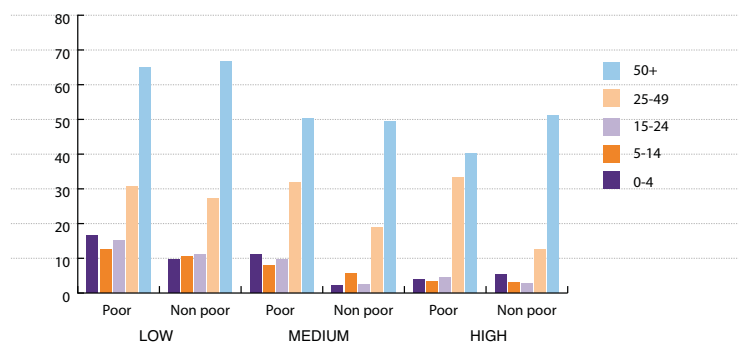
hazards.<sup>227</sup> Not only are health outcomes related to poverty and wealth, but the inability of mitigating poor health outcomes and the perpetuation of poor health are linked to poverty and its accompanying factors of education and access to health. Ill health is not surprisingly identified as an important cause of

Figure 35: Being sick within the last six months by age group and type of *mantiq*



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Figure 36: Being sick within the last six months by age group, type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

chronic poverty for the poor, especially when a primary income-earner becomes chronically or terminally ill. Even non-terminal illness means that income is lost from days off of work, disturbing fragile household economies that are highly sensitive to shocks and changes. In the poor environmental conditions of informal settlements, the risks of getting sick are higher than in other urban areas. Health costs can be high both because people are more likely to become sick and because treatment costs may compound over time.

Figure 35 shows levels of morbidity as indicated by the proportion of household members who reported being sick with an illness that had affected their activities of daily living, presented by age groups and types of *mantiq*. It clearly reveals that there is a significant gradient in the proportion of people who have recently been sick by the type of *mantiq* in which

they live. These differences are found for all age groups except those in the 50+ age range.

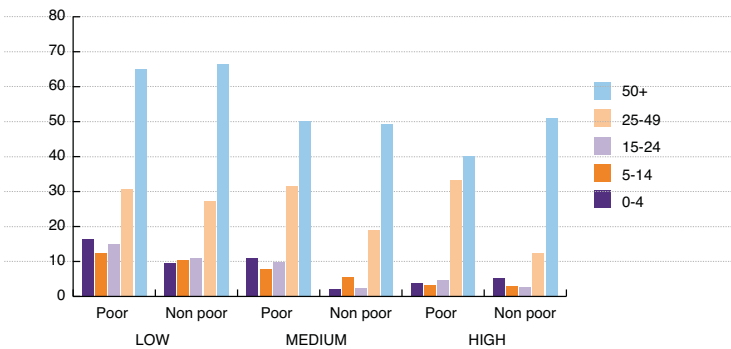
In investigating the effect of household poverty on the prevalence of illness, Figure 36 shows that the poor were more likely to suffer from recent illnesses than the non-poor, especially in the 24- to 50-year-old age group in all *mantiq*, with the exception of the elderly, age 50 and older, living in low and high *mantiq*. It also shows that the difference in children's health follows the gradient of the quality of the *mantiq* more than for other age groups. In an attempt to measure the total burden of illness on the household, Figure 37 presents the average number of sick household members in the last six months whose illnesses have affected their activities of daily living, by the age of the household member, poverty level of the household and the type of *mantiq*.

The results show that the burden of illness is generally higher among those living in the low *mantiq*, and particularly the poor. The number of sick people in low-*mantiq* households averages 1.13 among the poor and 1.05 members among the non-poor, compared to less than 1 person in the other *mantiq*. It also exposes a gradient in the average number of sick children and youth by the household poverty level and type of *mantiq*. Poor households in low *mantiq* have the highest average number of sick children and youth.

In addition, Figure 37 shows that together, all respondents in low *mantiq* and poor households in medium *mantiq* reported an average 0.40 sick adults in their households; that average decreased to 0.34 among the poor in high *mantiq* and further to 0.22 among the non-poor in medium *mantiq*. Supporting the much-explored hypothesis that health outcomes are socially determined, the lowest average number of sick adults, age 25 to 49, was found among non-poor households in high *mantiq*.

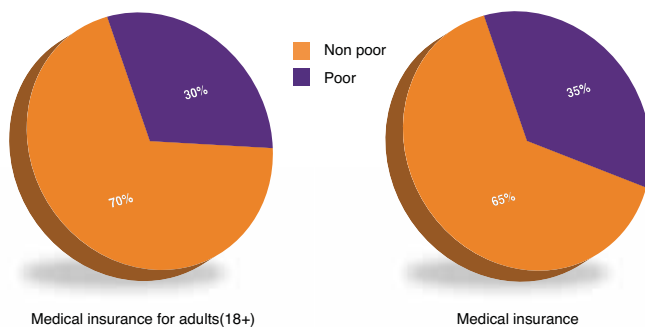
The highest number of sick elderly household members was found among the non-poor in high *mantiq*. In these households, the average number of sick adults older than age 50 was 0.68, compared with a range of 0.33 to 0.48 sick older persons in households elsewhere. The link here between longevity and income or neighbourhood quality suggests that a combination of work conditions, education, lifestyle and access to potentially costly health provisions results in different outcomes for different socioeconomic groups in Cairo, as they do worldwide.

**Figure 37:** Being sick within the last six months by age group, type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Figure 38:** Having health insurance by the type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

### Insurance

Health insurance can facilitate individual access to health care facilities. Figure 38 presents household members' access to health insurance as established in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey results. It clearly shows that except for the poor in high *mantiq*, access to health insurance differs greatly for households in different types of *mantiq*, and is largely dependent upon socioeconomic status. Among the non-poor, 64 per cent of households surveyed in high *mantiq* had access to health



*Pylons march across the desert to bring power to one of the established and rapidly filling new cities: 10<sup>th</sup> Ramadan.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

insurance; the same was true of 53 per cent of households in medium and 52 per cent households in low *mantiq*. Significantly fewer poor households had access to health insurance, however, with the poor in high *mantiq* exhibiting the lowest prevalence, at 23 per cent.

### Psychological conditions

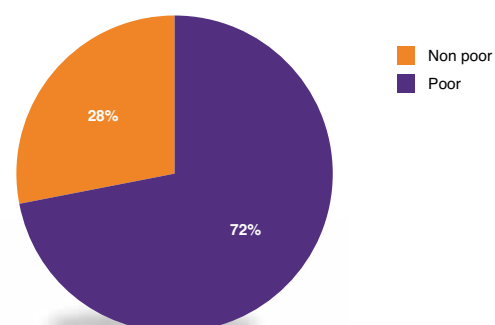
In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, respondents were asked whether any of their household members ever suffered from depression, psychological pressure or an undefined psychological disorder — depression or another disorder known by the households or admitted by them. Some respondents may have resisted mentioning problems due to the cultural norm of stigmatising psychological disorders. Figure 39 shows that the highest prevalence of psychological disorders was reported among poor households in high *mantiq* (6.6 per cent), followed by the poor in low *mantiq* (5.5 per cent). The lowest prevalence was observed among non-poor households in the high *mantiq* (1.9 per cent).

In low *mantiq*, 127 people reported suffering from a psychological disorder; 89 were members of poor households and 38 were members of non-poor households. When asked if they sought medical treatment, 44 and 16 respondents from the poor and non-poor households, respectively, reported doing so.

The responses to these questions in the survey may reflect stigma and ignorance con-

cerning the scope and range of psychological disorders among the respondents and other household members. Some Egyptian psychiatrists would claim that depression is the undeclared national disease of Egyptians. Chronic background stressors of low intensity and long duration, such as noise, pollution, congestion and poverty apply to all inhabitants of Cairo across different *mantiq*, yet would reasonably affect the poorer more acutely. Cairenes learn to cope with daily stressors ingeniously acquiring special skills while doing so, yet they pay the price of adapting in results such as fatigue, low tolerance to frustration (probably associated with street fights), and increased incidence of chronic conditions such as elevated blood sugar and blood pressure, and heart disease.<sup>228</sup>

**Figure 39:** Prevalence of psychological disorder by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

### Inequalities in health delivery

Considerable inequalities in Egyptian health outcomes have been brought to light not only by the findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey, but also by the World Health Organization (WHO). Some stark examples suggest that while healthcare delivery creates serious positive biases in favour of the wealthiest 20 per cent of the population, national campaigns are more successful in terms of health equity. The national measles immunization campaign successfully immunized 97 per cent of all infants in both rural and urban Egypt. While 97 per cent of the richest 20 per cent of households had their infants immunized, 95 per cent of households in the poorest 20 per cent also took advantage of the immunization opportunity. Access to more typical preventative and emergency health services is not as equally distributed among the country's population. Some health differentials suggest a strong urban/rural discrepancy. In terms of under-5 mortality, for example, while 56 out of every 1,000 infants born in rural Egypt die before age 5, the same is true of only 39 of every 1,000 born in cities and towns. But the socioeconomic differences suggest yet greater inequalities: three times as many infants born to families in the poorest 20 per cent die (75 of every 1,000) in comparison to the those born to families in the richest 20 per cent (25 of every 1,000 live births). The same biases are found when births attended by skilled health professionals are compared. In rural Egypt, 66 per cent of births are attended, while in urban centres, 89 per cent are attended. Just 51 per cent of the poorest 20 per cent of the population have their births attended by skilled health professionals, while 96 per cent of those in the wealthiest 20 per cent have the same level of natal care.<sup>229</sup>

USAID's Environmental Health Project conducted a comprehensive situational analysis as part of their Cairo Healthy Neighbourhood Programme in 2004. The study, which included literature reviews and stakeholder meetings, elaborates the specific health outcomes in different informal areas and slums in Cairo that illustrate considerable (negative) differences between national and Cairo city data.

Based on a wide range of surveys and analyses, those living in poverty and deprived areas were shown to be far more vulnerable to ill health and disease, particularly children.<sup>230</sup> At the same time, slum dwellers in inner parts of Cairo may benefit from their proximity to public hospitals (whatever the quality of service) in comparison to those outside Cairo.

## Expenditures and income in Cairo

Government and non-government analysis of poverty in Egypt indicates that urban areas consistently show much lower incidences of poverty than the national average, particularly in the governorates of Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez. Nevertheless, the extent of poverty is likely higher than official estimates. As established in the discussion of poverty estimations in Part One of this publication, the decision about exactly where to draw the poverty line is critical to statistical estimations and may be abused for social and political ends.

The positioning of the poverty line is especially significant in Egypt, where income distribution is massed somewhat above the official designation of poverty. Beyond the smaller proportion of abject or absolute poor, and the thin strata of ultra-rich, most of Cairo's urban households have low to moderate incomes and are closely grouped around a narrow range. As the World Bank's Urban Sector report stated, 'What is striking about Egypt's urban income distribution is its very high compression or lack of depth. For example, a simple doubling of income from EGP 595 per month [about US \$111 per month in 2008] will capture a full 50 per cent of all urban households'.<sup>231</sup> This means that, with an average of four persons per household, half of the national urban population lived on incomes of approximately US \$223 (or US \$56 per capita) per month, or less. The per-capita income and expenditure findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey show that those considered 'poor' in Cairo correspond to the first three deciles in the World Bank analysis illustrated in Table 16.

Calculating per capita income on a daily rate suggests that half the national urban population lived on US \$1.86 per day in 2005. Given the availability of government subsidies for bread, certain other staples and other consumables, the purchasing power parity gives this per capita amount increased actual street value. However, since this data was established, workers, especially the poor, have seen only marginal increases in general wag-

**...workers, especially the poor, have seen only marginal increases in general wages, while successive price rises in commodities and foodstuffs have affected Egyptian households significantly since 2005.**

es, while successive price rises in commodities and foodstuffs have affected Egyptian households significantly since 2005. Both the SRC/UN-HABITAT and the World Bank analyses were performed before food prices skyrocketed in 2008 and 2009.<sup>232</sup> The results of the government HIEC Survey of 2004-2005<sup>233</sup> enabled the World Bank to develop the tables below, showing urban household income and expenditure distribution for the national population.

Major poverty research institutes around the world are increasingly developing multidimensional methods to understand and describe poverty differentials and therefore inequity in society. Some United Nations agencies have been using multidimensional frameworks for many years in their analysis, and new approaches are continually being designed in an effort to better understand the scope and extent of household poverty.<sup>234</sup> The two dimensions of income and expenditure remain, however, key factors that indicate where socioeconomic divides fall, especially in Cairo, where a degree of income heterogeneity exists in the geography of the city. Notwithstanding concentrated pockets of intense poverty and clusters of extreme wealth, most poor families are found mixed in with lower- and middle-income families in a wide

**Table 16: Egyptian Urban Household Income and Expenditure Distribution by Decile 2004-2005 (EGP per month, at the exchange rate of 5.33 EGP = US \$1)\***

Decile	Household Income		Household Expenditures	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
First	0	533	0	487
Second	533	678	487	598
Third	678	797	598	702
Fourth	797	908	702	800
Fifth	908	1046	800	909
Sixth	1046	1199	909	1037
Seventh	1199	1397	1037	1205
Eighth	1397	1699	1205	1451
Ninth	1699	2371	1451	1988
Tenth	2371	-	1988	-

Source: Calculated from annual urban household expenditure and income by 20 bands, from CAPMAS Household Income Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2004/05, preliminary results. (Quoted from World Bank 2008a p.19)

\*Note that all sources of income are included, and for both income and expenditures non-cash as well as cash items are counted. Also note that income and expenditure levels have not been corrected for family size.

number of older core neighbourhoods and in the informal areas spreading around the city. As the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey has clearly exposed, a significant contingent of poor live in wealthy neighbourhoods, and they often experience the most extreme examples of urban inequalities.<sup>235</sup> But some might wonder why these findings are surprising as the vertical differentiation by income is present in the other areas of Cairo as well, with the poorest either occupying the rooftop or the ground floor. These are the two least desirable floors because the first is too exposed to direct sunlight and heat and the latter is the dampest, least ventilated area.

The socioeconomic intermingling of Cairene households has been attributed to limited residential mobility, the distortions of the real estate market and three decades or more of extreme rent control. In the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey methodology, this reality necessitated the development of the Areas Based Deprivation Index (ABDI) as a basis for identifying *mantiq* as the first level of separation for analysis within the city. Although the densely populated informal areas of Cairo are characterized as *slums* by many commentators,

## 'you will find young people ready to suffer or take the risks'

*Eman Hussein Hassan, 25, lives in public housing in New Cairo. She works in a beauty salon in Maadi. She majored in social research at university and graduated top of her class, owing in part to her graduation project in community services involving children.*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

I've been living here with my parents for eight years. When we first moved here, there were no villas, it was all desert around us. No one was building here, and it was empty. There were a few families and we all knew each other well. We would meet taking the same transport lines. It is public housing from the Housing and Development Bank — you take out a very basic loan with an installment plan and pay back the bank every year.

I work in Maadi, so every morning I walk from here to the main road [10 to 15 minutes], then catch a microbus to the Ring Road, and from there catch another bus to the Moneeb bridge. I get off at Zahra Masr El Kadeema, which is the closest to a metro stop and then take the metro to Maadi. It costs around EGP 10 to 15 per day [US \$2 to \$3]. It is expensive for me and moreso for others. Also, the microbus drivers change and increase prices everyday as they feel like it; there are no formal rates.

The government needs to organise transport better. To encourage more people to move to the new cities, transport is important. I know that services cost the government a lot, more than the public knows, but they need to plan and manage the situation a bit better.

My studies were in social research, and I realize how important it is in all areas. I would like to continue in this, but I can use my knowledge without waiting for a job to accept me in what I study. Everyone can do a service, even if they don't formally work in it. I try my best with what I have learnt and apply it in my everyday life and in my community.

### Changes and challenges in new desert developments

Access to water and electricity here is good, no problems really. The quality and amount of water here is actually much better than in the inner city, but maintaining cleanliness is an issue. Whether using garbage collection outside or within each building, residents organize for cleaners or maintenance people to check on everything in the buildings. There is no connection or subscription for us with the municipality to have regular checks on the buildings and their surroundings or the city in general.

Living here is of course quieter than the center of the city, but it used to be better than now. It is getting more noisy and crowded already. There were first plots belonging to the bank on which they built public housing, surrounded by private plots for villas and townhouses, but with limited stories, so they don't build towers. Because there are so many empty plots still, the municipality doesn't provide any services. While building these villas, they tend to dump their construction waste anywhere around us.

I enjoy living here. It is true it used to be better eight years ago, but in comparison to the crowdedness and suffocation



where we were living in El Gamrah, it is better here. To a certain extent there are wider open communal spaces. But we are all looking forward to the area getting better and improving. In terms of expatriates, most are minorities, immigrants mostly from Nigeria, Sudan and Cameroon, and construction workers. As much as we like to interact with the expats here, they do behave differently — lots of fighting — and the government or police can't or won't do anything about it. Last night, there was a huge fight and you can't even determine who lives in which apartment to press charges or file complaints because you don't even know who is renting the unit. There are also construction workers for the Talaat Mostafa development company for the rehab project, and they live here, too. Madinaty and Rehab cities [both luxury gated communities] are close to here, so they use these public housing units as housing for their construction workers.

There is another important issue in this area. When they first started the housing project, there were regulations that people buying here not have other houses, or contracts or house loans other than this one. But what we find now are owners of units here as a second or third property they own but don't live in, and therefore they rent it out to construction workers or expats with more money.

According to the Suzanne Mubarak programme and the Housing and Development Bank, the housing here was meant for young people or for young newlyweds who can't afford current housing options in the city or who can't even find a home to live in. But here you see it has become an opportunity for business or trading in housing. Real estate in Egypt is an investment that gets 100 per cent returns and so people are taking units and then setting prices as they want or they keep them empty knowing that prices are increasing everywhere anyway and they wait on the property to gain in value.

There are changes of course, new areas being built. Most families are holding onto the places they live in even if they are small — suffocated as we say — and even when their families grow, because they need to be close to jobs, transport systems and services. But now I feel that the way people are thinking is starting to change; they are more willing and getting used to the idea of moving to expanding areas like Badr City, or like here in the new settlements of New Cairo or the Sixth of October. A lot of people thought the idea of moving to the Sixth of October in the past was not popular, and so this is good, since people are starting to take it onto themselves more to venture out and give it a try.

### **Personal aspirations**

I would like to create a new life for myself. I would like to create a life that I know practically I can really do for myself and to have a forward-thinking vision, not look only to the now. I can sacrifice now to make improvements that will be realized in the future — work hard and sacrifice for benefits not only for me but for a new family and those of others. I don't mind going into deserts even further than here, suffering even more for a new life. There are a lot of young women and men who think like I do. More so now, you will find young people ready to suffer or take the risks. They have seen the lives of their parents and have a different outlook when it comes to their country and lifestyle now, especially on a global level.

There might be hardships but everyone throws this hardship on the president or their boss. The vision we have is always a bit bleak — it is a phenomenon of pessimism. There is too much fear and pessimism. I have a long-term vision, and I believe people should not dream and fantasize that everything will happen right away, tomorrow or even in their lifetime. I mean God created the world in six days to teach people that good things take time to manifest. I feel that people make their own lives more difficult than needed, they put themselves down, saying things like, 'No it's not going to happen', 'Forget it'.

Unlike older generations, I don't mind to start small and get to the larger goals at the same time as doing my duties to make things happen, not just to demand my rights only. That is what I say to people my age, older, younger: love our country a bit more. You will feel more inclined to help your country and then in turn the country will help you, too.

We only live on 5 to 6 per cent of our land in Egypt. We have so much desert land to give the youth, the youth who are realistic. And if they go to the desert, the services will happen. The businessmen or charitable organizations don't need to pour money into it if they allow the people the chance to get involved and solve problems too, especially the youth. I promise you will see results.

I wish my future to be better, for problems to stop and that the youth have better upbringing. Life is more expensive, they are mainly concerned with accumulating wealth today to survive. If you want to build a future for your children, start with building the right values instead of just building a material life. At least teach your son right so he can protect and take care of what you are building for him.





Informal areas, informal traders – the life blood of Cairo's street economy.  
Image: Chris Horwood

including the government, they are home, in fact, to various income groups; as this publication repeatedly illustrates, such areas differ significantly from large slums in other parts of Africa or Asia.

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey in Cairo used a wealth index to separate poor and non-poor as part of its methodology, but the survey results of the 'sufficiency analysis' (below) illustrate that the socioeconomic stratification correlates correctly with income in relation to expenditures. The respondents were asked whether their current income completely covers their basic needs measured in terms of food, education, health, accommodation and other expenses. The presentation of data

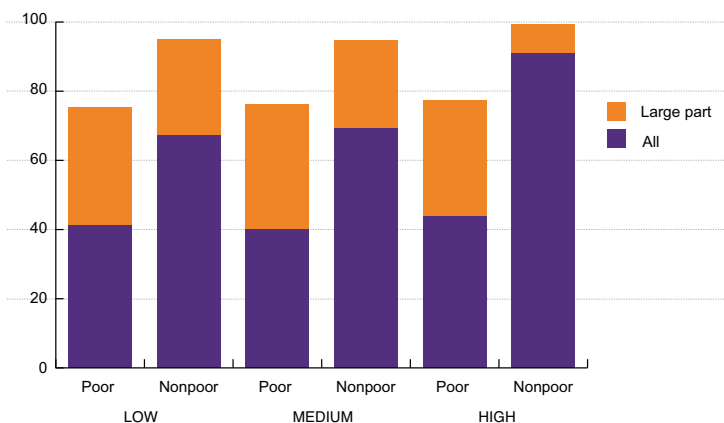
below separates food from other essential expenditures.

### Food expenditure

One of the most essential needs and the largest single expenditure for most households is food. Figure 40 shows that the poor always fare significantly worse than the non-poor, and although there is no difference between medium and low *mantiq*, the high *mantiq* residents show a far higher sufficiency of income to meet food requirements.

Data from the nationwide 2005 CAPMAS Household Income, Expenditures, and Consumption Survey (HIEC) shows that Egyptian households spend an average of 50.2 per cent of their budgets on food. Housing-related expenses are next, at 10.8 per cent, followed by healthcare (6.4 per cent), transportation (6.1 per cent) and education (5.1 per cent). Most of these expenses are reckoned to be higher in urban centres like Cairo, but incomes are also higher in the city. Survey data also show that as household income increases, household expenditures on food decrease in relative terms; expenditures on housing remain almost the same; expenditures on healthcare and transportation increase in relative terms; and household expenditures on education decrease in relative terms.<sup>236</sup>

Figure 40: Sufficiency of income to food by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level.



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

Most poverty studies in Egypt account for regional price differences. Regional differences

in prices generate different regional poverty lines and poverty incidence rates based on these lines. Just as interregional differences are quite significant, intra-city price differences are also extremely significant. The 2009 IIED study concerning the misrepresentation and underestimating of poverty in Cairo found that

*poor people who live in informal areas, especially on the outskirts of Greater Cairo, sometimes pay much more for the same food items than do those who live in some of the most well-off areas in Egypt. This is also the case in many areas in relation to the cost of rubbish collection and transportation, again shouldered more heavily by the poorer segments of the urban population. By correcting for spatial variation in price levels, their conclusions greatly differ about poverty distribution in Egypt. Even such small differences could produce significantly different results. Such prices mean that poverty lines based on regional prices are not adequate as they do not reflect the true costs of food consumed by the poor.*<sup>237</sup>

Based on research conducted in 2008 in eight of Greater Cairo's informal areas, or *ashwa'iyat*, the IIED study found that the high costs of living are not reflected in even the highest metropolitan poverty line. The study is critical of the fact that the poor themselves were not involved in setting the poverty lines. The authors also conclude that adjusting for price variation at the regional level is

**...the IIED study found that the high costs of living are not reflected in even the highest metropolitan poverty line.**

not adequate and that beyond the quantity of food the poor buy, the quality is also questionable. Furthermore, they state that while the 'food bundle' used for poverty lines allows for adequate calories, it does not allow for a nutritious diet. In terms of food and nutrition

**Table 17: Sufficiency of income for all housing expenses by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (2007) (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
<b>Rent and housing installment**</b>	64.9		60.5		87.7	
	56.5	72.4***	50.7	69.2	62.8	90.4***
<b>Water***</b>	67.0		69.8		88.5	
	56.7	75.7***	58.1	79.9†	70.0	89.8*
<b>Electricity**</b>	66.3		70.3		89.0	
	56.6	74.8***	58.1	80.6	68.7	91.0*
<b>Cooking fuel**</b>	68.4		71.7		88.7	
	59.8	76.3***	59.7	82.0†	64.5	91.8***
<b>Telephone***</b>	58.8		60.4		88.7	
	48.0	66.5***	49.8	68.4†	58.0	91.5***
<b>General maintenance***</b>	46.6		55.0		84.1	
	33.9	57.8***	44.6	64.1†	41.7	89.0***
<b>Transportation **</b>	52.9		59.2		82.5	
	42.5	62.3***	45.4	71.6*	44.8	87.3***
<b>Cloth **</b>	38.4		39.7		79.8	
	26.6	49.3***	25.6	52.9*	41.1	85.2***
<b>Cigarette ***</b>	45.5		51.0		82.7	
	36.6	56.6***	35.6	74.1***	54.0	88.9***

The asterisk denotes the conventional statistical expression when differences are significant.

†significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence)  
 \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

in Egypt, hunger is not the main problem. In fact, the two polarities of rising obesity and chronic urban malnutrition or stunting are more commonly found. The study concludes, 'Improved nutrition is crucial to ensure the avoidance of the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Thus, factoring in nutritious food items in the poor's diets, and not only sufficient calories, should be essential.'<sup>238</sup> Non-food household expenses

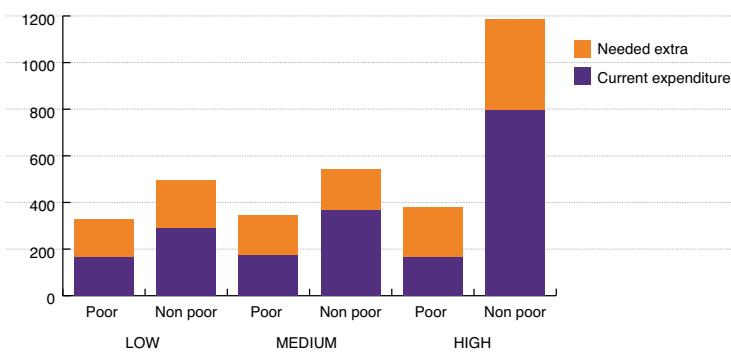
Table 17 shows the ability of households in different socioeconomic strata and different types of *mantiq* to afford their housing expenses, however it also shows that notwithstanding the non-poor in high level *mantiq*, both poor and non-poor groups in all *mantiq* suffer substantial insufficiencies. For example, across the different types of *mantiq*, only 56 per cent of the poor, on average, manage to afford their rent or house-payment instalment, compared to 77.3 per cent of the non-poor. The data reveals significant differences across the three types of *mantiq* and among the poor and non-poor when calculated in

terms of the average number of housing expenses totally covered by the household income. One analysis identified what is called 'housing-related poverty' — the poverty households experience only due to the pressure for paying their housing costs. This analysis estimated in 2002 that on top of the estimated 45 per cent 'poor' among the urban population in Egypt, another 30 per cent experience 'housing-related poverty', meaning that 75 per cent of all urban population had this kind of combined poverty problem.<sup>239</sup>

## Household expenditure

Figure 41 shows the average per capita expenditure of the surveyed households. The pattern of per capita expenditure distribution shows a clear gradient by type of *mantiq* and by the poverty level of the households. The most distinct observation is the fact that the same pattern holds when the respondents were asked to report income required to meet their basic needs (i.e., food, clothing and housing). The average per capita monthly expenditure among the poor in Cairo is less than 175 EGP (about US \$32). Among the non-poor, the average increases from 289 EGP (about US \$53) in low *mantiq* to 367 EGP (about US \$67) in medium *mantiq* to 749 EGP (about US \$136) in high *mantiq*.

Figure 41: Average per capita expenditure by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

When asked about the income needed to be able to afford necessary goods and supplies, poor respondents in low *mantiq* reported that their total required income would amount to less than 400 EGP (about US \$73) per capita, while non-poor respondents in the same areas reported needing 494 EGP (about US \$90). In medium *mantiq*, non-poor respondents said they would need 544 EGP (about US \$99) and residents of high *mantiq* reported needing 1,187 EGP (about US \$208). These assessments do not use any absolutes

Table 18: Comparison of average expenditures by households in different quintiles and different expenditure categories in urban Egypt

Category	1st Quintile (per cent)	2nd Quintile (per cent)	3rd Quintile (per cent)	4th Quintile (per cent)	5th Quintile (per cent)	Overall Sample (per cent)
Food	53.4	51.9	50.3	49.5	46.0	50.2
Alcohol, smoking & caffeine	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.4	2.7
Clothes	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.7	5.0	4.8
Housing & housing needs	10.9	10.8	11.0	10.9	10.3	10.8
Furniture, appliances & housing services	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.7
Health care	5.8	5.9	6.1	6.5	7.5	6.4
Transportation	5.0	5.8	6.1	6.4	7.2	6.1
Telecommunications	3.2	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.9	4.5
Culture & recreation	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.6	1.8
Education	6.0	5.5	5.2	4.7	4.3	5.1
Restaurants & hotels	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.4	0.7
Commodities & other services	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.3
<b>Total</b>	100 per cent	100 per cent	100 per cent	100 per cent	100 per cent	100 per cent

Source: Table compiled from HIEC Survey 2004/5 statistics. Taken from USAID 2008 (Table 3.10).

in terms of basic need requirements and are only based on reported perception of need. What constitutes 'enough' or 'need' may differ considerably between poor and non-poor households in different *mantiq*, but it is interesting to note to what extent the non-poor in all *mantiq* consider their incomes insufficient to meet their basic needs. Looking more closely at what different respondents claimed they needed in comparison with their current expenditures, the trend is clear: the gap between what households have and consider that they need was consistently higher among the poor (who generally needed approximately double their present income to meet their needs) than the non-poor. For the non-poor, the proportional difference between current expenditures and desired extra income diminished with increased *mantiq* quality.

The conclusion of the 2009 IIED study focusing on underestimation of poverty lines in Cairo considers that the non-food allowance of even the most generous of poverty lines is too low: 'Raising the value of poverty lines to reflect these costs adequately will surely raise poverty incidence rates in Greater Cairo, especially given that a significant percentage of people are clustered around existing poverty lines'.<sup>240</sup>

### Main household providers

As a universal norm in Cairo, with minor differences between *mantiq* and socioeconomic groups, 96.7 per cent of household heads are the primary providers for their families. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey found the average for poor households (95.3 per cent) was slightly lower than those of the non-poor (98.2 per cent). Interestingly, and as expected, the prevalence of sons and daughters as secondary household income providers was relatively high among the poor (average 17.4 per cent), while among non-poor households it was just 6.7 per cent (see the employment section on child labour). In the non-poor households, the spouse of the head of household (in most cases the wife) plays a more significant role in providing for the family than do the children, acting as the secondary provider in an average of 23.5 per cent of households. In contrast, the spouse is the second main provider

in only 7.3 per cent of poor households in all *mantiq*. In terms of providing a secondary income, therefore, it appears that children in poor households play a similar role to spouses in non-poor households.

### Sources of income

Three main sources of income were investigated in the SRC/UN-HABITAT study: income from work, income from assets and income from social insurance and pensions. Table 19 shows the distribution of income sources among the different households surveyed. It indicates that income from work (formal or informal) is the main source of income among all types of households and across all types of *mantiq*.

The primary source of income for an average of 69 per cent of all households surveyed was work by adult men. Throughout the different types of *mantiq*, however, sources of income varied considerably. In high *mantiq*, for example, adult men were the main source of income for 84.6 per cent of poor families, while men's work accounted for just 58.2 per cent income in non-poor households. Evidently, the high level of non-poor women as sources of income (41.2 per cent) in high *mantiq*, as well as the higher proportion of older residents in non-poor households accounts for this differ-

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**...the prevalence of sons and daughters as secondary household income providers was relatively high among the poor (average 17.4 per cent).**

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ence. Adult women's work as a source of income was less frequently reported in the low *mantiq* (24 per cent) followed by the medium *mantiq* (19 per cent). The work of children between 6 and 18 years old was the least reported source of income from work, and was most common among residents of medium *mantiq* (5.6 per cent) followed by the low *mantiq* (4.8 per cent); the fewest reports of children as sources of income were reported in high *mantiq* (1.2 per cent). As the data indicates,



*Sustainable planning?  
With Cairo and  
Egypt becoming  
increasingly water-  
stressed, concerns  
about the high water  
consumption of these  
privileged communities  
are being raised.*

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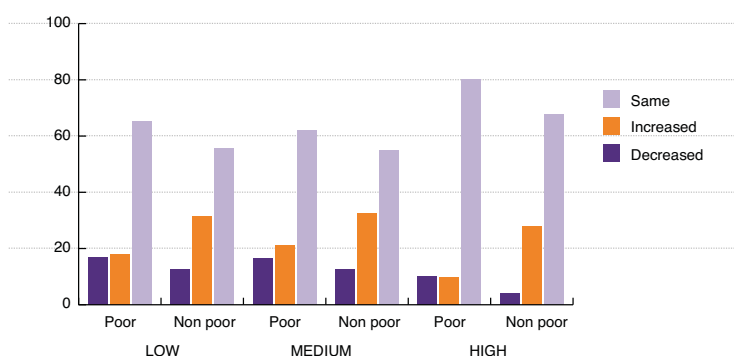
income from children's work was reported by more poor households than non-poor ones.

It has been stated that poverty in Cairo is sometimes deceptive insofar as Cairenes are relatively asset-rich (in terms of overall possessions) but most remain income-poor. Many first generation or second generation urban households, having migrated from rural locations, take pride in the number of household assets — mainly 'white goods', TVs and the like — they can accumulate to mark their new status as city dwellers. This may be one of the many factors that keep people in cities despite apparent deprivations, although many 'white goods' may have been purchased with remittances which were boom-

ing until the 1990s.<sup>241</sup> Around the world, the urban poor remain in cities because the range of livelihood opportunities continues to be superior to those in rural areas, and the possibilities for upward mobility are greater than in the impoverished places of their roots. However, deriving a source of income from assets is a different matter, and as the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey confirms, it is the non-poor who have a considerable advantage in this regard. An average of 21 per cent of the households reported income from assets, but the breakdown by so-

**Cairenes are relatively asset-rich (in terms of overall possessions) but most remain income-poor.**

**Figure 42:** Changes in income by the type of the *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

cioeconomic group and *mantiq* reveals significant differentials. Not surprisingly, income from assets increases in prevalence significantly from low to high *mantiq* — a significantly higher proportion of non-poor households in high *mantiq* reported income from assets than poor households across the various types of areas.

Pension as a source of income also increases as the *mantiq* quality increases, with the lowest levels exhibited by households in low *mantiq* (36 per cent) and the highest by those in the high *mantiq* (59 per cent). Clearly, poor workers with their traditional and overriding dependency on the informal sector and casual work are less likely to benefit from pensions, which are predicated on formal employment,

government work and registered companies abiding by rules of employment law.

### Changes in income and expenditure

Respondents were asked to compare both their household income and expenditures in the survey year (2006) to their levels of both in the preceding year. Figure 42 presents the income comparisons and shows that while income stability is common among all groups of respondents, income decrease was slightly more often experienced by the poor than the non-poor, albeit the differences were not significant in the medium and low *mantiq*. By contrast, income increases were more common among the non-poor. Due to the relative differences in income between the poor and non-poor it may be suggested that income increases of the non-poor are higher in absolute terms, although the survey did not explore these differences.

The most commonly cited reasons for the increases in income were salary or pension raises, while tightness of the labour market and decreases in working hours were most commonly cited as reasons for income decline.

By contrast, when asked to compare their current expenditure to that of the previous year, the majority of the respondents reported increases in the expenditure (see Figure 43). Except for the poor in high *mantiq*, more than 75 per cent of the households reported increases in their expenditures. The most commonly cited reasons for the increases in

### The most commonly cited reasons for the increases in household expenditures were increases in prices.

household expenditures were increases in prices, which were reported by 78 per cent of the respondents, followed by added children’s educational expenses, reported by 11 per cent of the respondents. Among the poor in high *mantiq*, 64 per cent reported increases in their expenditures, while just 30 per cent reported stability of their expenditure in the

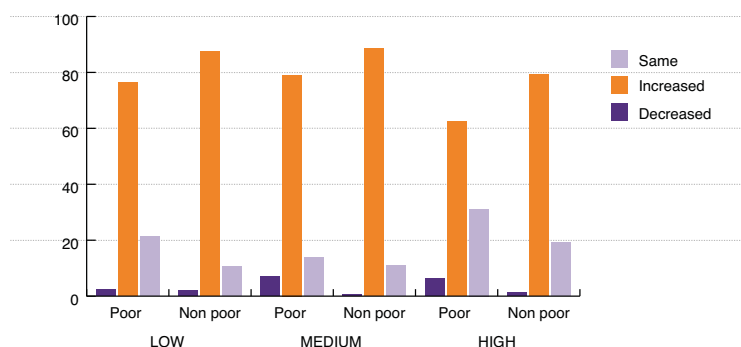
**Table 19: Sources of income by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level (%)**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
<b>Work</b>	82.7		78.1		75.8	
	81.0	83.3	76.4	79.5	90.3	73.8***
<b>Adult work</b>	82.2		76.4		75.7	
	81.0	83.3	73.5	79.0†	90.0	73.8***
<b>Adult men work*</b>	76.4		69.8		61.4	
	76.2	76.5	70.1	69.5	84.6	58.2**
<b>Adult women work†</b>	23.7		18.7		40.9	
	16.9	30.0***	9.7	26.9*	31.7	42.1***
<b>Children’s work†</b>	4.8		5.6		1.2	
	8.3	1.5***	9.6	1.9**	6.9	0.4***
<b>Assets***</b>	15.0		21.2		46.3	
	7.0	22.3***	17.0	25.0	3.6	52.2***
<b>Pensions***</b>	35.7		38.4		58.8	
	35.2	36.2	35.9	40.7*	26.6	63.2***

†significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

same period, exposing their vulnerabilities to price changes. The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey preceded the hefty commodity price rises that occurred in 2008 and 2009, but other analysts have commented on the additional burdens the rising prices have placed on the urban poor, as well as their continued exposure to vulnerabilities as the value of their income diminishes in real terms. Only 27 per cent of poor households and 15 per cent of non-poor households reported that their expenditures had remained the same or decreased during the previous year. It is also evident that

**Figure 43: Changes in household expenditures by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level**



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.



Under the shadow of a highway and alongside rail-tracks, shops and stalls of the vast and growing Manshiet Nasr informal settlement.

Image: Chris Horwood

increase in expenditure is experienced more by the non-poor across all *mantiq*. While the distribution of differentials suggests some equity insofar as poor and non-poor households both suffered from increased costs, the result of the preceding sufficiency of needs analysis illustrates that again, the burden of these changes fall overwhelmingly on Cairo's poor.

### Managing financial shocks

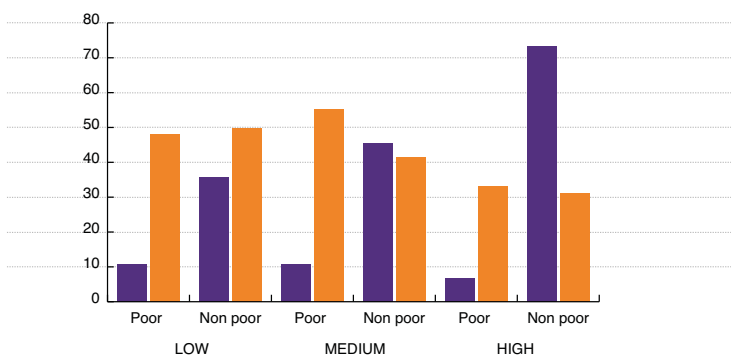
Respondents were asked whether their household would be able to raise 2,000 EGP within one week in case of an emergency situation. Not surprisingly, non-poor households were more likely to be able to raise the required sum of money than poor households. Among the non-poor, the proportion of households able to raise the money increases from 36 per cent among residents in low *mantiq* to 73 per

cent among residents in high *mantiq*.

For the poor, the situation was relatively similar throughout the types of *mantiq*: overall, less than 10 per cent reported ability to raise the money. The group reporting the least likelihood of being able to raise 2,000 EGP within one week were the poor in high *mantiq* (6.7 per cent), followed by those residing in medium (10.8 per cent) and low (10.9 per cent) *mantiq*, respectively. The three most frequently mentioned sources of the funds were savings, relatives, neighbours and friends, and work. The non-poor on average would rely on savings (average of 53 per cent), while the poor could rarely depend on savings (just 6.6 per cent), but on average, 76 per cent relied on family and friends, illustrating a level of social capital typical in poorer environments.

The CAPMAS/HIEC survey conducted in 2004 and 2005 revealed some interesting findings with respect to households' capacity to save money. The study indicated that the total annual expenditure of all surveyed households in Cairo amounted to 280.7 million EGP, with an average annual per capita spending of 3,171 EGP and an average annual household expenditure of 13,006 EGP. The individual and household income averages were higher than expenditures, indicating an overall savings capacity among the surveyed households of 10.8 per cent of their total income. This savings capacity is obviously unequal across different income quintiles. A comparison between the data from incomes versus expenditure offers an indication of savings capacity (see Tables 20

Figure 44: Households' ability to raise 2000 EGP within one week by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Table 20: Annual household income by quintile (EGP)**

Household Annual income	1 <sup>st</sup> Income Quintile	2 <sup>nd</sup> Income Quintile	3 <sup>rd</sup> Income Quintile	4 <sup>th</sup> Income Quintile	5 <sup>th</sup> Income Quintile
<b>Mean</b>	7,784	10,266	12,494	14,640	26,588
<b>Median</b>	7,200	9,600	12,000	14,400	22,080

Source: CAMPAS HIEC survey as cited in USAID 2008

**Table 21: Annual household expenditure by quintile (EGP)**

Household Annual Expenditure	1 <sup>st</sup> Income Quintile	2 <sup>nd</sup> Income Quintile	3 <sup>rd</sup> Income Quintile	4 <sup>th</sup> Income Quintile	5 <sup>th</sup> Income Quintile
<b>Mean</b>	7,927	10,264	12,041	13,440	20,801
<b>Median</b>	7,586	9,928	11,703	12,618	10,840

Source: CAMPAS HIEC survey as cited in USAID 2008

and 21). The savings capacity was found to be negative for the first quintile, almost zero for the second quintile, 3.6 per cent for the third quintile, 8.2 per cent for the fourth quintile, and 21.8 per cent for the fifth quintile.<sup>242</sup>

### Informal and formal support received by the household

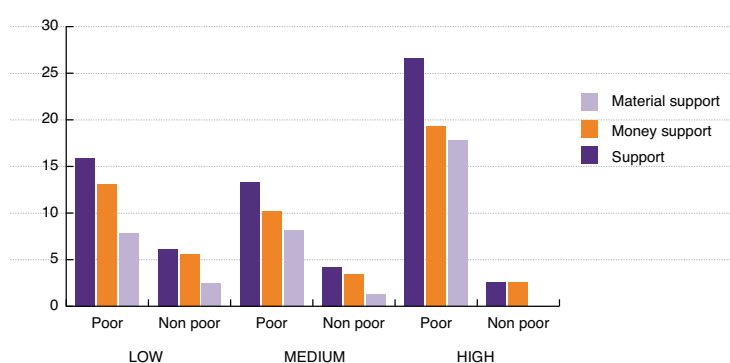
Respondents were asked whether their household received any type of support, formal or otherwise. Figure 45 shows that receiving support is not limited to only the poor — non-poor households also reported receiving some support. Furthermore, poor residents were more likely to receive support than non-poor in all *mantiq*, with the highest level of support reported by the poor in high *mantiq*. This finding should not be surprising when other factors revealed by the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey show consistently that Cairo’s poor households in high *mantiq* fare worse than others in relative, and absolute, terms. Poor households may also receive informal support from the non-poor in their spatial vicinity owing to cultural traditions.

Investigation into the type of support received shows that except for the non-poor in high *mantiq*, all respondents received a mixture of both monetary and material support. Furthermore, monetary support was more prevalent than material support for all types of households.

### Government subsidies

Another important form of support for households derives from the long-standing gov-

**Figure 45: Type of support received by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level**



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

ernment subsidies programme. Egypt’s food subsidy system has been a mainstay of the government’s long-term policy of promoting social equity and political stability, which had its origins in the 1940s after World War II. It has also been a major component of the social safety net for the poor, guaranteeing the availability of affordable staples — particularly bread, but also sugar, tea, rice and cooking oil, as well as butter, beans, lentils and macaroni. In recent years, the objectives have been to assist the reduction of infant mortality and malnutrition, and mitigate the adverse effects of recent economic reform efforts. Since the introduction of the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP) in the 1990s, the Egyptian culture of widespread governmental subsidies has come under attack and been reformed. The cost of the subsidy system has declined considerably from 14 per cent of government expenditures in 1981





Bakers in Imbaba, one of Cairo's largest informal settlements.

Image: Chris Horwood

to 5.6 per cent in 1997. The absolute cost, however, remains high: in 1997, the total cost was 3.74 billion EGP, or about US \$1.1 billion (at exchange rates prevalent in that era).<sup>243</sup> In fact, far from reducing the numbers assisted, the government claims that it has doubled the number of families who benefit from the ration card system in the past five years. In 2004, the number of people who fell under the umbrella of the system was estimated at 39.8 million. By 2010, 63 million of the country's 79 million people benefited from the system, according to figures from the Ministry of Social Solidarity.<sup>244</sup>

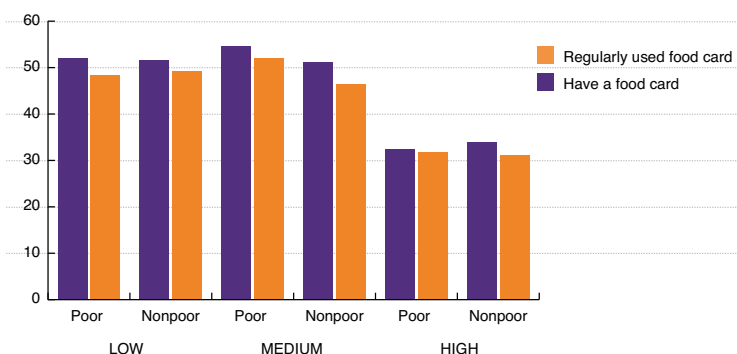
Figure 46 shows that more than 51 per cent of the households in both low and medium *mantiq* surveyed in the SRC/UN-HABITAT

Cairo study possessed the necessary government card to receive subsidies. Just over 32 per cent of the households in the high *mantiq* also possessed the card.

The survey's findings indicate that more than 95 per cent of households that possess the cards use them regularly to obtain subsidized food. The fact that nearly as many non-poor households as poor households surveyed both had and used a card for subsidized food suggests poor or inefficient targeting of the subsidies, or the prevalence of distortions through venality and abuse, such as reselling subsidized wheat on the black market or us-

**...nearly as many non-poor households as poor households surveyed both had and used a card for subsidized food suggests poor or inefficient targeting of the subsidies.**

Figure 46: Having and using governmental food card by the type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

ing subsidized bread as fodder. One study also claimed that 45 per cent of the ration cards are in the name of people who have died, while 55 per cent of the families are unable to add the names of their children to their ration cards.<sup>245</sup> Governmental negligence in the regular updating of the subscribers database and a lack of investigation into the social conditions of the families allows many of the non-poor to profit from the subsidy.

Another study of the distribution of food subsidies between the poor and the better-off analysed World Bank data from 2007 and found that 62 per cent of all subsidies were claimed by the 'better off', while just 38 per cent were absorbed by the 'poor' with the extreme poor only absorbing 4 per cent of the total.<sup>246</sup> Other long-standing subsidies under scrutiny are those for gas and oil and for some utilities. Few commentators disagree that severe mismanagement lies at the heart of Egypt's subsidy programme. The government, donors and other stakeholders agree that the system's costs can be further reduced and its efficiency improved with better targeting to the needy. In particular, donors have clearly and unambiguously stated that Egypt's policy of untargeted bread subsidies is both economically unsustainable and wholly inefficient at amply distributing resources to the poor.<sup>247</sup> The subsidized National Housing

the criteria that qualify families for subsidies. The way in which households are categorized as poor or non-poor in the SRC/UN-HABITAT analysis is not the same as the government's methodology of subsidy qualification, but many studies have suggested that distortion and poor targeting is a characteristic of Egypt's long-standing subsidy programme.

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**many studies have suggested that distortion and poor targeting is a characteristic of Egypt's long-standing subsidy programme.**

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Programme launched in 2006 is regarded by some analysts as another badly designed mechanism. First, the programme requires applicants to have a university degree, which by default rules out the majority of the urban poor, who more commonly attain 'institute' and vocational high school diplomas. Second, the financing mechanism and construction regulations require the applicants to pay almost 105,000 EGP (approximately US \$17,850) on installments during the first year alone. Each housing unit is subsidized by a fixed 15,000 EGP (approximately US \$2,700) in addition to the indirect subsidy on the land price that was given to private developers by selling them public land at below-market prices — in some cases, reportedly, at almost one-tenth of its market price.<sup>248</sup>

However, the possibility that some non-poor households in all *mantiq* could qualify for subsidies should not be discounted, considering the multidimensional nature of poverty and

## 'there is a real need for mad optimism'

*Aly El Guindy, 34, interviewed 6 August 2010 at his home in El Zamalek, opposite the elite Gizeira Club, where he has lived since childhood. He is married with no children .*



Image: Pascale Nader

### Profile

I am a writer. I used to write for *Al-Ahram Weekly* newspaper and *Cairo* magazine and the *Community Times*, and have also published a book of poetry in Arabic and continue to write poetry. Due to increasing economic pressures, I also write advertisements now — I'm a copywriter and creative director in a multinational ad agency in Cairo. I also wanted to participate in what seems to be the only dynamic thing happening in Egypt, which is the market. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> century war that is where the action is; the capitalist society has homogenized all values so we have these market values going on now.

One good thing that is happening in the country is that the market is steaming and there's a lot of work; marketers have invaded the Cairo scene. So, there's a lot of business in Egypt. There are 80 million people to feed that need to consume stuff, whether the bottom of the pyramid or the affluent and privileged, and that's what seems to be happening now. It is much more of an open market — everybody has the chance to make it.

However, it is still very closed. We don't really know what exactly is happening. Most of the big deals that occur are

unknown. It's all about information and certain people know; without exaggerating too much, there are a lot of unknown issues in Cairo, even as a market economy. Connections are very important. If you have connections with the government, you will have more information than the normal average person.

But it makes my life more vulgar or shallow, puts everyone on a competitive mode, makes family values the most important and the only reason to elevate your family's living is to buy more consumer products — the American dream to get a house with a swimming pool and two kids. Society used to just breed itself in a deadlock. If you were a taxi cab driver, so would your son be, and so forth. The market is liberating: now you have more social mobility, but only to a certain extent, of course.

### Changes and challenges

Everything is going to the private sector. The public sector is removing its responsibility, but it is still very centralized. I don't know how to explain it. It seems we are beginning something which is still not very clear. People tend to be harsh on the way things are, but we have to remember that we got out of socialism and gained independence.



Lenin, for example, predicted that when you try to apply a socialist regime, there will be 50 years of tyranny of the proletariat, and they are the ones in power in the government and we are going through this phase and it is going to take time.

Gamal Abdel Nasser did a lot of good things by allowing education to spread. If it wasn't for him, those who are educated who have a career today, God knows, would still be ploughing the land for the British or Americans or Turkish occupiers. But for the mass of Egyptians who just got educated in the last generation, it's been less than 50 years since we stepped out of provincial thinking into a real civil society; we are slowly starting to recognize our rights through our own sweat, blood and tears. For example, in 2005, the *Kifaya* movement was a breakthrough, where a true wide civil disobedience movement, even a coup if you like, happened. You had human rights activists, NGOs, students, judges, all components of civil society outside of institutions rising up and threatening the government, so the government made all these cosmetic changes. For example, we have now independent journalism. Before 2005, it was only the government newspapers reporting; now we have more opposition at a functional and not just symbolic level.

### **A real need for mad optimism**

I think this is the most exciting time for Egypt, because everything is up for grabs. The government has lost its legitimacy and is keeping people barely happy with their 'bread and circuses' approach, allowing religious fanaticism, soccer games, satellite dishes, subsidies, all these consumer products. But I am very optimistic. What Egyptians need is courage and non-practicality. At present, we keep it down to the basic material needs and leave our psychology, spiritual or civic inspiration to the next world and not this world. Egyptians have always lived on a very small periphery to just grow their crops and sell it so they can enjoy themselves with their families, sing their songs and write their poetry. What we need is for ideals to enter the real world. There is a real need for mad optimism and imagination and adventure.

Nations in Europe, for example, didn't receive their human rights out of practical reasoning — they went through hundreds of years of civil, sectarian war and conflict and intellectual adventure until they received their full rights. Egyptians and Arabs have not gone through this. They want to go through the day and have food on the table and be content with being ruled.

### **'Up for grabs': The future of poverty and informality**

We have 70 per cent informal [housing]. If we can make this into a functioning part of society and not look at the poor, as the current government does, as a burden,

we could see the poor as the fuel or the combustion for our progress and development. The Egyptian poor are extremely innovative and entrepreneurial with the limited access to formal education and resources that they have. It is an interesting miracle how a person can live on EGP 200 [US \$35] per month and endure such hardship and still look at it with a smile. But I think we need to get rid of that and direct that endurance in another direction. You can't sit in the café watching the news, smoking *shisha* and talking about abuse of human rights and wait for the changes — you have to take charge of it.

We need change in people's minds and cultural change and to come out with new realizations. Even though we are functioning in the modern world, the majority of Egyptians are stuck in the middle ages. It is a very non-secular mentality. Our identity has to be in the future, not in the past, and we have to create our own identity and not be conservative, and all these things have to exist before we can begin to discuss the mechanisms. We don't have the sockets to plug in the programme to happen. We are not ethically content with ourselves; we need to feel like human beings so we can act so.

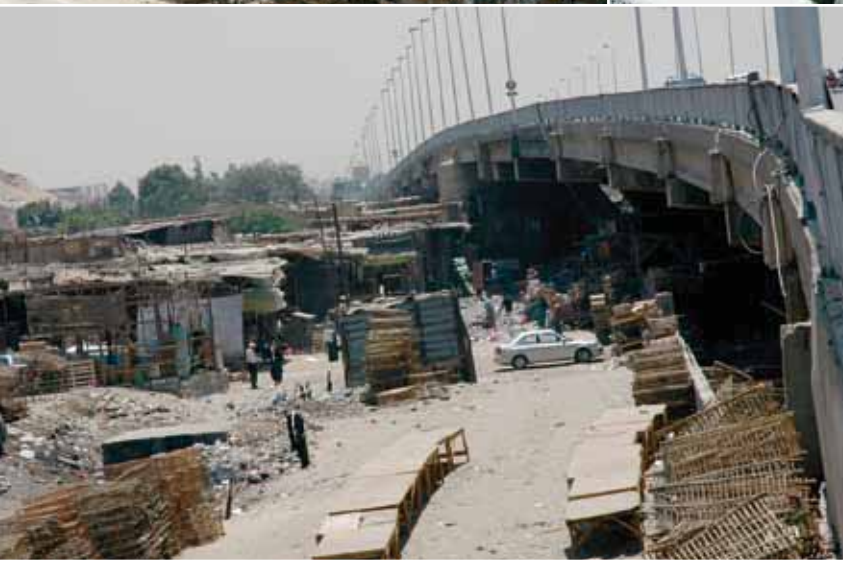
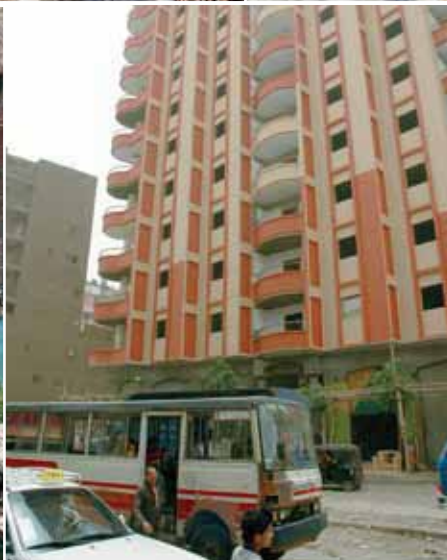
Egypt is up for grabs, we are a virgin land and mind and we can only create our future. Our future is in creation now. It is very joyful to be here at this time as opposed to a country that is already institutionalized. We are in a country that still has potential and an untapped wealth: the Egyptian psyche and ideals that have not yet surfaced we do not know what they are. Like people have said, the propeller of the helicopter is on — we are just waiting for it to lift off. It is a very exciting and very joyful feeling for me.

But I also feel like I'm a dead person, with a chance of being born again. I got buried, but my heart is still pumping. We expect the West to open the grave but that is not it, we have to try. We may be reaching for something impossible but it is definitely worth it.

### **'Resentment rising' in the city**

Cairo is chaotic. Chaos stems from this lack of faith, lack of hope and optimism on a collective level. The market system and its basis on material gain, especially for Egypt, consists of grabbing what you can today. It makes it very competitive — violent anyway — and despite all this, somehow to this point Egyptians are still very nice and warm towards each other.

Now I notice changes. Egyptians are losing their patience, especially the underprivileged and impoverished. Resentment is being vocalized, which one can definitely identify with. So the hierarchal caste system, even though it is decreasing with capitalism, is breaking down but there is resentment rising.



*Informal areas house the majority of Cairenes. Despite negative and pejorative stereotyping enjoy a high level of socioeconomic heterogeneity. They are however characterised by lower standards of water, sanitation, public services and other public facilities.*

*All images by Chris Horwood*

## 'life is like it has always been, there is no change'

*Milad Wakim Badeer, interviewed 17 June 2010 in El Zamalek at his workplace, a multinational company where he has worked for over 30 years in janitorial services and kitchen maintenance. He has lived in Kerdasah, a semi-urban area near the Giza pyramids since 1962.*

### Profile

My full name is Milad Wakim Badeer. I'm 58 years old, married of course; my daughter is 30 years old and my son is 25 years. Both my children are married, too. We are four people living in the household: myself, my wife, my son and his wife, and they just gave birth to a baby 11 days ago. We live in an area called Kerdasah. It takes about 45 minutes to get to the office every day. I take four or five different public transport vehicles to get from Kerdasah to the Abu Rawash industrial area to the Mihwar bridge then onto the Ring Road and finally to Zamalek. I have worked for a multinational company for the last 31 years in the kitchen/buffet team.

### Living in Cairo

Everything has become more expensive — everything. The poor are dying or suffering intensely. I consider us in a low middle class and there are people who are completely dead: they have nothing. It's not a good thing. I invested in my children, paid for their education and then you find them in the same place, sitting at home trying to find work. It causes psychological stress. There is never any peace of mind, ever — and for my son, he is never at ease, he's looking for work every day. There really are few joys. Nothing is nice. After getting home from work you don't want to see the streets again or go anywhere. After all the disgusting mess of using public transport and the extreme stress in the streets, one really doesn't want to see or do anything. The city and its suffocation is one thing, and then prices are too high to do things that we enjoy, unfortunately.

### Changes in Cairo

I'm originally from a large rural area called Deir El Naghameesh, Wagh Ibli, in the Saeed [Southern Egypt]. Nothing has changed there at all; they live off agricultural work and don't find a living so they are not doing well. In Cairo, it is a bit better. I came to Cairo a long time ago; I was 18 years old from a monastery called The Coptic Antonios. I lived there for five years and then I came to Cairo and stayed here to work. I found the company a few months later and started with them just as they were establishing themselves in Egypt.

Life is like it has always been, there is no change. No change. Maybe the opposite — it was better before than today. There is nothing new in the city, but in fact its people have changed. Its people are dead, no smiles, everyone is depressed. The city is not so loving anymore, no love.



Image: Pascale Nader

### Effects of poverty and informality in the city and views on these issues

People are living but not finding anything close to a 'life'. They work for EGP 10 or EGP 15 [US \$1.75 to \$2.60] — barely enough to eat. I have no idea how they do it. There are those who find nothing, others looking for work not finding anything. When everyone is at ease around you, you will also find peace of mind psychologically of course. There are people living at a very high level, then those very low.

If everyone gets educated it should be moving, but because of who you know and your connections, there are advantages that are not fair. Those who have no connections find no work. Except those with contacts or whose father is a doctor or lawyer, it's almost impossible, even if you're educated. The son of a poor man will make EGP 500 [US \$88]; the rich man's son gets paid what he needs or wants.

My salary is very good at EGP 2,150 [US \$378] per month, but compared to other people at the company it's low; there are people who make EGP 10,000 and more. For 31 years of service, my salary is low and hasn't changed for quite a few years. I have no health insurance either, for example. For someone who has been working for 31 years in a company I feel my income should be higher. But between the present management and those before they are killing us completely.



## Part Three: Policy discussion

This final section of the book examines policy implications and the policy environment in Cairo while offering policy recommendations based on the findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT study and other urban analyses. Part Three first discusses the key features of Cairo's urban development in recent years, followed by a presentation of five selected issues that characterise policy imperatives and implications for the urban environment: supply-side housing production, changes in rental laws, the Unified Building Law, the urban expansion and claiming of the desert and, finally, slum and informal areas upgrading or relocation. This section also includes relevant recommendations for Egypt's urban sector. Finally, the section completes the book with concluding comments relating to the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey and broader UN-HABITAT recommendations.

### Key features of Cairo's urban development

The most important features of urban development in Cairo over the last four decades relate to two main categories: *formal* development and *informal* development, which together define present-day realities in the metropolis. Without commenting on the relative success or failure of the efforts, they can be summarised as follows.

**Formal urban development** is characterised by public and private interventions in a changing policy environment that include the following:

1. The development of service infrastructure to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population and to meet international standards and expectations concerning health, education and the like. Major developments and improvements have included public health facilities, including hospitals and clinics; schools, training establishments and extending the education reach of the state; and water, sanitation, solid waste management and energy infrastructure expansion throughout the city.
2. The development of transport infrastructure and services inside and around the city to meet the increased population pressures and economic activity of Cairo, which remains the highly centralized hub of the country. Projects include the metro; public buses; bus lanes, flyovers and bridges; the ring road and major inter-city connecting arteries; and urban corridors.
3. The development of residential housing programmes and schemes to meet needs of low- and middle-income households; the development of new serviced cities and settlements outside the city to create alternative nodes of metropolitan life.
4. The ambitious and visionary, strategic interventions of multiple desert 'reclamation' projects through the ever-expanding designation of new cities and settlements under the authority of NUCA
5. The development of dramatic new plans for the future captured in the 'Cairo 2050' aspirations; and the targeted elimination of unsafe (slum) settlements through the new work of the ISDF. This is a separate issue from housing provision and development of new cities. Strategic planning (Cairo 2050) is not implemented yet, but may have radical implications for the future development of Greater Cairo.

**Informal urban development** can be characterised by the burgeoning of squatter settlements and the transformation of private agricultural land in the city into thriving informal settlements that have created residential and economic centres for 7 to 9 million poor, low- and middle-income households. The dynamics of informal growth have been explained in detail in Part 2 of this book as well as in Special Feature 1 on the dynamics of the growth of the informal housing phenomenon in Cairo and Egypt. Features of this process include:

1. Wide-scale, independent but illegal construction of multi-level, durable housing by informal developers.
2. Private investment in informal housing and infrastructure on private and public land in multiple city locations.
3. Despite strict laws and regulations, growing informal settlements gain strong footholds throughout Greater Cairo.



4. The subsequent government involvement in the development and upgrading of 'mature' and populous informal settlements, including a degree of formalisation of some informal areas.
5. Local initiatives to provide services through charitable NGOs as well as extended government welfare programmes to assist informal residents.

The government has been trying in recent years to juggle the formal and the informal — whether *de jure* or *de facto*, by commission or omission, by design or spontaneous, whether under government policy, or by the absence of it. Just as Cairo appears to be a chaotic tangle of dysfunctional entities pulled and pushed by different forces, so too has the political (and therefore policy) environment experienced different forces upon it. Since the British relinquished power in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt has undergone a socialistic revolution, a period of wars, and is now deep into a different revolution of modern neoliberal economics and political 'openness', while maintaining a highly traditional culture under different strong leaders.

The variations of architecture and structures within the city offer a metaphor for these often coexisting and contradictory forces: the teeming close-knit cluster of stately palaces and *belle epoch* boulevards, modernist new state buildings, dilapidated historic structures, unfinished informal blocks and squatter hovels, river houses and gated communities, social housing and New Cairo villas all express the changing times Cairo has endured and adapted to under the over-arching shadow of a burgeoning population. The traditions and culture of Egyptian governance, policy development and policy implementation have likewise struggled to keep pace with change and remain today an amalgamation of old ideas alongside new. Professionalism parallels a lack of competence, and traditional systems of patronage, social networks and clientelism struggle against new demands of meritocracy, international standards and transparency. Cairo is a city in transition.

Over the last two decades, deep changes have developed in the way the Egyptian state and

private sector do business and make policy decisions. Many commentators have charted the impact of the emergence of Egypt from the Nasserite socialist years, characterised by a ubiquitous and all-controlling state, to a gradual and increasing embrace of liberal, deregulated, market-driven and globally open economics — even if power-sharing at the political level remained restrictive. Following the 'revolution' of January / February 2011 and the emergence of a new regime with a strong reform agenda the process of continued changes look set to continue. Egypt is in the middle of this transition process and the impacts of these changes continue to be far-reaching, at both the macro- and microeconomic levels, and throughout society. Many utility services are being privatized and reorganized on a cost-recovery basis — partly as a result of external pressures from donors to promote such approaches. Increasingly, where policy interfaces with living standards, issues of urban distribution and access to resources, the population is more exposed to the markets and less to subsidies, social protection and effective customer-oriented regulation of service provision. Nevertheless, continued subsidies (fuel, food, transport, health) remain a mainstay of government presence in the lives of many low-income families. On one

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**Despite increased efforts to upgrade informal settlements, the differentials between planned and unplanned areas, which also conform to wealth and socioeconomic gradients, are substantial.**

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side, the rise of private schools and private health facilities throughout Cairo offers more choices and higher standards — but only for those who can pay. The rest continue to use government services that have been criticized for low standards and distribution distortions in favour of planned central zones as opposed to informal areas. It is well established that educational attainments and health outcomes are key determinates of socioeconomic opportunities for urban households.



*Cairo remains the social, political and economic powerhouse of Egypt.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

The same can be said for policy affecting other utilities such as water provision, solid waste management, sanitation services and infrastructure construction, such as roads and street lighting or even policing of informal areas. Despite increased efforts to upgrade informal settlements (often generically called 'slum upgrading'), the differentials between planned and unplanned areas, which also conform to wealth and socioeconomic gradients, are substantial in relation to state utilities and services. With respect to urban infrastructure provision and operations, the *World Bank Urban Sector Update* report of 2008 confirms these trends, stating that,

*In informal (aashwa'i) areas, infrastructure assets and services are normally of inferior standards. The same can be said for community facilities and solid waste collection services. This is a reflection of the centralized means of allocating limited resources for such services and the stiff competition to capture these resources. The private sector has become more and more prominent in the delivery of health, education and transportation services in urban areas, not because of an explicit government policy but due to the inferiority of government-supplied services. In some poorer urban areas NGOs and community development associations are providing much needed basic health services, kindergartens, and illiteracy classes.<sup>249</sup>*

It is beyond the scope of this publication to describe or evaluate urban policy in its entire-

ty, but the rest of this section highlights for discussion selected aspects that have direct impact on specific issues dealing with urban equity, the inclusive city and UN-HABITAT's primary concerns and mandates.

### Supply-side housing production

Starting in 1952, the Egyptian government's policy in relation to housing production has resulted in steady but sufficiently modest production levels that have unwittingly contributed to the massive rise in informal low-income construction. In the last three decades, state-constructed residential units have represented roughly 10 per cent of the total. As detailed previously, the bulk of the overall added housing stock was developed informally, without planning or legal regulations.<sup>250</sup>

While the population of Greater Cairo comprises approximately one-quarter of the population of Egypt, 50 per cent of all government-built housing — amounting to over half a million units — built between 1982 and 2005 was constructed in the capital. During the same period, the population of Greater Cairo rose by over 5 million, from approximately 11 million to more than 16 million. Data from the USAID Housing Study of 2008 found just 5.1 per cent of Greater Cairo households living in government-built or financed units.<sup>251</sup>

Two major state construction programmes have been operating for most of the last 13 years: The Mubarak Youth Housing

Programme (1997-2005) and the current National Housing Programme (2005-2011). According to a statement in 2005 from the Housing Ministry's official spokesman, Hisham Amin, 'From 1996 to 2005, the Mubarak National Project for Youth has successfully completed the construction of 100,000 housing units in 13 new cities, including the Tenth of Ramadan, Sixth of October, Al Sadat, Al Shourouq, Al Obour, New Damietta, New Beni Sueif, New Assiut, New Luxor and New Cairo'.<sup>252</sup> Immediately following this scheme, the government initiated the National Housing Programme (NHP).

The NHP, also known as the 'Half a Million New Homes Project', was launched in 2005 as part of President Mubarak's election campaign — a new housing initiative specifically for low-income young Egyptians, with a target of 500,000 new units (or 85,000 per year) to be constructed over six years. The units are being built by the private sector through structured but substantial state subsidies.<sup>253</sup> To subsidize the private sector-built housing units, the state undertook the following: the provision of the land, free of charge; linking of the new units to public utilities networks, including water, sanitation and electricity; the provision of other public services and transportation; and the supply of all services required by private sector contractors for the purpose of constructing the youth-housing units. At least half of these new units are to be built in new cities as part of the incentive for young families to occupy them. Public housing units range from 60 to 100 square metres in multi-story walk-up apartment blocks. The state's budget subsidizes 15,000 EGP (approximately US \$2,650) of each housing unit. The remaining cost of 35,000 EGP (approximately US \$6,250) is to be paid by the new owners in instalments on the following basis: a down payment of 5,000 EGP (approximately US \$900), with the remaining 30,000 EGP to be paid in monthly instalments over a period of 20 to 30 years.

Current occupancy of state housing, and the supply of units, is low in comparison to the apparent demand. However, due to the continuous trend towards real estate investment by all income groups, demand may be differ-

ent from real need. Particularly, demand on government-subsidised housing units is very high, boosted by speculators who aim to get the cheap units for resell (even without official registration if asset transfer is not permitted) at market price. A recent study established that among all 'demanders' in the current urban housing market in Egypt, 53 per cent are looking for government-provided housing, 30 per cent are looking for housing on the private market and the remaining 17 per

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### **Current occupancy of state housing, and the supply of units, is low in comparison to the apparent demand.**

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cent are looking for either type. Of these, 47 per cent had heard about the NHP. Of those who had heard about it, 26 per cent said that the units offered by the NHP are suitable, 22 per cent considered them unsuitable, and the majority (52 per cent) did not know enough about the programme offerings to say whether the units were suitable or not.<sup>254</sup>

The public/private partnership employed in this scheme and the clear-cut and direct financing mechanisms 'signal for the first time in decades that there is both the political will and the means to follow through on fundamental reform' in the public sector housing market.<sup>255</sup> As Special Feature 6 on new cities details, the same no-nonsense, direct approach has recently been used by the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) in its management of the new cities in terms of land sales and development.

Over the years, a dominant criticism of government pro-poor housing has been that through inefficiency, careless legislation or direct intent, many units intended for low-income families have ended up in the hands of the non-poor. Another criticism is that they have been, and continue to be, badly located from the perspective of the intended users. However, the limited size of the units probably means that while the wealthy would not be interested in residing in them, they may



not be averse to trading them. Observers also suspect that the government is increasingly trying to withdraw from the subsidization of new housing as it embraces market mechanisms. This move, in tandem with the old rental policy and the modest building rate of low-income housing, has combined to create the housing crisis facing Cairo, many argue.

The Egyptian Center for Housing Rights (ECHR) has claimed that contemporary housing policies have resulted in the presence of 1 million unoccupied apartments in Cairo and another 800,000 in other governorates. While these figures may exaggerate the truth, the ECHR describe Egypt's housing crisis as one of 'dwellers without dwellings, and dwellings without dwellers'. The ECHR director, Manal al Tibi, has been quoted saying, 'In reality, the state is moving away from its social responsibility of providing economical housing units to the low-income segments of society. It is trying to woo private sector contractors into gradually taking this responsibility off the state's shoulders. Furthermore, the state has steadily been decreasing the subsidies that it provided on economical housing units. In 2001, the state subsidized such units to the tune of 55 per cent. In 2005, it has decreased subsidies to around 33 per cent'. With regard to the 85,000 unit-per-year NHP plans and the housing shortage facing young couples in particular, Manal al Tibi also said, 'What is really needed ... is about 600,000 units to be built each year to adequately deal with the nationwide problem of housing shortages'.<sup>256</sup>

The social responsibility of the state may not literally mean providing economical housing units. Rather, its responsibility is to ensure access to and use of decent housing by the whole population. This may be translated into different policy forms: housing benefits paid to the poor, old housing renovation and upgrading schemes, subsidising housing built by other providers such as NGOs, housing cooperatives and the like.

### Changes in the rental laws

The remarkable freeze on rents in Egypt has maintained a stranglehold on the rental market and resulted in serious distortions in the housing market. Only in 1996, after more than five decades, was the power of the old rent law finally reduced, by the introduction of new legislation. But its legacy continues.

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### **The remarkable freeze on rents in Egypt has maintained a stranglehold on the rental market and resulted in serious distortions in the housing market.**

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Despite successive inflation and price rises, massive population increases and a property and land boom that have together transformed Egyptian household and national economics, millions of families continue to pay archaic rental fees throughout Cairo.

*Like other megacities with growing populations Cairo needs a vision for the future and effective leadership to avoid being overwhelmed.*

*Image: Chris Horwood*

Some pay the price of a meal for the monthly rent of a downtown luxury flat, and without doubt many low-income and poor families, as well as wealthier households, have benefited hugely from the outdated rent policy.

The 1996 new rent law allowed landlords to set rent prices according to current market values for new rent contracts but did not allow old contracts to be affected. These old contracts were multi-generational, requiring tenants to die or move voluntarily before landlords could regain possession of their property. The damage to the housing market and economy has been fourfold:

- First, below-market rents have removed incentives for landlords to keep their properties in good repair; many have allowed their buildings to become severely deteriorated and in some cases, dangerous. It is worth noting that landlords represent the full socioeconomic spectrum of society; an increasing number live and own buildings in informal areas. In 2008, the median rent of old rent apartments was 30 EGP (US \$5.50) per month — just one-sixth of the median new rent (or market) level.<sup>257</sup>
- Second, when apartments become available, landlords have preferred to leave them vacant for their own family to use (normally gifted to sons at their marriage); these account for many of the unoccupied apartments in Cairo. Estimates suggest unoccupied rental flats account for one-third of all vacant housing in Cairo, which is in turn estimated at 25 to 30 per cent of available stock.
- Third, the old rent law removed incentives for the construction sector to develop new low-income rental apartments, as no profit could be made. The poor, when faced with unattractively located or unaffordable government-subsidized housing, as well as an absence of available low-rent apartments on the market, acted on their own: they developed housing in the informal areas, either by squatting on state land or building on urban agricultural plots.
- Finally, the five-decade-old non-competitive rental market has devastated the economy by depriving the state

of property tax income, thereby reducing the country's overall economic development.<sup>258</sup>

As of 2008, the old rent law still dominated the market. The USAID Housing Survey in 2008 found that 26.9 per cent of all households lived with fixed rent under the old rent law. This high proportion of the rental stock operates outside the formal market exchange system and has no relation to market prices. Nevertheless, the new rent law is gaining momentum and having an increasingly transformative impact on the market. For those households that moved between 2003 and 2008, new rental agreements accounted for 35 per cent of all new moves, and represented 66.5 per cent of all moves which were reported as formal exchanges through registered housing markets.<sup>259</sup>

The introduction, promulgation and promotion of the new rent law in Egypt and Cairo is already becoming a critical policy change that will have far-reaching market impacts. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the freezing of rent was initially designed to

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**Nevertheless, the new rent law is gaining momentum and having an increasingly transformative impact on the market.**

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save the poor from rapacious landlords profiteering from wartime demands, and it was maintained as a pro-poor aspect of President Nasser's welfare socialism. Acting as an effective subsidy by decree (where the landlords and markets absorb the cost) it allowed, and continues to allow, millions of poorer Egyptians to stay in affordable rental housing. The demise of the old rent law over time will without doubt have economic repercussions for the poorest groups, but overall, analysts suggest that the market levels of rent are still affordable (at around 25 per cent of people's income) and the benefit to the whole economy by removing the distortion caused by fixed rents will be positive in the medium to long term.

## Unified Building Law

The Unified Building Law passed in 2008 represents important new legislation and a serious attempt to rationalize and regularize Egyptian building law. Hitherto, building law contained numerous loopholes due to overlapping authorities, different executive and legislative reference points, ignored zoning rules and the overriding sense that developers (individual or corporate) could enjoy some form of impunity from actual prosecution. Proscription against building on agricultural land was fierce in the 1980s and 1990s, for example, but implementation of the laws was negligible. Fines for infractions were low and corruption was allegedly lively in different state entities dealing with construction. Millions of individuals, corporations, land-owners and even senior officials circumvented the existing rules and contributed to the chaotic mix of city structures and zoning visible today in Cairo.

The Unified Building Law sought to address this issue and bring an end to the era of what may be regarded as effective *laissez faire* construction and haphazard development. Apart from regulating urban expansion and the construction industry, it particularly sought to check the spread of informal settlements. Through this law, the following five areas are addressed:

1. Urban planning and development (including the provision of 'urban observatories', increased participation planning mechanisms and greater authority to the GOPP)
2. Building code (and building standards)
3. Conditions for the demolition of buildings (and the redefining of areas into 'unplanned' and 'planned')
4. Protection and maintenance of housing buildings
5. Preservation of buildings with cultural or architectural importance

The Unified Building Law deals with issues far wider than urban structures and their locations. It seeks to reorganize the approach to strategic urban planning and the creation of future visions for Egyptian cities. To coordinate and develop a coherent strategy, the

GOPP plays an increasingly dominant role. The law calls for the establishment of an urban planning and development directorate in each governorate, necessitating improvement in the stature and capacities of urban planning at that level, where previously the urban planning departments were relatively weak and non-existent in some governorates.

Urban planners were pleased to find that the law also called for changing the tools of planning, from traditional master plans and structure plans, which were largely physical land-use plans, to strategic plans and action plans, which will incorporate socioeconomic and environmental issues. These will focus more on local economic development, environmental management and on promoting public-private partnerships and stakeholder participation, in addition to increased regularization of poor households' tenure.

The new law also sets operational procedures for dealing with slums, informal settlements, downtown areas, industrial zones and historic urban areas and is the legal backbone for the new operations and mandate of the ISDF, the Informal Settlements Development Facility charged with the removal of slums from Cairo and the whole of Egypt by 2017. It is a key piece of policy that has direct impact on the poorest socioeconomic groups in so far as new informal residential construction is severely proscribed and the most uninhabit-

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**The projected increase of Egypt's population indicates that it will hit the 100 million mark by the year 2022, representing an increase of 25 per cent from its current population level.**

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able residences (classified as 'unsafe') will be demolished and their residents relocated and re-housed. The removal of unsafe/slum and shanty or shack-type housing units and the relocation of their residents is not necessarily positive for the residents themselves. Rights groups and resident associations of community-based non-governmental groups fre-



*An example of participation-based rehabilitation and renovation in Cairo's historic core. The photos show a before and after illustration of specific projects along the ancient city walls.*

*Image: by kind permission of Dr Dina Shehayeb*

quently point out that relocation to new units in remote areas can often create a range of new socioeconomic problems, or engage residents in repayment commitments they can ill afford. As stated in a 2008 World Bank report, 'The net result is that often public housing units are in such inconvenient locations that the low-income beneficiary families cannot pursue their livelihoods and leave the units vacant. This happens in the new cities as well as in remote locations in governorates'.<sup>260</sup>

### Urban expansion and claiming the desert

The projected increase of Egypt's population indicates that it will hit the 100 million mark by the year 2022, representing an increase of 25 per cent from its current population level. Recognizing the 'daunting urban challenges' posed by this new population, the government is bracing itself to meet the needs of accommodating, employing, educating, transporting, healing, feeding and offering safety to the new masses. It remains to be seen whether the new government(s) following the 2011 mass demonstrations demanding change, will develop different strategies to meet these challenges. Most of the projected growth will occur in urban and peri-urban areas throughout Egypt. Urban economies will need to provide the bulk of the estimated 700,000 new employment opportunities for new entrants into the labour pool every year for the next 15 years, while 300,000 to 400,000 new housing units are estimated to be needed (per annum) for the

same period. The utilities and services needed for the existing population, let alone the future population, continue to pose major challenges for Egypt.

The major policy tool identified to address the coming growth has been development of virgin desert land. For more than 25 years, the national government has undertaken a Herculean and audacious effort to build new cities with housing, parks, utilities and services, economies and recreational areas, as well as major connecting arteries in the desert. The promotion of desert development and the creation of these 'new modes of urbanization' have absorbed massive capital resources as the state has attempted to undertake what is probably the largest development project in the world, comprising 23 new cities over 750,000 hectares of land, managed by the NUCA.<sup>261</sup> Eight of the major cities have been established; more continue to be established, expanding Greater Cairo.

The results to date have been varied, criticisms harsh, and the learning gradient has been steep for successive governments that have themselves been subject to ideological changes, modernization, increased professionalism and adaptation to the highly organic nature of this form of urban development. There have been successive generations of new cities in the last decades as more are conceived of, and as existing cities are expanded. Even in 2010, newly conceived cities were being added to NUCA's jurisdiction and responsibilities, continuing a process that started in the

late 1970s. Settlements and cities are added together as boundaries alter and as policy adapts to new requirements. The vision of desert development continues at a fast pace, and there is increasing evidence that after a poor start and a redesign of methods and practices, the population shift into the new communities may be finally gaining traction.

Just as it is hard to imagine what the housing pressure of today in Cairo would be if the ban on informal housing in the last two decades had been effective, so too is it hard to imagine what future options the next generation of Cairenes would have if the new cities programme had not been initiated. The current trend is that the closer settlements to Cairo and the more connected are the most successful in attracting settlers and activities, namely 6<sup>th</sup> of October new city and New Cairo settlements as a first degree and Obour, Sherouq and 15<sup>th</sup> of May new cities as a second degree. One of the expected future trends, which is being the motivation for more people to move to such cities, is that they will eventually become suburbs of Greater Cairo agglomeration according to its continuous growth. This fast-moving and developing context is discussed in more detail with a breakdown of new occupancy statistics in Special Feature 6 on new cities, as well as in Part One of this publication.

According to the World Bank, since 2004, Egypt's urban development policy reform has gained momentum through efforts to improve urban planning practices with expanded local government and stakeholder participation in strategic planning, a more pragmatic approach to dealing with urban expansion on agricultural land, reforms to housing policy and finance, rethinking development standards and urban upgrading practices, the introduction of the concept of cost recovery to urban projects and the introduction of a market-oriented mortgage finance system, as well as efforts to capture the appreciation value of state investments.<sup>262</sup>

### Slum and informal areas upgrading or relocation

This publication has emphasized the reality and expansion of Cairo's thriving and highly

populated informal sector. The major policy approach above and beyond issues dealt with in the Unified Building Law of 2008 recognizes implicitly that the informal areas are here to stay and will be incorporated as part of the urban fabric with continuous upgrading programmes to regularize their status in the urban fabric. This is evidenced by the major penetration of utilities and services in informal settlements. It is also evidenced by the absence of any legislation or policy to demolish non-slum informal settlements.

In essence, the Unified Building Law draws a line under previous informal growth and considers that unless the buildings are unsafe or extraneous to 'public good' they will remain and enjoy statutory benefits of facilities and investments to meet requirements of the planned and serviced areas of the city. This process of assimilation and absorption (albeit

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### The Unified Building Law of 2008 recognizes implicitly that the informal areas are here to stay and will be incorporated as part of the urban fabric with continuous upgrading programmes to regularize their status in the urban fabric.

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sometimes reluctant) has been underway for years in a *de facto* and *ad hoc* way and will continue to not only regularize the physical infrastructure of informal areas but also regularize tenure agreements and the legal status of informal construction. Under the new law, however, the regularization of informal areas will no longer be left to be *ad hoc*. Described as 'unplanned' areas, the majority of informal areas should be subject to planning. Being part of a plan and connected to the overall planning framework of the city/governorate, these areas will be subject to physical improvement including service provision, widening streets, de-densification, and the like.

The lack of urban services in informal areas and their poor environmental quality are results of both political and economic con-



straints. Some commentators suggest that more sustainable forms of urban governance in the informal areas have been hindered by those entities in authority that enjoy the *modus operandi* of the government operating with a degree of clientelism, surrounded with multiple layers of red-tape bureaucracy. As one urban analyst describes, 'The durability and tenacity of informal Cairo is, to a large extent, the effect of an incompetent and indifferent state, the political administrative capacities of which have been subverted by the survival strategies of the political elite...the neglectful nature of its rule has foreclosed alternative governance strategies'.<sup>263</sup> The same commentator suggests that the government has been reluctant to shed its essentially clientistic model, in which housing and services are distributed top-down without accountability. This approach holds groups in thrall to jobs and goods — through benevolent strategic intervention in upgrading, the government exercises political control in informal areas.<sup>264</sup>

The comprehensive plans announced by the government in 1993 identifying 79 areas for upgrading and 12 areas for demolition had not been systematically implemented a decade later in 2003.<sup>265</sup> Consuming a budget of over 3 billion EGP between 1993 and 2008, the planning programme enabled systematic extension of infrastructure to consolidate informal areas through normal municipal servicing efforts. This led to progressive improvement of informal areas that otherwise would have stayed in 'medieval' conditions. The problem is that such programmes never have set indicators to determine when one informal area is completely upgraded or up to the standard of formal areas. Upgrading efforts were not systematically planned or monitored throughout the life of the programme.<sup>266</sup> More recently, government emphasis has been on upgrading and legalization. But slum upgrading is not a new concept. As early as 1978, the World Bank and USAID started engaging in urban development projects. Manshiet Nasr was targeted for broad-scale upgrading of infrastructure and social services. According to a 1986 World Bank assessment, 70,000 residents were assisted in their upgrading work. Later (between 1998 and 2008), a cooperative German development

partnership (KfW and GTZ) introduced participatory upgrading and local development approaches in Manshiet Naser and Boulaq el Dakrou. In another initiative, Helwan New Community, core units of 'embryo houses' (the 'sites and services' solution) on land with water supply tried to offer proof that the state could compete with informal development by providing non-subsidized housing options to low-income families.

Donors have pushed for cost recovery and sustainability in all upgrading and housing projects they have funded, but this has generally been unsuccessful, as government has failed to develop and institutionalize replicable models. No effort to sell the land to the settled families in areas like Manshiet Nasr or Helwan has been viable. The land prices (set at market prices of adjacent areas) have been too high, and land titling has been discounted by the government, as it assumed that providing land titles would encourage growth of informal settlements.

A major upgrading initiative prompted by the 1992 earthquake and subsequent insecurity in informal areas, the Programme for Urban Upgrading, has operated with relatively modest investments. Given the population densities in the informal areas targeted for the government upgrading efforts, the

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**The government has indicated that the cost of implementing post facto infrastructure in informal areas is three times the cost of what it would have been if implemented during, or prior to, construction.**

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per capita allocation was 335 EGP (approximately US \$60). The officially targeted cohort of informal settlers standing to benefit was calculated at 5.7 million people, when in fact analysts claim that closer to 20 million people should have qualified. Using this more realistic population level would have reduced the per capita investment to 135 EGP

(approximately US \$25).<sup>267</sup> Not only were the resource allocations relatively low considering the actual social and infrastructure needs, but also, it has been argued, the most pressing social services such as schools were left out in favour of road-widening, bridges and other infrastructural public works. Others have objected that participatory approaches were not used, resulting in top-down investment choices and selection criteria being opaque to those in informal areas.

The government has indicated that the cost of implementing *post facto* infrastructure in informal areas is three times the cost of what it would have been if implemented during, or prior to, construction.<sup>268</sup> Referring to the ‘cancerous growth’ of the unplanned areas, the government has found it easy to justify the relatively cheaper costs of new planned development and its preferences to build new, orderly and predictable settlements rather than servicing the older and more chaotic parts of the city.

Today, there are new approaches to urban upgrading and a widespread appreciation of the importance of participatory urban development. There is also a new spirit of acceptance and inclusion of informal areas as inevitable and redeemable aspects of Cairo’s urban growth. Some studies suggest, in fact, that far from being social aberrations or ‘cancerous’ growths of the city, informal areas work very well in terms of housing, sustaining and employing millions of Cairenes. The German development agency GTZ and its partners have pioneered participatory approaches, working closely with governorates in upgrading projects in Cairo and throughout Egypt. Through increased exposure to international examples, government authorities both at the national and governorate levels have begun to recognize that urban upgrading is multidimensional and cannot only offer physical infrastructure such as water, sanitation and road-paving. Now, the toolkit includes land tenure regularisation, social and municipal services improvement, engaging NGOs and local community development associations in a participatory approach, and improving economic conditions and opportunities for small businesses. The World Bank

suggests that ‘engaging all stakeholders and promoting community participation in the process is slowly becoming the over-arching methodology for upgrading slums and informal settlements’.<sup>269</sup>

The SRC/UN-HABITAT survey asked respondents about general public works upgrading efforts in their neighbourhoods, whether high, medium or low *mantiq* according to the area-based deprivation index (ABDI) created by SRC for the survey. Respondents were asked whether their neighbourhood had been upgraded during the last five years. Residents of low *mantiq* had reportedly witnessed more upgrading efforts than those in medium and high *mantiq*. While 48 per cent of low *mantiq* residents reported upgrading in their neighbourhood, the corresponding proportions for the medium and high were 40 per cent and

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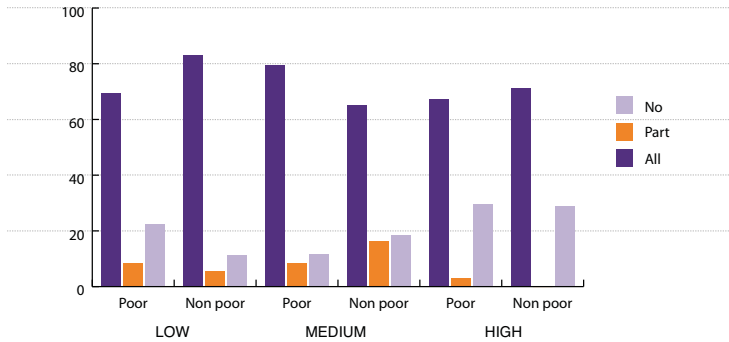
### **Most respondents reported that they perceived these upgrading efforts as useful and beneficial.**

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18 per cent, respectively. These reports were consistent among the poor and the non-poor households. However, more surprisingly, the average number of these upgrading and general public works initiatives did not differ significantly across the type of *mantiq*. On average, those who reported upgrading efforts for their *mantiq* reported 1.8 projects. The average for the low *mantiq* was 1.94, while the average for the medium *mantiq* was 1.7 and 1.9 for the high. These findings suggest that the interventions in low *mantiq* were more noticed and appreciated by the residents, even if the actual number of interventions was fairly equal across *mantiq*. A question remains, however, as to why there would not be noticeably more upgrading projects in low *mantiq* compared with high *mantiq*.

Most respondents reported that they perceived these upgrading efforts as useful and beneficial. Those who did *not* benefit from the projects were most prevalent in high *mantiq*, followed by poor respondents in low *mantiq* (Figure 47).

**Figure 47:** Residents' perception of the 'usefulness' of upgrading projects by type of *mantiq* and household poverty level



Source: SRC/UN-HABITAT survey data 2008.

**Table 22:** Perception of needed services for the neighbourhood by type of *mantiq* (%)

Need services	Low	Medium	High
Electricity	5.4	3.5	2
Sewerage	10.2	6.9	3.9
Fresh water**	16.3	6.7	8.9
Street light	29.7	24.2	26.6
Street pavement*	31.7	27.8	13.2
Street cleanliness**	46.1	27.5	23.7
Gardens and public parks***	18.7	7.9	3.7
Hospitals and health units	24.5	14	8.3
Schools	10.7	9.4	5.1
Transportation***	16.9	6	2.3
Youth centers***	9.9	6.7	0
Police services	20.7	19.5	26.8
Average number of need projects	2.4	1.6	1.2

\*significant at 0.10 (90% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.05 (95% confidence) \*\*significant at 0.01 (99% confidence) \*\*\*significant at 0.001 (99.9% confidence).

When asked to identify the most beneficial project, residents frequently mentioned street lighting and street paving. Street lighting projects were more commonly mentioned in the medium *mantiq* (42 per cent) followed by the high *mantiq* (27.5 per cent). Street paving was more commonly mentioned in the low *mantiq* (44 per cent) followed by the medium (28.5 per cent) and high (26 per cent) *mantiq*, respectively.

### Needed services for the neighbourhood

Respondents were asked about the needed services for their neighbourhoods. Table 22 shows that low *mantiq* residents were more

likely to identify more needed services for their neighbourhoods, followed by residents of the medium and high *mantiq*.

The most needed services in the all of the *mantiq* were street cleaning, street paving and street lights, although their perceived importance changes slightly among the different types of *mantiq*, with those in low-quality areas most concerned about the cleanliness of their environment. The need for police presence was most important to residents in high *mantiq*, and to a relatively lesser degree in medium- and low-quality areas.

### The 'contested space' debate

Land can be seen as a contested space among different social groups, different economic groups and different power-brokers in this relatively new age of neoliberal economic models, increased private-interest domination of the economy and increased foreign investment. Some of the discourse on land, informality and 'slums' is being framed by authorities in terms of environmental concerns — protecting the environment, managing health concerns of residents and the like. The slaughter of 300,000 Zabbaleen pigs in early 2009, for example, was carried out under health and safety alerts, though international health authorities established that the H1N1 virus ('swine flu') was not passed from pigs to humans. Presumably, those in authority understood the Zabbaleen dependency on pigs and the impact the slaughter would have on their livelihoods; the action could easily have been designed to facilitate the eventual removal of the community to zones outside of town. In other cases, the potters of south Cairo and the fresh food market of Rod Al-Farag<sup>270</sup> were also relocated in the 1990s after a lengthy resistance; the state cited environmental and health reasons as a justification for the removal, but desired spatial restructuring of the city under the New Cairo Development Plan also played a prominent role in the decision.

Some analysts wonder if environmental and public health concerns are just new and more acceptable paradigms being used as a pretext to dominate the 'contested space' on which

many informal and squatter settlements are situated.<sup>271</sup> Writes Jennifer Bell, 'While the debate over informal areas in the city centres rage on, these districts continue to expand both in area and in population. At the same time the environmental challenges associated with this type of growth continue to intensify and provide fodder for the allied interests that seek to displace those living there in favour of more elite urban interests or gentrification'.<sup>272</sup>

Formerly, beautification and modernization were the arguments offered to justify the removal and demolition of informal 'slums', as they were when selected slum removal took place during the Nasser and Sadat regimes. The shift to environmental concerns as a jus-

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**Formerly, beautification and modernization were the arguments offered to justify the removal and demolition of informal 'slums', as they were when selected slum removal took place during the Nasser and Sadat regimes.**

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tification for upgrading became evident in 1997, when the former governor of Cairo cited destruction of 13 informal areas as part of the city's environmental agenda. This relatively new environmental discourse may allow the state to shift from the class dimensions inherent in the demolition of informal areas and focus on the larger concept of 'sustainability'. Some have argued that it also serves to distract from the equity question involved in policies that favour tourist plans or private real estate designs over the urban poor. Clearly, the logic of the environmental argument, as well as some aspects of the mandate of the newly formed Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), can be invoked particularly when the informal city obstructs the expansion possibilities of the formal city. This is not as conspiratorial as it may seem: given the high land values in many parts of the informal city, squatter areas and inhabited parts of cemeteries, the government can fully fund slum re-

moval and slum-dweller re-housing by selling off land under existing settlements. Indeed, this is the funding model and 'business plan' of ISDF, in cooperation with governorates.

In other cases, the state's designs on inner-city Cairo real estate such as the Nile islands of Warraq, El-Dahab and Al-Qursaya have led to various efforts (some involving the military in 2007, for example) to reclaim the island land, circulating rumours that a 'big investor wants to buy the island'.<sup>273</sup> Whether there are ready investors or not, various rights groups and activists have expressed doubt that any public good or environmental protection is at the heart of these initiatives. Instead, writes analyst Jennifer Bell, 'with no obvious public interest to justify the expropriation, it appeared a more naked expression of the confluence between state policy and economic interest', where residents were effectively regarded as squatters on state land and denied rights to the land offered under the land reform legislation.<sup>274</sup>

UN-HABITAT appreciates the need for prevention of increased informal and slum areas as well as the need to invest in upgrading work as a clear response to reducing the urban divide. The examples above, collated from experts that may have a particular perspectives when analysing government activities, point to the fact that the debate around contested space continues in Cairo. The rest of this section focuses on recommendations relating to space and living conditions in Cairo emerging from the analysis laid out in this book.

## UN-Habitat recommendations:

Based on the Social Research Centre (at the American University in Cairo) and UN-HABITAT survey results as well as the analysis of the urban sector developed during the preparations for this book the following policy recommendations are suggested:

- ***Inclusive policies to narrow the urban divide:***

Acknowledge the divide that exists between the poor and non-poor households and areas, and encourage adequate and sufficient investment in informal areas towards an inclusive city where services, amenities opportunities and resources are available on a more equitable basis.

Strategies for inclusiveness should be based on a clear vision of how the four dimensions of equality- economic, social, political and cultural- can be integrated into the day-to day lives of the citizens of Cairo. Specifically, inclusive policies should be targeted to reduce gentrification in core parts of the city, to assist the poor citizens that live in the rich neighbourhoods that this study has identified as the most deprived in terms of access to services. The public transport systems of the desert areas should also be enhanced to prevent them from becoming only dormitory cities.

- ***Divided spaces- promoting urban planning policies to enhance opportunities***

As Cairo is an ever expanding city, it is expected that the city will typically continue to spread outwards. The existing urban regional strategy creating various new 'desert' cities should be reinforced supporting a polycentric city linked by various urban corridors. Yet, in order to avoid further division of spaces, it is recommended to avoid that the city grows by an uncontrolled and unplanned 'urban sprawl'.

Urban planning approaches should target reducing urban sprawl using a positive approach to densification for example

through specific policies and action plans to reduce the number of under-utilised and vacant housing units (up to 30% by some estimates) in core parts of the city. Heritage preservation in central Cairo can assist income generation, employment opportunities, tourism revenue and enhance further urban revival. Incentives to protect and promote urban heterogeneity through proximity of services and facilities and the avoidance of zoning, ghettoisation and gated communities will also help reduce the urban divide.

The proliferation of informal and squatter settlements needs to be managed through more comprehensive implementation of existing legislation and increased alternative housing options for the poor as well as increased availability of affordable serviced land for the poor. Reforms in financial mechanism to produce social or low-cost housing are urgently needed in order to offer loans and credits accessible to the middle class and the urban poor.

Rental markets should be monitored so that despite the current promotion of new liberalisation, the urban poor may be assisted and protected through a policy/programme of staggered regulation guided by a notion of assisted minimum rental levels for certain categories of property and socioeconomic groups.<sup>275</sup> Government should also promote building public/private housing units for rental as part of social housing policies.

- ***Promoting Governance to bridge the urban divide***

To bring the 'urban advantage'\* to all citizens, local authorities working closely with national government bodies and civil society, should implement inclusive policies in areas such as land use, planning, housing, etc, supported by less bureaucratic urban management and more ambitious reforms in favour of the urban poor.

\* *The concept of 'urban advantage' refers to the distribution of the related benefits, expected in urban centres, in terms of opportunities, employment, different services (including access to health, education, utilities etc)*

Decentralization in Egypt is considered very limited. Central government control over local authorities continues to be significant, and the mandate assigned to elected representatives is rather poor; Reforms aimed at decentralizing the top-down government structure are encouraged in particular to allow decentralizing urban planning to local authorities. In addition, the local authorities' control over asset management should be expanded and their ability to pursue sustainable financing mechanisms further enhanced.

- ***Governing in a “city of cities”***

To respond to the growing demands of the expanding city, such as transport, pollution, crime, poverty and exclusion, effective metropolitan governance arrangements are needed. As long as Cairo does not have a metropolitan governance system, addressing fundamental challenges such as territorial isolation, fragmentation of technical and political interests, legal restrictions on municipalities to intervene beyond the politico-administrative jurisdictions, the capacity to govern in a “city of cities” will be limited and many of these challenges will not be addressed in an integrated territorial perspective.

State land has been undervalued in Egypt and led to speculative practices and wind-fall profits for a few. It is recommended that raising values in state land can be captured by the public sector in order to enhance the financial potentials for public management and increases the possibilities to invest in infrastructure by bringing land values to prevailing land markets. Income gained from this capture should be used towards a cost recovery or cross-subsidization initiatives in public schemes, which could offer increased financial sustainability for public urban housing, land investments and other initiatives.

The efforts to legalise and regularise land to enhance security of tenure of the informal settlers that are not likely to be relocated should be re-doubled.

- ***The Opportunity Divide***

Strategies that aim at providing the “urban advantage” to all should include a sustainable, inclusive dimension that also benefits the poor. Large-scale, labour intensive infrastructure and urban improvement works have provided gainful employment to the non-skilled workers while granting them a share in the “urban advantage”. However, the government should make serious efforts in providing employment for the “middle class”, who is currently the group excluded from the “urban advantage” and experiencing high unemployment and as a result of this a drastic reduction in their living conditions. Concomitant to this, programmes for poverty reduction targeting poor families and households are needed, especially for those living in the high mantiq areas, which are the most deprived in Cairo, according to this study. Subsidies should be made efficient to achieve optimum support for the poorest households and those that require assistance and other forms of re-distribution of wealth such as targeted cash transfers for poor urban populations.

A final and overriding recommendation may be added, with respect to the stakeholder or participatory approach to urban planning and decision-making. Mechanisms and practices today are quite perfunctory and inefficient. There is a need for more efficient, open, and inclusive forms of participation and consultation that involves both poor and non-poor populations. Recent social and political transformations in the city and the country are at a watershed that has opened great possibilities for the city to build more democratic institutions and practices. These in turn will create opportunities for all Cairenes to be part of a city that aspires to become prosperous and equitable: a city in transition still ‘under construction’ and moving towards a more promising and modern urban future.

## Survey findings and concluding comments

The findings of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey are summarized in Table 23. It is beyond the scope of this work to prescribe specific policy changes without deeper analysis of relevant sectors in light of their particular legal, policy and historic contexts, however, the exposition of inequalities and other contextual discussions in this study provide clear implications

for policy reform. In particular with regard to narrowing the gap between the poor and the non-poor and enhancing urban equity in Cairo, Table 23 and Part Two of this report illustrate significant differences between the poor and non-poor as well as between different neighbourhoods in Cairo.

When looking at the wide range of findings concerning the differentials of living conditions for Cairenes, it is clear that poverty is the overall defining factor. The urban divide in Cairo is not characterised by populations living inside or outside of slums but by income and the conditions of the places where people live — which in many cases may appear to have limited government presence (in terms of services, infrastructure and management). Poverty combined with, and compounded by neighbourhood conditions of physical deprivation directly affect people's health, educational attainment, access to reliable water, hygienic and environmentally safe living areas and future opportunities. Disparities in income exist but as the relatively low Gini Coefficient for Cairo illustrates (see the discussion in Part One) the bulk of the

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**When looking at the wide range of findings concerning the differentials of living conditions for Cairenes, it is clear that poverty is the overall defining factor.**

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population are low income or middle-low income while the strata of rich and super-rich is relatively thin and representing less than 5 per cent of the city population. The good news may be that the level of inequality is therefore not extreme, but the bad news is that the number of Cairenes who struggle to meet the basic needs of living in the city and find the opportunities to advance (breaking the inter-generational cycles of low education attainment and low income, for example) is high.

The starkest contrasts in Cairo, as seen in the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey results, were between the poor and the non-poor living in the



**Table 23: Summary of selected SRC/UN-HABITAT Cairo urban inequity differentials**

This assessment is based on the severity of the difference of a particular issue between poor and non-poor households (irrespective of the difference in *mantiq*), according to the results of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey. The differences are categorized as low, moderate and severe depending on the significance of the differences found between socioeconomic groups, and as assessed by the author. Readers may refer to the original data presentations relating to the different categories to make their own assessments of differentials and significance.

Note that the categories do not automatically imply a gradient that disfavours the poor. The measure only indicates the level of difference between socioeconomic groups.

Living conditions at household (HH) level between poor and non-poor (selected results)	Differential assessment*	Associated Figure in text
HH Characteristics: Dependency ratios (looking after children and older family members)	Moderate	-
HH Characteristics: Nature of family relationships (tightly knit or detached)	Low	-
HH Characteristics: Having personal identification card and election card	Moderate	-
HH Characteristics: Sense of security (exposure to violence and crime)	Moderate	-
HH Characteristics: Social cohesion and cooperation among Cairenes	Moderate	-
HH Density/overcrowding: Household with a density of 3 persons per room	Severe	Figure 7
HH Density/overcrowding: Sleeping arrangements (shared: children / parents / siblings)	Severe**	Table 5
Housing quality & durability: Type of housing (building / apartment / rooms)	Low	Figure 8
Housing quality & durability: Walls and ceiling structure of the housing unit	Moderate	Figure 9
Housing quality & durability: Floor quality / Windows and painted walls	Moderate to Low	Table 6
Housing quality & durability: Bathroom ownership and / or access	Low to None	Figure 10
Housing quality & durability: Availability of kitchen	Moderate	Figure 11
Water: Access to improved water for the households	Low to None	Figure 12
Water: Frequency of fresh water cutoff affecting the household	Severe	Figure 13
Sanitation: Access to flush or traditional toilet for the household	Low	Figure 14
Sanitation: Sink next to the toilet	Moderate	Figure 15
Secure Tenure: Type of housing unit (ownership / rental / other)	Severe	Table 7
Secure Tenure: Documents for land ownership	Moderate	Figure 17
Secure Tenure: Ways of acquiring building (built with, or without license / purchased etc)	Severe	Figure 18
Secure Tenure: Household perception of security of tenure	Moderate to Severe	Figure 20
Secure Tenure: Duration of residence in the housing unit (by years)	Moderate	Figure 21
Secure Tenure: Feeling insecure in current rented accommodation	Moderate to Severe	Figure 23
Education: Educational attainment for household population	Severe	Table 8
Education: Sufficiency of income for all educational expenses	Severe	Table 9
Solid waste management: Disposal of household rubbish	Moderate to Severe	Figure 24
Solid waste management: Positive impact of cleaning project on collection service	Low	Figure 25
Solid waste management: Accumulation of rubbish	Severe	Figure 26
Solid waste management: Availability and frequency of street sweeping	Moderate to Severe	Figure 27
Transport Issues: Sufficiency of income for transport	Severe	Table 11
Transport Issues: Means of transportation serving the neighbourhood	Moderate to Severe	Table 12
Transport Issues: Relation between income, residence and use of transport modes.	Severe	Table 13
Work: Adult (aged 25-59) labour and work stability	Severe	Figure 28
Work: Youth (aged 15-24) labour for household population	Severe	Figure 29
Work: Child (aged 6-14) labour for household	Severe	Figure 30
Work: Unemployment among adults (aged 25-59) for household population	Severe	Figure 31
Work: Older adult (60+) labour for household population	Severe	Figure 32
Health Issues: What household members do when sick (physician / pharmacist / other)	Moderate to Severe	Figure 33
Health Issues: Receiving governmental medical expenses exemption	Severe	Figure 34
Health Issues: Sufficiency of income for medical expenses	Severe	Table 15
Health Issues: Being sick within the last six months by age group	Low	Figure 36
Health Issues: Average number of sick HH members by the age group of the members	Low to Moderate	Figure 37
Health Issues: Having health insurance	Moderate to Severe	Figure 38
Health Issues: Prevalence of psychological disorder	Moderate to Severe	Figure 39
Income & Expenditures: Sufficiency of income for food	Severe	Figure 40



Income & Expenditures: Sufficiency of income for all housing expenses	Severe	Table 17
Income & Expenditures: Average per capita expenditure	Severe	Figure 41
Income & Expenditures: Sources of income (especially in terms of assets)	Moderate to Severe	Table 19
Income & Expenditures: Sources of income.(in terms of male or female)	Moderate	Table 20
Income & Expenditures: Changes in income in recent years (increased / decreased / same)	Moderate to Severe	Figure 42
Income & Expenditures: Changes in household's expenditure (more / less / same)	Low to Moderate	Figure 43
Income & Expenditures: Household's ability to raise 2000 EGP within a week (managing shocks)	Severe	Figure 44
Income & Expenditures: Receiving support and its type (material / financial)	Severe	Figure 45
Income & Expenditures: Having and using governmental food card	Moderate	Figure 46

(\*By 'differential assessment', the low, moderate and severe categories are expressions of difference between the poor and non-poor on the particular survey issue. It is a 'relative assessment', therefore, and not an absolute one. This summary is only indicative.)

better-off (high-quality) *mantiq*. As frequently seen in the sections of Part Two this category of 'poor' often reported a lower quality of life on a range of variables than poor households living in the most physically deprived areas of the city. The least dramatic findings from the survey have to do with the similarity of findings between low and medium *mantiq* on some variables. This may point to the heterogeneity and richly mixed social, historical and cultural factors that have led to the spatial positioning and intermingling of different socioeconomic groups in Cairo.

In terms of housing issues and the key criteria used by UN-HABITAT to understand the extent of slum areas and prevalence of slum dwellers, the data from this survey looks positive. It suggests that despite other struggles and deficiencies people experience in their living conditions, relatively few live in overcrowded conditions. Access to water and sanitation is high and most homes are durable; residents enjoy a high sense of security of tenure even if their dwelling's status remains extra-legal by government criteria. The relatively small proportion of Cairo's population that met the slum criteria have been identified by the Informal Settlements Development Facility and are being addressed as Egypt commits itself to eliminate slums throughout the country in the next decade or earlier. Using their new criteria adapted from UN-HABITAT's standards, the ISDF estimates that approximately 0.8 per cent of the nation's population lives in slums. UN-HABITAT estimates that in 2007 the proportion of urban population in Egypt living in slum areas was 17.1 per cent with the urban population at around 32 mil-

lion, suggesting almost 5.5 million urban Egyptians lived in slum areas.<sup>276</sup>

The survey results suggest that the most appropriate social analysis lens to use in Cairo is that of poor and non-poor rather than slum versus non-slum, as low- and middle-low income households make up the majority of households in informal areas but their dwellings may not fit the UN-HABITAT criteria for 'slums'. Understanding Cairo's informality and the context and policy regime in which it exists will offer significant insights into the urban divide in the city. It is clear that many urban and social problems associated with unplanned (informal) areas, as well as prob-

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**...despite other struggles and deficiencies people experience in their living conditions, relatively few live in overcrowded conditions.**

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lems in deteriorating planned areas need to be addressed by government (and governorate) intervention and sound municipal management in terms of services and infrastructure and regulating mechanisms. At the public level, Cairenes from all socioeconomic strata are affected by the congestion, traffic, pollution and noise of a megacity bursting at the seams and struggling to keep up with a growing population. But at a household and individual level, it is clear that people experience Cairo very differently according to their socioeconomic status and where they live. As

such, Cairo has significant challenges to face to make the city more inclusive and it remains to be seen whether the dramatic events of January/ February 2011 — driven by popular demands for a more open society — will result in significant socioeconomic changes.

UN-HABITAT's *State of the World's Cities Report 2010/2011* focuses on bridging the urban divide and offers five steps towards creating an inclusive city.<sup>277</sup> They are generic recommendations but applicable to Cairo, where the scale of poor/non-poor separation and informality suggests a city within a city with different levels of exclusion between the two. The Cairo 2050 plans and many parts of the new spacious cities outside of the capital do little to offer increased inclusiveness for the low income and millions living in informal areas. UN-HABITAT's policy analysis identifies the following steps:

1. Assess the past and measure progress towards or away from an inclusive city.
2. Establish new, more effective institutions, or strengthening existing ones.
3. Build new alliances and linkages across tiers of government.
4. Develop a sustained, comprehensive vision to promote inclusiveness.
5. Ensure an equitable redistribution of opportunity.

The same analysis also identified five levers of inclusiveness in order to open and create the opportunities that can bridge the urban divide: improve the quality of life, especially for the urban poor; invest in human capital formation; foster sustained economic opportunities; enhance political inclusion; and promote cultural inclusion.<sup>278</sup> The concluding recommendation of this publication is that these five steps and five levers of inclusiveness be applied, increasingly, at the policy level to reduce the urban divide and promote a prosperous and inclusive Cairo of the future.

## voting with their hands: the historic dynamics of informality

The explosive growth of modern Cairo began after the Second World War, and with it came the rapid growth in informal housing and employment that have come to characterize the city. In the absence of alternatives, people ‘voted with their hands’ by building for themselves, creating the informal housing market and a form of urban living that now dominates the city.

### **End of WWII to 1947: Cairo as the great magnet**

Cairo had always attracted a disproportionate level of resources in Egypt, and at the beginning of the city’s rapid growth the centralization of political, economic and demographic power was magnified. What is now the Greater Cairo area in 1947 sheltered an estimated 2.8 million people at a time when rural-urban migration and natural growth pushed the urban growth rate to 4 per cent per year. Instead of sprawling outward, the city grew upwards: it was the substandard, multi-storey tenements in the old core ‘Eastern Town’ of Cairo that absorbed the influx of poor people. At that time, the city was surrounded by old villages and agricultural land as well as vast tracts of desert. The expansion that took place in the post-war years occurred predominantly in the fringe villages close to the heart of Cairo and in privately owned village agricultural lands. During the 1940s, no formal planning mechanisms or strategic plan directed changes in the city, which also had no independent local administration. Urban development was regulated by the Subdivision Law of 1940 but there were no housing projects or government-funded housing schemes to absorb migrants or prepare for the fast population growth that was underway.

### **Two decades of continual growth, 1947-1967: Incipient informality**

Rapid population growth in excess of 4 per cent per year during this period mirrored the rapid industrial and urban growth in Cairo. With the creation of the Municipality of Cairo in 1949 and the subsequent Housing and utilities Directorate of the Government of Cairo (1960), as well as the Master Plan for Cairo (1957), formal urbanization took off in anticipation of the huge projected needs of the city and in response to its endemic internal growth.

During these years, Cairo saw the emergence of upmarket areas such as Mohandesin, Dokki, Hadaek el Quba, Abbassia and Shobra on its west and northern sides, as well as the Nasr City scheme. Urban developments also took place in the south (Helwan and Maadi areas) but most notably to the north of the city, where new suburbs mushroomed around the industrial area of Shubra el Kheima. Government schemes capitalized on the availability of desert space and launched the eastern and western expansion of the city that continues today.

With the socialist-oriented government that came to power in 1952, Cairo saw heavy governmental involvement in public housing projects during the early 1960s, followed by significant withdrawal during the late 1960s. Public housing and civil servant housing projects were launched by the government to meet demand as the concentration of civil servants in Cairo increased. Urban development during this period was directed by government with, or through, private companies and public sector concessions companies. But, at the same time as the government was preoccupied with progressive socialist forms of urban development, the phenomenon of informal construction began. Areas such as Boulaq el Dakrou, Waraq el Hadar and Embeba that mostly emerged as expansions on agricultural land around villages at the edge of Cairo and its city limits grew steadily from the mid-1960s onward. Others like Manshiet Nasr and Ezbat el Haggana expanded during the same period on desert state-owned land, while in the majority of



*A view from the sky of social housing in the middle of Manshiet Nasr informal settlement/slum*

*This image has been reproduced by kind permission of Google Earth. Image©2011 GeoEye.*

*For all Google Earth images in this publication the image date is between 2009-2010*

cases the growth occurred on privately owned agricultural land. Initially, the growth of these informal areas at the periphery was tolerated, and urban authorities paid them little attention. In some cases, as in Hadayek Zeinhom, settlements were even encouraged or planned by the government, particularly those that provided temporary housing of families displaced from Suez and Port Said cities during the Arab-Israeli wars.

### **The war years, 1967-1974: Frozen formal development**

During the years of the Arab-Israeli wars, there was a sudden curtailment of formal urban development in Cairo. Government attention and budgets were directed to the war efforts. However, while expansion of its infrastructure and housing development was frozen, Cairo's population levels — fuelled by war evacuees and continued rural-urban migration — raced forward. The average growth rate in Greater Cairo continued to be high, at 3.1 per cent during these years. In the context of unprecedented numbers of families seeking housing and passive acceptance of the phenomenon by urban officials, the growth of informal areas picked up speed.

The subdivisions of agricultural land in critical areas around Cairo took place as new informal areas began to grow — precursors of the vast informal settlements that now dominate areas like Basatiin, Dar el Salaam, Omrania-South Giza, and el Zawia el Hamra, as well as new areas around Boulaq el Dakroul and Embaba. The transformation of agricultural land into unregulated informal settlements became a trend that developed a strong foothold and foundation in these years, as if in preparation for the huge explosion of informality that the oil boom and era of *infitah* policies would accommodate.

### **Oil and openness, 1974-1985: Accelerated informality**

The start of this period was marked by the progressive opening up of the previously rigid, protected and socialistic Egyptian economy to new liberal and international impulses. Government-sponsored urban development resumed in Cairo. The new political and economic openness (*infitah*) allowed a substantial number of Egyptians of all classes to work overseas. Many worked in the Gulf States, which were profiting from the new oil boom created by the OPEC oil-price hikes in the early 1970s. Egyptian workers' remittances directly funded a cash-based economic boom. Holding unprecedented amounts of cash, many blue-collar workers and urban migrants invested their money in construction in the informal areas of Cairo. The expansion of informal settlements and verticalisation happened more rapidly during this 11-year period than in the previous 50 years. One estimate from 1981 claimed that a staggering 80 per cent of the increase in Cairo's housing stock over the preceding decade had been in the informal areas. A subsequent study in the year 2000 indicated that more than 80 per cent of all informal expansion and settlement building took place on agricultural land in and around the city.

But the rush to build and the visible proliferation of residential informality in non-serviced and unregulated areas eventually attracted closer government scrutiny and proscription. From 1978, successive laws and decrees made it illegal to build on state land (those doing so were regarded as illegal squatters) or private agricultural land. The so-called *quiet encroachment* continued despite the laws, however, suggesting a level of governmental ambivalence, collusion and compromise with the millions of settlers who ignored and found ways to avoid the bans. Some directly link the rise in informality in defiance of the laws with the evident flourishing business in petty bribes amongst local officials.

During the 1970s and 1980s, city officials found the growth of informality so dynamic that it was beyond official control or intervention. Increasingly, the informal settlements were not just the choice of the poor but also, as land values rose, the lower-middle classes and middle classes, who built and bought apartments in the informal areas.

While the government was unable to provide sufficient or affordable housing for the city's rising population, the vast numbers inhabiting informal settlements precluded the options of removal, eviction or demolition except in small pockets of slum dwellings. In addition to these factors, longstanding rent control laws originating in the 1940s and reinforced over time severely discouraged legal private investment.

Unable to address the irregular, illegal and almost non-serviced squalor of the expanding informal settlements, the government launched a new towns policy, enshrined in the Law of New Communities (1979), and later, the establishment of the New Urban Communities Authority. New cities and settlements were to rise up from the desert and offer a regulated and fully serviced alternative industrial and residential growth pattern for the existing illegal households and future millions. As stated by David Sims, this would be 'the ultimate solution to the phenomenon of urban informality'.

\* Rent control laws were removed in 1996 with conditions. Their impact past and present is the subject of closer focus in Part Three.



## special feature 1 (cont'd)

The *infitah* also paved the way for a revival in the real estate market by making real estate attractive to private companies as new financial and legal facilities and land concessions became available in the desert. This resulted in the subsequent emergence of the semi-luxury housing market, the phenomenon of exclusive residential enclaves. The real estate boom could also be attributed in part to the cash economy of the upper-middle class fuelled by Gulf State remittances.

### **Informal consolidation, 1986-2000**

The substantial reduction in remittance income from Egyptians working overseas is estimated to be the main cause for the marked slowdown of informal expansion in Cairo between 1986 and 2000. Evidence suggests that prohibitive laws and decrees continued to have little impact on the slower but continued growth of informal areas. The natural growth rate of Cairo's population fell to 1.9 per cent while migration from rural areas into the city also significantly declined. The combined effect slowed down population growth in the informal areas, but they continued to grow in size and density. Between 1991 and 1998, 43.5 per cent of the Cairo agglomeration was said to support informal urbanity, representing 13,000 hectares of illegal and irregular build-up. The option of starting clean or turning back the clock had long passed and the authorities were forced to consider how to regularize, modernize and incorporate the informal areas. The 1980s, generally, was a time when the Egyptian government invested in trunk infrastructure in Cairo to lift up the quality of public utilities in the capital city. The idea of expanding these efforts to consolidated informal areas was seen a continuation of the government's role to modernize the city.

While little was done to tackle the issue of tenure with respect to informal residences, from the early 1990s the government began sporadic upgrading efforts in selected informal areas. This was tantamount to an official acceptance of the immovability of informal areas, the spread of informal settlements and the unacceptability of their non-serviced living conditions. National security was another driving force that released national and international commitment to urbanize informal areas with infrastructure and social services: official neglect was observed to provide space for extremist sympathies as Islamic fundamentalist groups filled social gaps the government ignored. Nevertheless, some analysts have observed that despite the establishment of the National Fund for Urban Upgrading (1993) informal areas were often bypassed in favour of wealthier areas, where the fund focused its efforts on larger infrastructure projects. During this period, and up to the present day, commentators, academics, government agencies and the media have developed a strong interest in the reality of informal settlements. This issue, along with the new cities and new settlements discourse, has dominated discussions on urban planning, urban equity and modern Cairene society.

### **The last decade, 2000-2010: Urbanizing the informal**

Studies over the last 10 years have revealed more fully the scope of informality in Cairo. A 2006 study estimated that 65 per cent of the population of Greater Cairo lives in informal settlements. This represents a sobering 10.5 million people from a population of approximately 16.2 million. While the growth rate of formal Cairo was just 0.3 per cent between 1986 and 1996, the demographic growth of informal Cairo was 3.4 per cent. These differentials between the formal and informal areas have continued into the new millennium. Equally, the density of population in informal areas is unusually high by world standards: in 1998, the average informal area density in Cairo reached 528 inhabitants per hectare compared to 400 inhabitants per hectare in formal areas. In informal Manshiat Nasr, densities of more than 1,500 inhabitants per hectare were recorded — one of the highest levels on the planet. According to one expert, between 1996 and 2006, informal areas absorbed almost 79 per cent of the city's population growth.

Just as the rental freeze exacerbated the housing crisis and encouraged informality, so too did the passing of the new rent law in 1996, which aimed to increase the availability of rental housing units. The application of this law enabled rental values to be liberated and become more reflective of market values. This rise in rental costs has been said to be responsible for pushing middle- and low-income households towards the more affordable housing stock in the informal settlements on the fringes of the city.

The government continued to promote the development and settlement of its new cities and towns at the same time as it urbanized parts of the informal areas. The future of such programmes is now uncertain with the change in government in early 2011. The informal areas still grow as the main market solution to fixing the problem of insufficient affordable housing availability. With the virtual end of rural-urban migration, it is natural population growth that fuels the informal residential growth patterns in modern Cairo. Many observers have noted that turning a blind eye to informality has also allowed many state officials to benefit from bribes and corruption at the local level. Informality affords mutual benefits for those in need of housing and those in control of land.

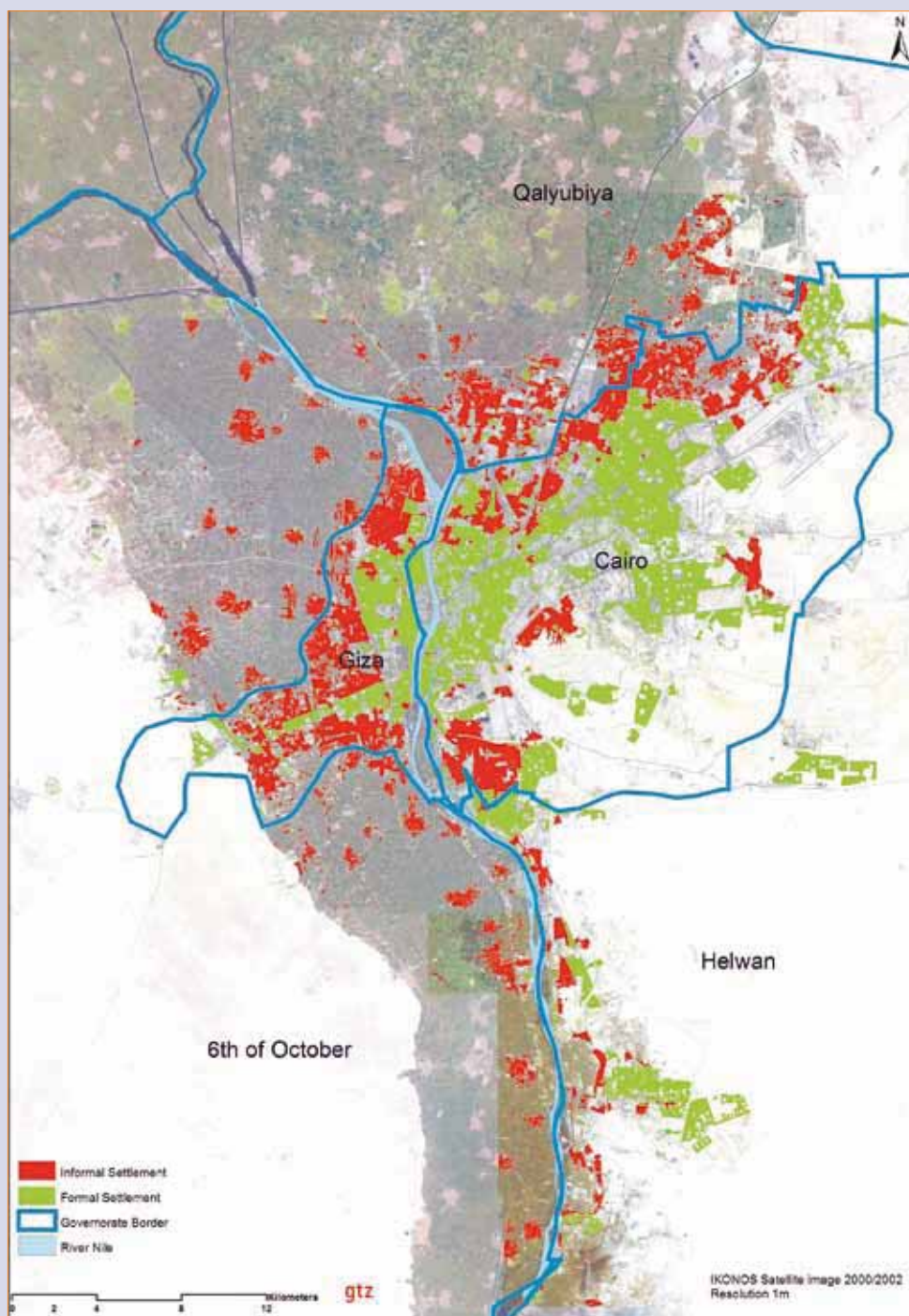
Despite its increasing modernity, Cairo maintains traditional systems of governance that, some say, still support patronage and clientelism. According to this perspective, if advantages related to land and housing are important 'spoils' to distribute to loyal followers, then the potency of state patronage could be said to be weakened by housing equity, land titling and participatory regularization of informality. Equally, the inefficiency of local administration, the overlapping or competition of different state agencies and the lack of public transparency of government policy or budget allocation could be described

as a hindrance to effective decentralisation, maintaining power at the centre. By this argument, the 'logic of neglectful rule' is a sleight of hand that is deliberately or by default calibrated to maintain control in an environment of less-than-clear regulations, jurisdictions and implementation of laws.

In conclusion, many studies have tied the emergence and progressive growth of informal housing in Cairo to the failure of state housing policies, laws and delivery systems in Egypt, combined with minimal state intervention that effectively sanctioned the growth. With the extraordinary levels of planned construction underway on the periphery of Cairo, around the city ring road and in the numerous new settlements in the desert, it remains to be seen whether informality will remain such a dominant aspect of life in the city. Informal areas also continue to grow outside the ring road. Stronger legal restrictions and less space available for informal growth point toward a change, with new towns leading the way in housing development, however, the city's planners and authorities still face the question of what to do with the more than 60 per cent of Cairenes who already live in informal settlements. In addition, some analysts suggest the power and momentum of informality is embedded in Cairene culture and will not be curtailed by current policies of containment because the government housing supply and interventions are not commensurate with the magnitude of demand. Slum upgrading is taking place but at insufficient levels, and the new towns that do offer large numbers of alternative housing units are often not appropriately tailored to the preferences (livability) or budgets (affordability) of many.

Sources:

Most of this Special feature draws from the comprehensive descriptions from Sims 2000 and Sims 2010. Other sources were Dorman 2009; Munro 1998; Piffero 2009; Séjourné 2009; World Bank 2008.



#### **Formal and informal areas in Cairo, 2000/2002**

*This map is based on the work and research by the Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP)/German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).*

*The PDP is an Egyptian-German cooperation project implemented of the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and KfW Entwicklungsbank with financial assistance by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).*

# making a virtue of necessity: recycling solid waste by the poor, for the poor

In the globalized world, waste management is one of many issues that divide North from South. Broadly, the North produces more waste with more recyclable materials, yet despite higher levels of waste segregation, recycling remains relatively low. Meanwhile, the South produces less waste with more organic components, and poverty creates the imperative and opportunity for unusually high levels of recycling. This is no less true in Cairo, where waste management has been dominated by the informal sector and where recycling of waste has become an important economic sub-sector sustaining thousands of people.

Surveys repeatedly illustrate that for ordinary people, build-up of solid waste in public areas creates major discomfort and is cause for complaint in and around Cairo's neighbourhoods. Government research for the Cairo 2050 Vision found similar results. As mentioned in Part Two of this publication, until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, open dumps and unregulated piles in public spaces were the only destinations for waste. Remarkably, until the 1980s, there was no formal system of waste collection in Cairo. Waste collection was performed by the Zabbaleen — up to 90,000 informal solid waste removers, Christians and up to recently the city's major pig farmers (feeding and rearing swine efficiently on organic waste collected from households throughout Cairo). They were, and remain, the experts in collection, removal, recycling and reselling of solid waste in the city. But by 1980, the need for waste collecting began to overtake the Zabbaleen's capacity as the levels of solid waste rose with the city's rapid population growth and expansion of informal areas. The municipal authorities also became overwhelmed by the problem as uncollected refuse began to build up in Cairo's streets.

Greater Cairo is producing a staggering 14,000 to 15,000 tons of waste per day. The current level is the result of exponential increases in the amount of municipal solid waste from rising populations and increased consumerism. After years of failing to encourage the Zabbaleen to expand and modernize their services, in 2000, the Egyptian government decided to delegate the solid waste management to foreign companies through an international call for tender. The privatization of SWM in Greater Cairo has allegedly drastically affected the livelihood of the informal sector dealing with solid waste. Today three foreign companies (two Italian and one Spanish) operate in Greater Cairo. The changes have been controversial and produced mixed results — far from the expected integrated waste management system claimed by the National Strategy for Integrated Solid Waste Management. Waste collection rates in Greater Cairo are estimated to not reach more than 50 per cent in certain areas, only 35 per cent of the population is served by a sanitary landfill and if companies are producing compost, they do not recycle non-organic materials. As illustrated by the SRC/UN-HABITAT data in Part Two, poorer areas are the most disadvantaged ones, not least because working in poor areas (normally informal settlements) presents numerous problems of access, density and quantity of refuse for the companies. Despite these changes, it is estimated that the Zabbaleen continue to be informally responsible for around a third of all solid waste management in Greater Cairo.

The Zabbaleen recycle more than 80 per cent of all collected waste, while the new waste collection companies are required to recycle just 20 per cent of the organic material — the rest is either composted (organic components) or dumped. This discrepancy offers important opportunities for the poor (Zabbaleen and others) to act as economic agents by offering public municipal services (waste collection) and performing sustainable and environmental services (recycling). The economic imperative of the poor creates an unexpected and beneficial environmental service to Cairo. Zawia district in North Cairo provides an interesting example of spontaneous recycling and solid waste management by the poor in the informal areas as well as some of the problems facing municipal waste systems.

In the informal part of Zawia, the population density reaches 187,000 inhabitants per square kilometre. The district was regularised in 2004 and it is now supposed to benefit from statutory public services. The Italian company responsible for waste management there is facing problems fulfilling its mission because of the high density of the area and thus the high waste generation per square kilometre, which make the service more expensive than in middle- and high-income areas. In Zawia, the collection has been delegated to sub-contractors from the Zabbaleen community. However, since the waste in that area holds limited interest or attractiveness to the Zabbaleen, they only collect waste infrequently, resulting in community complaints. These shortages in the service lead to waste accumulation in the streets, but in Zawia, as in many informal areas, different actors are also benefiting from this service dysfunction through increased availability of recyclable waste.

On the streets and in the households of Zawia, various people make their living from waste picking while many others generate supplementary incomes from waste — incomes that in a fragile economic environment are significant. Old women and children, as well as various adults, often sort through the piles of waste and climb into containers to search for recyclable or reusable materials. Informal collectors coming from outside of the community also operate in the streets, intercepting recyclable rubbish or discarded items before they are thrown out or disappear. Some may focus

Image: Chris Horwood

on bones, metal, remnants of bread, cardboard, parts of old electronic goods or clothes. Some people from the area work on order and collect plastics, cardboard, textiles and bottles to supply larger recycling agents who pay poor householders grateful to make small amounts of cash for their castaways. In some cases, the waste collectors go from door to door and in others they have a local collection point where people bring their rubbish to sell to the dealers. Collectors then resell materials to local workshops or factories that reuse them: some use old cardboard to transport glass and mirrors, others make mattresses out of textiles. Bread goes to livestock breeders and plastic bottles can be used as water or soap containers. The activities remain predominantly local, as the collectors and their clients know each other and know their local needs.

Dealers generally make 10 per cent profit on their trade. Even though they generate as little as EGP 25 (US \$4.30) per week, many poor residents are willing to do the work and take what they receive. They often operate in the shadow of the more organised and hierarchical Zabbaleen. One dealer can collect around 200 kilograms of materials per week. Old bread collection generates around 200 kilograms per week in Zawia, and textile collection around 100 kilograms per week for a population of about 41,850 inhabitants (Zawia). All of these activities are important, as the garbage that is left for the waste collection company at the end of the process is often saturated with moisture and predominantly organic and has no recyclable use for the community, but can be turned into industrial compost by the international waste collection company working in the area. In particular, organic waste has little or no value for the Zabbaleen, except as food for the livestock (300,000 pigs) that were all condemned and destroyed in 2009 as part of a government city health intervention.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and poverty may be said to be the mother of necessity. Throughout the low-income areas of Cairo, items of any worth are being recycled, reused and transformed by local people. The process only partially deals with the larger problem of municipal waste, however, which continues to increase as the population grows and develops more consumerist habits. Perhaps the processes at work now illustrate more about the needs that accompany household poverty in the city than the ability of local residents to provide effective solutions to the burgeoning solid waste management issues.

Source:

Lise Debout, PhD, researcher at the CEDEJ (Cairo, Egypt) and EVS (Lyon, France). This article presents some results of a study commissioned by COSPE-Egypt within their Poverty Alleviation and Environmental Enhancement in Cairo North project. Special feature written by Lise Debout with contributions from the author.



**Imbaba informal settlement.  
Uncollected rubbish is a common site  
in the main streets**



### the new metropolitan strategy 'cairo 2050': whose vision?

Following the ministerial decision in 2004 to implement integrated development plans in all the governorates of Egypt, a dramatic planning process started for Greater Cairo, led by the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Urban Development. The Centre for Future Studies (CFS) at the Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC) has helped GOPP imagine the present and future challenges Cairo will be facing. It is a planning process that was perceived to go beyond the earlier master plans for the city, and which was characterised by a strong emphasis on participatory management and sustainability. The outcome is *Cairo Vision 2050*, which features an audacious series of mega-projects that promise to transform Cairo and thrust it into the future as a global city.

Few deny that the congested, chaotic, unclean and noisy megalopolis that is Cairo needs not only a facelift, but a serious urban strategy to accommodate its expected 28 million inhabitants by 2022. Added to issues of deteriorating living conditions are those of security, as much of Cairo is comprised of highly dense and inaccessible informal areas and mobility is restricted by traffic jams.

The *Cairo Vision 2050* plans complement two important elements of the urban planning momentum already in place. Firstly, efforts to complete and fill the new towns and desert cities around Cairo have been redoubled to offer sustainable economic and residential centres for demographic expansion. The development has been most successful since the late 1990s in creating low-density exclusive residential enclaves — including golf villas, green spaces, luxury hotels and private facilities — which have proliferated, exemplifying new socio-environmental inequalities. Secondly, a more recent acceptance of the informal settlements that house more than 60 per cent of the city's population and consume over half its physical space mean upgrading and urbanization work will be expanded and increasingly inclusive of informal areas. However, while there seems to be a new effort to urbanize and incorporate informal areas, the vision of Cairo 2050 also includes drastic interventions in some informal areas that include cutting through with wide boulevards and replacing some informal areas with other real estate developments such as the case with the whole of Manshiat Nasser and the areas around the Pyramids. This process is allegedly already underway in the Imbaba mega project in North Giza and in Boulaq Abu el Ella on the Nile. The vision of 'upgrading' of these areas also includes de-densification of the urban fabric to provide public services, parks and open spaces.

Image: Chris Horwood

*Part of the proposed plans for Cairo Vision 2050.*



While a great deal of development is already taking place in the city, the real roadmap for Cairo and the most dramatic changes are proposed in *Cairo Vision 2050*. GOPP looked to strategic visions outside of Egypt for inspiration, taking London 2066, Tokyo 2050, Singapore 2050, Paris 2020, and Sydney 2030 as models for Cairo's new horizon. Capitalizing on Cairo's existing reputation as the educational, historic, economic and cultural hub of the Arab world, it seems the city planners are now indexing the Egyptian capital among the elite network of Global Cities. In this analysis, the city's cultural legacy takes first place with the reorganisation of Cairo being steered by the economics of tourism as its primary imperative. It is easy to see why informal areas do not fit into such a vision of Cairo — indeed, some commentators are concerned the social needs of the citizens may be eclipsed by the economic agenda of the visioning process.

The development of this new metropolitan strategy has also been seen as a useful tool for the Egyptian authorities to unveil a new urban order across a number of key mega-projects. It is a new order that some identify as stemming from Egypt's positioning of itself as an outward-looking, investment-seeking modern economy. Evidence of any emphasis on urban equity, reducing poverty and bridging social divides is hard to find in the mega-projects narrative that characterises the new vision, although equity and competitiveness were conceived as stated objectives of the strategic planning exercise. The plans are vast in scope, impressive in imagination and include the following:

- The dramatic 'Khufu Plaza Parks': A wide boulevard of parks, underground car parks and multi-lane avenues that will carve through the dense informal area of Boulaq al Dakrouf, creating a corridor that links the future new Grand Museum near the pyramids and the affluent neighbourhoods of Doqqi and Mohandessin and then through them to the Nile.
- A new 1,800-*feddan* finance and business centre east of Cairo.
- The transformation of informal settlements in areas such as Ain Shams, El-Matereyah and Imbaba, developing historic Khedival Cairo and relocating wholesale businesses out of the centre of Cairo.
- Ministries located in downtown Cairo are to be relocated to a new governmental district close to the 'New Cairo', freeing up a large amount of space and buildings for redevelopment.
- The construction of extensive new urban extensions on both sides of the Pyramids Plateau dedicated to the relocation of families living in informal settlements (the Nazlet El Samman area).
- A Tourism Centre with a capacity of 3,200 rooms, a Tourism Oasis with 2000 rooms and an increase in the number of hotel rooms of international standard throughout Cairo to 50,000 rooms.
- An international library, two international 'medical cities' and a number of technological universities.
- The transformation of the City of the Dead and other cemeteries with Islamic mausoleums and informal settlers into high-end development and green spaces.
- Finally, the beautification and enhancement of the banks and islands of the Nile by new business spaces and parks, tourism and recreation, including a 2,500-*feddan* area dedicated to Arabian horses (Marabet Project).

There is no doubt that many aspects of these plans would be applauded by international city planners as Cairo looks to reshape the city and prepare for the future. The old buildings from the 'belle époque', sites of Islamic heritage, the Nile and the pyramids are clearly seen as key cultural resources to create value in land and property, and it is made clear that the new city must be built around them. Areas of small-scale industry will become obsolete — particularly places like Maspero and Boulaq Abu el Ella, two neighbourhoods located on the east of the river enjoying the view of the coveted Nile — and the cemeteries and the (currently rural) city islands of the Nile, as well as informal areas around the pyramids, are all territories that are now subject to speculative pressures.

The GOPP states that the plans have been developed in participation with 1,800 'key officials, planners and thinkers' through workshops, symposiums and conferences, while the formulations are guided by the findings of a survey covering 5,000 households in Cairo. The Egyptian media has also taken a keen interest in the plans, and controversial discussions of the plans and their implications are commonplace. The fact that GOPP is going ahead with its plans does not suggest that those consulted approved or agreed with the vision for Cairo — in fact, many experts remain sceptical.

At an economic and spatial level, GOPP has, through its vision, put on the table questions concerning the optimum size of the urban area to be targeted, directions of urban development priorities, ways to accelerate the development of new towns and, by its corollary, means for reducing the density of the core city area. The future of transport and infrastructure and the need to redefine and diversify housing programmes in urban neighbourhoods, as well as ways of regulating land distribution, are also critical urban issues that the project has raised. Finally, the thorny issue of governance has been broached in a context where Greater Cairo has so far no legal or institutional reality and where governorates have historically struggled to act coherently or in partnership, without a clear mandate.

## special feature 3 (cont'd)

For some urban analysts, *Cairo Vision 2050* raises critical questions: because the vision focuses on a market-driven, investor-led growth and physical planning model, the issues of urban inequality and bridging the urban divide appear to be secondary priorities. Will urban inequalities be increased in the new Cairo of 2050? The absence of debate about the social agenda in the plans concerns those who suspect the ideas are disproportionately focused on fiscal returns, global aspirations as well as what are seen by some as highly ambitious physical interventions. Formulated around the motto, 'International-Green-Connected', the *Cairo Vision 2050* appears to run a risk of failing to be consensual while eclipsing issues of social justice and poverty that are critical to sustainable, harmonious and inclusive cities. For some, many of the mega-projects seem almost fictional and completely untenable, involving, as some will, the demolition of large swaths of established urban areas and the relocation of hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of people. The construction plans alone seem fantastical to some. For example, a total of 15 metro lines are targeted by 2050, while more than 10 years will be needed to complete Cairo's third metro line, which remains under construction. Some experts wonder who really believes in the mega-projects at all, speculating that the plans may be a spectacular distraction from the more convoluted and gritty problem of dealing with informal settlements and the functionality of new cities.

Nevertheless, GOPP, through Cairo 2050 is rightly tackling issues that are crucial and long-neglected, such as transport, connectivity, congestion and planning.

UN-HABITAT provides technical support to GOPP in different areas including sustainable development, pro-poor planning, local economic development, GIS delineation and classification of planning zones and capacity building within GOPP. UN-HABITAT is not directly involved with the 'mega', physical urban design-oriented projects and takes an active role in working closely with GOPP so as not to let such physical urban design oriented efforts for some zones dominate the 2050 vision, while many urban challenges, including those in informal areas, remain unaddressed.

While planners' interest in making Cairo more green, eco-friendly and sustainable is laudable, many hope that the authorities will manage to overcome their underlying negative view of the hyper-density of informal settlements and central city areas and focus less on ambitious physical urban design schemes. As urban compactness is universally praised for its social, environmental and financial effectiveness, some argue that policymakers should recognize, beyond real negative externalities that need to be addressed, the virtues of the existing multifaceted Cairene urban fabric.

Image: Chris Horwood

Part of the proposed plans for Cairo Vision 2050.



Whether or not *Cairo Vision 2050* is able to bridge the socioeconomic gaps in the city or results in creating more urban inequalities, there is little doubt that it offers a radical and dazzling range of plans that may help Cairo in its urgent need for structural transition to face the future and provide a liveable and sustainable city. The way towards this, some argue, may be to accept feedback and apply changes to the proposals of the vision, rather than assume it must be implemented in its entirety. More involvement of the public is regarded by some as critical, in order to win broad support and apply the good governance principles of transparency, accountability and democracy.

Sources:

Barthel 2010; Carmona 2009; Newman & Thornley 2004; Kipper & Fischer 2009.

This special feature was primarily written by Pierre-Arnaud Barthel, Associate Professor – University of Nantes (France) Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economiques et Juridiques (CEDEJ) – Cairo, with additional contributions from the author.

## providing suitable housing for slum dwellers by 2017? the informal settlement development facility (ISDF)

Slums have always been part of Cairo's urban fabric, and although all informal housing is often referred to as slums, in fact only a small fraction of the city's informal areas qualify as deeply deprived. In what may be the best attempt to link new national definitions with UN-HABITAT's international criteria for slums, the Egyptian government has established the Informal Settlement Development Facility (ISDF), by Presidential Decree number 305/2008.

In creating the ISDF, the government emphasized its responsibility to its citizens and its support of international agreements about the right to safe housing and the goal to improve the lives of slum dwellers: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; UN-HABITAT's recommendations on slums; and Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11. The ISDF's overarching aim is to eradicate slums from Egypt by 2017 by ensuring safe housing throughout Egypt. With this new nomenclature, 'unsafe' is synonymous with 'slum'.

The ISDF initiative marks the third stage of a process that started in 1994. The first stage, from 1994 to 2004, was known as the Informal Settlements Development Programme. It provided basic urban services (electricity, municipal cleanliness, water, sanitary drainage, road paving) for about 325 informal areas and developed 13 deteriorated areas, at a total cost of 3.2 billion EGP. The second stage ran from 2004 to 2008 and was named the Informal Settlements Belting Program. This initiative focused on supporting local government in preparing detailed plans to enable development efforts for restricting the growth of informal areas by creating a ring (*tahzeem*) of mixed-use urban development around the outer edges of informal areas. In the third stage, the ISDF is supporting local government in the provision of safe housing on a cost-recovery basis. Priority is given to the eradication of 'unsafe' settlements. ISDF reports to the Egyptian Cabinet, and in its preliminary year of research developed a detailed database of 404 unsafe informal areas throughout urban Egypt.

In its role as a central fund and enabling agency, the ISDF must work in partnership with local authorities in 29 governorate areas. It is the local authorities that are responsible for the correct elimination of unsafe settlements and the relocation of slum dwellers. ISDF also needs to cooperate and coordinate with at least 14 ministries and link its work with existing and ongoing national programmes of urban planning, infrastructure, housing, data collection with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), and a host of different socioeconomic development initiatives including health, employment, literacy and identity card extension.

Image: Pascale Nader

**Low-income units in New Cairo.**



In early 2009, the definition of unsafe areas formed the basis of a national ISDF survey, which prioritized redevelopment in areas where in the areas concerned at least 50 per cent of any of the following criteria are met:

- **First Priority:** Buildings in locations that pose threats to human life, including areas in danger of rockslides, flooding or train accidents.
- **Second Priority:** Buildings that are constructed with recycled or reused material for walls, roofs, floors and the like; buildings with minimal resistance to natural disasters, and deteriorated buildings.
- **Third Priority:** Threats to the health of inhabitants, as in the case of the lack of clean water, improved sewerage, location within the influence zone of high voltage cables, or building on unsuitable, unstable soil.
- **Fourth Priority:** Threats to the stability of inhabitants, such as the lack of ownership or the lack of freedom in dealing with the inhabitants' property.

The results of the ISDF survey provide a target and a road map for the agency to complete its work within eight years (between 2009 and 2017). Of the 404 areas documented during the 2009-2010 research, 116 (28.7 per cent of the total) were labelled 'unsafe' in the five governorates that comprise Greater Cairo. The highest number in any single governorate in Egypt is, not surprisingly, found in Cairo governorate with 53 identified unsafe areas (13 per cent of the total). Over 45 per cent of all unsafe areas in Greater Cairo, therefore, have been identified within Cairo governorate.

According to the ISDF to date, the government efforts in providing suitable housing for slum dwellers include:

- 1) The adoption of UN-HABITAT definition and criteria,
- 2) The preparation of a national map of slums (unsafe areas),
- 3) The preparation of a National Unsafe Area Action Plan and action planning guidelines,
- 4) The preparation of 60 action plans for removal and/or development of unsafe areas,
- 5) The provision of finance for development of unsafe areas, and commencement of projects in various governorates.

The National Map of Unsafe (slum) Areas covers 229 cities, based on UN-HABITAT criteria, and is targeted to address MDG Goal 7 Target 11 by 2020. The National Action Plan for Unsafe Areas outlines duty bearers, responsibilities to be implemented, and budgets required including information management, programmes and projects, capacity-building needs and partnership consolidation. Action planning guidelines have been adapted from UN-HABITAT guidelines, action plans are being prepared for unsafe (slum) areas, and relocation and upgrading projects are underway.

As mentioned, the ISDF has redefined slums in Egypt and thereby revealed 'substantial discrepancies between previous statistics concerning the size of slums and the more recently produced ones. Areas which are considered unsafe are estimated to contain 1.1 million inhabitants; [this] represents the number of people in great need of immediate action to improve their living conditions. Such statistics would change the position of Egypt on the world map of slums.' These figures also suggest the slum population of Egypt comprises less than 1.5 per cent of the total population of Egypt.

Despite the use of land-based financing as a key element of ISDF's approach, land-based finance does not necessitate slum removal. According to ISDF, the relocation of residents to residential areas close to industrial areas in new communities on the edge of the city is a decision taken by the city and/or region stakeholders during the preparation of legal urban plans, such as the Greater Cairo Strategic Regional Development Plan. The Greater Cairo Strategic Regional Development Plan — technically led by UN-HABITAT — provides slum residents with housing, infrastructure and services in new communities, including Fifteenth of May City, Sixth of October City, and others.

As with the discussion of poverty measurements in Egypt, some observers fear that the ISDF underestimates the problem. They worry that the designation of settlements as non-slums because they are not unsafe doesn't take into account the extent of extreme poverty and harsh living conditions that some people endure in informal urban settlements, now classified by the new building law as unplanned areas, implying that with planning to provide infrastructure and services their most urgent problems are solved as a first step. Some observers suggest that these *solutions* do not adequately deal with issues of exclusion, lack of accessibility and connectivity to the city, economic development or job creation, the enabling of informal businesses in these new areas or the support of social development initiatives, and the like.

There are also concerns that in the enthusiasm to create the cost recovery and a sustainable financial 'business model' for slum removal and slum dweller resettlement, the interest of real estate may disproportionately influence policy in a way that may disfavour the poor residents, or those in life-threatening places. And, because there is not a good history of inter-ministry and city centre-governorate collaboration on government projects, some fear that the ISDF's tall order of directives and targets is unrealistically ambitious. However well-intentioned the ISDF is, given the power of political and economic elites in Cairo and the spectacularly high value of some land designated as unsafe slum areas inside the city, it remains to be seen if the agency can overcome these barriers and achieve its mission.

## new towns: taming the desert with nowhere else to grow

The New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) is currently building 23 new cities on more than 750,000 hectares of desert land in Egypt. Eight cities in the Greater Cairo area in particular are the focus of massive investment, speculative interest, territorial expansion and grandiose urban planning: Sixth of October, El-Shiekh Zayed, Tenth of Ramadan\*, Fifteenth of May, El-Obour, El-Badr, El-Shorouk, and New Cairo. Part One of this publication describes the conceptual origins, the rationale and the implementation of the new towns policy in some detail, but the subject is included here as a Special Feature because of the significance and importance of the phenomenon to Cairo and its growth strategy. Expanding into the vast deserts that surround Egypt's dense and compact settled areas is a natural choice for the country's developers, yet creating suburban new town oases on virgin desert land remains controversial and fraught with contradictions.

Throughout New Cairo and other developments around Cairo's ring road, a breathtaking number of structures are under construction. Hundreds of thousands of workers labour in the heat around vast earth-moving equipment and concrete mixers. Huge grids of scaffolding and mountains of rebar surround innumerable houses and residential blocks, as well as state-of-the-art structures intended for private offices or shopping malls. This is Cairo in urgent transformation, which some argue has been fuelled by (and in turn fuels) furious land and property speculation in the desert.

Many structures stand unfinished and incomplete, and many more are uninhabited. The households with bougainvillea creeping over the walls, curtains in the windows and, typically, an SUV visible through the compound gates are still uncommon examples of what whole districts may one day look like. It is hard to imagine how the vibrant activity of Cairo's informal areas and the real needs of low-income Cairenes could be incorporated into some of the lavish new settlements.

Three decades of planning and implementation have resulted in new cities in different stages of development and maturity. The Sixth of October and Tenth of Ramadan cities, for example, were slow to attract residents but are now closer to becoming the sustainable mixed-income settlements of their planners' dreams. Different levels of economic activity and residential occupation suggest different levels of response to the audacious transformation of desert into what planners and real estate developers insist will be the future face of Cairo. The wastelands of flat featureless desert are becoming spacious, interconnected and discrete areas of garden villas, gated communities, public housing, countless private swimming pools, golf clubs, plush hospitals, schools and shopping malls, executive office blocks and stylish recreational centres all separated by open areas and parks. Other areas are furnished with capacious warehousing and factory units and still enjoy a raft of special conditions and privileges that incentivise investors to make the new cities their location of choice.

Considering the hectic, noisy and polluted congestion of inner-city Cairo, the slow uptake and mixed success of the new cities is curious to many observers. Most commonly, experts agree that the new cities lack the efficiency that urban concentrations and high densities offer. The distances are too vast — most of the new cities are designed with around 60 per cent open space — so only those with private transport can maintain the lifestyle. Public and private mass transportation systems do not service the new cities sufficiently or cheaply enough for most people to find them desirable alternatives to Cairo proper. Even if they are part of the 11 per cent of households that own cars, few Cairenes are accustomed to suburban lifestyles and the conspicuous absence of street life, kiosks, coffee shops and mixed-use urbanity that characterize the traditional city.

It is not just an issue of charm, but one of hard economics: approximately 40 per cent of jobs in urban Egypt are created in the bustling *mêlée* of small, informal businesses. This informal economy throngs Cairo's streets and informal settlements and frequently occurs close to where people live. How would such enterprises survive in the new cities, with their strict prohibitions on informality or any kind of deviation from western-style spatial planning?

Despite the fast growth of factories and businesses in some new cities, the numbers of those motivated to move out of Cairo remain spectacularly lower than expectations. Incentives and subsidies to attract low-income and middle-income families have not had widespread success, either, as few can afford living in the high-priced homes marked up to ensure profits for developers. Critics wonder how sustainable or 'green' the well-watered grasslands of parks, golf courses, swimming pools and gardens can really be, as they consume millions of cubic metres of Nile water pumped onto the desert plateaus.

NUCA claims it is aware of past errors that led to high costs, high levels of speculation and low residency rates in the new settlements. Today, the agency claims it has tightened policy and reformed its strategy accordingly. But NUCA administrators also justify the new desert settlements as intrinsic to Cairo's future and, from a demographic point of view a non-negotiable imperative. Their investments and prioritisation of the desert 'reclamation' strategy are necessary, they argue, and will be justified as the new cities become thriving centres for future generations. They claim their methods of land sale and associated regulations are now stricter and more equitable than before, in an effort to fight the

rampant speculation that saw the value of one square metre of desert land in a development zone increase by a factor of 10 between 1997 (approximately EGP 150 to 200) and today (approximately EGP 1,000 to 2,000). Beyond the infrastructure servicing that was the template for early city development, developers are increasingly pre-positioning public schools, mosques and hospitals, and working out ways to improve transportation for those without cars. Trams are planned for New Cairo, as are other transport systems involving the metro, rapid transit and light rail.

Some experts suggest that innovative planning approaches, learning from the informal areas, should be applied to attract low income people to new cities and accept mixed-use developments there. Diversifying the economic activities of new cities and linking work to residence has been repeatedly shown to be a critical factor. Creating an industrial zone is not enough to ensure this, some insist. These and other strategies, critics argue, are what needs to be in place to have a better success for the development of new cities.

While some talk of the new cities in terms of failed policies and elitist developments that exacerbate urban inequalities, others recognise that Cairo has little choice but to grow into the desert developments. They will become the face of modern Cairo in coming decades as old Cairo, bursting at the seams, struggles not only with its swelling population but also with creating a new modern identity beyond the informality that is fast enveloping the city. Cairo aspires to maintain its position as the leading Arab metropolis and to become a 'global city', attracting global capital and competing with worldwide markets in education, health, industry and ICT while continuing to offer a world-class cultural and historic experience. The new city strategy has to work. Although seemingly supply-driven, awkward and even elitist, given demographic projections and the government's relentless commitment to the new cities strategy, it is hard to see how they will not one day succeed in their objectives and tame the vast desert periphery.

Source: Sims, 2011.

\* Strictly speaking 10th of Ramadan is not part of the Greater Cairo satellite cities. It has been planned from the beginning as an independent city in the middle between Cairo and Ismailia. In most literature it is included as part of the new cities development.

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**Parts of New Cairo seen from the air.  
Infrastructure in the desert.**



## historic cairo: obstacle to development or hub of new energy?

Cairo's historic core has, in recent years, become an increasingly deteriorated centre physically repelling the upper tiers of its resident population. City planners and architects have been discussing how to address the problem, considering ideas ranging from outright reconstruction to modern revitalization. Most scenarios only see the increasingly poor residents and artisans as obstacles to urban growth, with gentrification as the only solution to economic revitalization. However, others see potential for renovation, and with it a continuation of a grand historic heritage. In the case discussed in this Special Feature, an innovative and participatory approach was used by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) that may offer a model for future interventions based on socioeconomic sustainability of the intangible heritage as well.

Al-Darb Al-Ahmar (ADAA) is a popular district considered part of historic Cairo. With its approximately 200,000 residents, it is considered the hub of traditional handcraft production. Like other popular districts of the city core, it experienced a decrease in population in recent decades, primarily due to the decaying housing stock and poor infrastructure. Half a century of frozen and below-market rents (in compliance with the rent control laws) meant that owners abandoned the maintenance of their buildings and left residents to struggle with lack of housing finance, out-of-date planning ordinances and the poor technical expertise of local contractors (who implement seasonal incremental improvements financed by residents). Complicated ownership due to inheritance and occasional insecure tenure added to the problem, while the 1992 earthquake left 20 per cent of the properties in ruins.

In 1998, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, an international non-profit organization, initiated a multifaceted community development programme in ADAA in collaboration with the local government and the donor community. Their Housing Rehabilitation Program (HRP) was one of the pioneer programmes in the area aiming to secure tenure, improve living conditions and preserve the valuable urban fabric by gradual rehabilitation of existing residential structures and the redevelopment of ruined buildings and vacant plots. A sensitive planning approach utilized multidisciplinary research to explore the sustainability of the social and economic aspects of living in such historic and traditional areas. The initial phase of research revealed that the project should aim to keep the existing community and attract back residents who had previously left, rather than adopt the more conventional compensation and relocation scenario followed in other parts of historic Cairo.

A detailed physical survey of the buildings in the areas chosen for intervention was followed by a series of preparation studies as a basis for the design of the HRP. First, a social survey revealed the demographic characteristics of the resident population, revealing that the residents of ADAA are a tightly knit community with 86 per cent of the current population born in the neighbourhood and 65 per cent working inside ADAA or in neighbouring districts. Housing conditions, perceived problems (at building and area levels), previous investment in home improvements, willingness to invest, affordability, expected role of the project and services needed at area level were also explored. Second, a qualitative in-depth 'lifestyle assessment' was conducted to explore every day use patterns, levels of housing maintenance, priorities and preferences, as well as what the residents value most in the area, and what they resented. These studies provided important baseline information concerning the residents' ability and willingness to contribute to improving their home environment, as well as a venue for gaining community trust by honestly discussing with the residents the different possibilities for the future of the district. The outcome helped persuade the governor of Cairo and project directors at AKTC headquarters that the residents of ADAA had more potential than had previously been acknowledged to participate in the revitalization of the district. These studies were also the basis upon which appropriate design and implementation strategies, financing mechanisms and priorities regarding the technical rehabilitation works were formulated. A structural assessment study determined the levels of intervention needed, their cost and time of implementation. In addition, a health risk assessment study revealed health problems at building and area levels distinguishing between those related to the occupants' behaviour and those related to certain housing conditions. The aim was to gear housing rehabilitation to be health-promoting and risk-minimizing as much as possible while maintaining the historic integrity of the building design and construction methods.

Based on the triangulation of the results from the above studies, implementation started in the first 10 buildings and the HRP manual was developed incrementally, delineating the financing mechanisms that covered the various possible scenarios for resident contribution in building rehabilitation costs, and procedures of implementation covering the legal, social and administrative aspects of the process. This bottom-up approach succeeded in developing a programme sensitive to the local conditions at community and institution levels.

After gaining the government's overall project endorsement, the other significant factor was engaging the local community. It concerned gaining the trust and involvement of the local community so that sense of ownership towards the neighbourhood was not violated. Resident participation became an indispensable asset rather than a strategy to overcome an obstacle in the way of development. Accommodating resident needs and preferences served several purposes: to convince residents to contribute to the HRP, to ensure the sustainability of rehabilitation results, and to improve living conditions.

A strong indicator of residents' buy-in in any intervention is their willingness to bring their own resources and efforts to the project. In the ADAA work, residents who had typically expressed their unwillingness to contribute financially in the initial questionnaire later contributed up to EGP 10,000 (approximately US \$1,785) per household towards building improvements. In the first building, residents contributed only 8 per cent of the reconstruction work. This contribution increased to 50 per cent in buildings rehabilitated in 2009. All financial contributions by residents were paid partly up front and partly on monthly instalments with flexible plans ranging up to four years. Another aspect was that choice of building for rehabilitation was demand-based and not decided by the professionals.

Residents were also part of the design process. A participatory design approach was adopted for implementation where plans were developed respecting and supporting resident lifestyle. After the first few buildings, it became clear that more participation is needed during implementation to familiarize residents with their renovated environment and means of maintaining it. Post-rehabilitation assessment was also introduced to verify the performance of the building and occasionally adjust the *fit* between resident behaviour and building elements. This participatory design approach minimizes future misuse, destructive maintenance and cleaning practices that may jeopardize building safety or decrease building performance, negatively impacting the residents.

In a 2009 survey (eight years after the implementation of the first building), satisfaction with the HRP rated highest among the district population in an assessment of all 13 programmes offered within the ADAA Revitalization Project. In the 107 rehabilitated residential buildings (340 households), 42 private toilets and 55 small kitchens were added, improving health conditions in dwellings. Residents were persuaded to add ventilation shafts to previously 'windowless' rooms. Some of the more general impacts of the HRP were making residents proud of living in the area; encouraging both community and authorities to better maintain and clean neighbourhood streets and spaces; and inspiring other improvements in the neighbourhood outside the HRP.

Unlike conventional historic preservation efforts aimed solely to enhance the aesthetic and historic value of the urban fabric, this project acknowledged the community's 'perceived values' (social, economic, psychological and cultural), thus capitalizing on the potentials of the residents and businessmen in the area. The project, distinguished for its flexibility and its experimental orientation that increased responsiveness to real challenges and capitalized on the hidden potentials, offers a replicable mechanism of how common people may contribute to the revival of a city as complex as Cairo.

From one perspective, there is some truth in those that say that the AKTC project was an 'island of excellence'. It was an exceptional project in terms of high levels of outside funding, elaborate and sizable management and technical teams, and a long period of implementation. Much of these exceptional resources were utilized to reach a working mechanism for funding and handling the legal, social and administrative particularities of the context in historic Cairo.

Concerning the replicability of the project and the necessary work of rehabilitation in historic Cairo, two critical factors need to be in place: local capacity needs to be established and enhanced at the level of local governance and urban development agencies; and funding needs to be sourced to the level of 50 per cent of actual costs, to match the 50 per cent that residents have proven to be willing to invest in home improvements.

More than just an 'island of excellence' and similar to the AKTC project in Aleppo, the project in ADAA showed the way to possible future approaches and strategies that could contribute to locally owned and locally driven urban revitalization in some of the oldest and most dilapidated areas of Cairo.

Sources: AKTC 2001; Shehayeb 2009b; Shehayeb & El-Mikawi 2003; Shehayeb & Mokheimer 2001.

This paper was written by Dina K. Shehayeb, Professor, Housing and Building National Research Centre, who was also housing consultant for the project from 1998 to 2005 and closely involved with the research, design, implementation and impact evaluation of the process described in this special feature.



*Formal and informal residential areas encroach on ancient historic sites*

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## city of the dead: informality and myths amongst the tombs

Along the eastern edge of Cairo stands the district of Al-Qarāfah, a unique zone made up of an extensive series of cemeteries stretching four miles in length. This sprawling, dusty, ochre-coloured district is full of shrine-mosques, mausoleums and tombs of early religious leaders, noblemen, military commanders and leading families of the notables of the different tribes that founded and developed Cairo. It is also full of people – living people. So many, in fact, that the City of the Dead and other cemeteries in old Cairo are recognised areas of informal low-income residency and are included as a distinct category in the urban typography of the city.

In recent years, the City of the Dead has come to symbolise the desperation of poverty and the chronic overcrowding of Cairo. Almost relishing the collision of modern demographic and economic pressures with ancient and medieval Egyptian structures, reporters and filmmakers have used the necropolis as a *leitmotif* of urban apocalypse. Writes one commentator of the scene, ‘The crush of urban malaise and the impossible housing crisis was painted as so dire that the marginal poor were being forced to live cheek by jowl with the dead’. Other Cairenes are repelled by the tomb-dwellers’ poverty and proximity to the dead; those living in Al-Qarāfah are stigmatised and characterised as living in a seething mass of desperate poor.

There are three urban myths concerning the City of the Dead that need to be challenged: firstly, that the phenomenon of living in or around tombs is new and born out of desperation; secondly, that the necropolis affords only the most deprived living conditions and is the option of last resort for the marginalised poor; and thirdly, that the numbers living in the City of the Dead are astronomical and still rising to between 500,000 and one million people. None of these narratives holds up under closer examination.

The establishment of the cemeteries dates back to the Arab conquest of Egypt in 642 AD. The Arab commander, Amr ibn al As, founded the first Egyptian Arab capital, the city of Al Fustat, and established his family’s graveyard at the foot of the hill al Moqattam. Over the centuries, different rulers, caliphs, pashas, sultans and dynasties founded new graveyards and burial chambers for themselves and their families, such as those of the Mamluk rulers — originally freed slaves who formed a military caste — who founded a new graveyard named Sahara on the fringes of the city. Often, the funerary monuments were erected as symbols of self-glorification for the upper classes, intended to perpetuate their own memory. What were once separate graveyards are now interconnected and form the vast area known as the City of the Dead.

The tombs have been inhabited for most of the 1,400 years between their establishment and today. The first residents were the custodians of noble families’ graves and the staff in charge of burial services, as well as Sufi mystics in their *khawaniq* (colleges and *madrasas*). Pilgrimages to the tombs of the famous and revered, and to the graves of their own ancestors, have long comprised an important aspect of Egyptian families’ cultural traditions, and they remain important to this day. For centuries, people have lived in the grid of tombs and their courtyards to guard and maintain the gravesites but also to provide hospitality for visiting pilgrims and family members.

Some residents live in the tombs to be near their loved ones and ancestors, but most originate from more crowded areas in Cairo, or they migrate from the countryside looking for work and shelter. Certain zones of the City of the Dead are populated by families from particular villages in the Upper Nile region. Over the centuries, depending on the economic prosperity of Cairenes and Egyptians as a whole, the tombs have provided a safety net, absorbing the population that could not afford accommodation or shelter elsewhere in the city. It is said that after the 1992 earthquake, many people were forced to move into family tombs, thereby adding to the number of people already living in the cemeteries.

Rather than being a squalid and desperate alternative to living in other urban areas of Cairo, the City of The Dead offers its residents a relatively spacious, quiet, low-density residence, surrounded by well-crafted, though often deteriorating, masonry buildings to which the government or private owners have provided water and electrical connections. Many visitors and people who live there are charmed by the sense of serenity of the place, despite the considerable poverty of many residents. The environment provides an oasis from the hectic and congested nature of other informal areas and the traffic-clogged roads outside the cemeteries. Residents also claim a good measure of ‘social capital’, owing to the vibrant community life within the tomb districts. Many of the tombs have courtyards and people plant trees and have gardens, which is impossible to do in most of the low-income informal areas that shelter over 60 per cent of Cairenes.

The number of people living in the City of the Dead has, according to experts, been greatly exaggerated. Newspapers, film documentaries and official reports quote and re-quote unsubstantiated reports, resulting in wide ranges of population

*In this Google Earth image the City of the Dead is on the left, Manshiet Nasr – the vast informal settlement is on the right.*

*This image has been reproduced by kind permission of Google Earth. Image©2011 GeoEye.*

*For all Google Earth images in this publication the image date is between 2009-2010*

estimates, from the 5 million claimed by one organization to the 1 million estimated by the Governor of Cairo in 1978. One of the problems of using census figures and other tools of analysis or estimation is that they end up including the population living adjacent to the tombs in high-rise apartments or old villages that are not cemeteries. One analysis of the tomb districts (*aqsam*) using 1986 census data calculated that just 12,780 people lived in the City of the Dead and other associated cemeteries. Given the demographic changes and natural population growth since then, there are probably many more people living among the dead, but even if the number had tripled it still wouldn't approximate the numbers circulated in the urban myths surrounding the City of the Dead.

Apart from offering informal residences and workplaces for some thousands of people, the City of the Dead is an ancient and vital part of Cairo's social and cultural history, almost as old as the city itself. With land speculation and valuation higher than it has ever been, and with demographic and economic pressures rising, the future of the cemeteries may be hotly contested as the government attempts to transplant and take over the tomb districts to make way for high-end developments and parks, as suggested in the *Cairo Vision 2050*.

Sources: Kipper & Fischer 2009; Sims, 2011.

Image: Chris Horwood

*View of City of the Dead — so close to central Cairo  
and possibly threatened by relocation plans*



### gendered burdens: women in the slum of ain es-sira


The Egyptian Conditional Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (CCT) is a social policy programme implemented by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS). The Egyptian CCT is designed as a pro-women cash transfer intervention, focusing specifically on aiding women's well-being. The reason women are put at the centre of the social policy design is the unequal burden of poverty that they, married or not, carry in the context of Egypt's urban and rural settings. The CCT is part of a raft of positive programme reforms and capacity development of social units (the smallest department of MoSS at the community level) to become community service centres, linking citizens to service providers, be it public, private or NGO.

The following brief case study describes the lives of women in the Ain Es-Sira slum, focusing on the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) where the Egyptian cash transfer pilot programme is being implemented. The women in Ain Es-Sira carry the double burden of having a productive and reproductive role in their households. This burden is compounded by their families' residence in a slum environment where housing rights are not afforded, and where illness is rampant. The women manage these daily struggles with few resources and inadequate services.

Ain es-Sira is one of the oldest slums of Cairo. It has been receiving wave after wave of migrant families, some coming from other urban neighbourhoods and others coming from a variety of mostly Upper Egyptian villages, all seeking shelter, easier livelihoods and the opportunities afforded by proximity to central Cairo. Ain es-Sira is a *shiyakha*, or district located in Old Cairo (locally known as *Misr el Qadima*), and is home to approximately 29,349 individuals in an area of 0.71 square kilometres. It is also home to the infamous tanneries of Cairo — a main source of income in the area, but also an environmental and health hazard.

The inhabitants of Ain Es-Sira are not exclusively poor, but the area has deep pockets of extreme poverty. Ain Es-Sira began as the site of the first low-income housing project in Cairo. The flats in its housing blocks were gradually sold by their original inhabitants during the 1980s. Adjacent to this nucleus of buildings, private homes and other types of dwellings began to appear. Little more than urban shacks, they comprise shelters built from corrugated iron, wood and mud brick. In some areas, these were originally temporary shelters built for earthquake victims and victims of other natural disasters, but they have now become permanent features of the area, with electricity and running water connected. The ramshackle shelters, or *iwaa*, currently house approximately 1,000 families in Ain Es-Sira. Moreover, many of these *iwaa* have been sold or rented to their current occupants. Some people have paid up to EGP 11,000 (US \$1,965) for a two-room shack. These sales are informal and unregistered, so the occupants have no legal entitlement to the homes.

Image: Chris Horwood



*Imbaba informal settlement. New social housing construction can be seen in the background.*

Insecurity and instability are the most remarkable features of daily life in Ain Es-Sira, but the precarious nature of existence in the area has a gender dimension that is often ignored or overlooked. Women's poverty is often linked with their 'headship' of households. But it is not only single women who suffer; married women living in the slums also have their burdens. Fully 70 per cent of women who participate in the Ain Es-Sira CCT claim that they carry the responsibility of accessing services for their families and are the sole decision-makers on child health and education. Additionally, women describe the obstacles they face in accessing these institutions, such as being mistreated by teachers, doctors and other service providers. Finally, women participating in CCT focus groups and surveys say that fund-raising for education and healthcare is their 'biggest burden'.

Relying on unstable allowance from husbands, work that is sporadic and underpaid and the 'humiliating' need to borrow from neighbours, the women of Ain Es-Sira are struggling to make ends meet. The CCT gives women with children EGP 200 (US \$36) per month in return for them keeping children in school and using preventive health care that is readily available in the area (the schools are also in the area so no travel is involved), and they receive a monthly visit from a social worker. The women use a debit card to take the monthly stipends from a local ATM, so they control their own income and spending. They also know that money is coming, so they can make investments and pace their expenditures.

Like other impoverished and underserved parts of Cairo, Ain Es-Sira is served by numerous Civil Society Organizations and philanthropic institutions. These organizations, while focusing on women, tend to give preference to those women who are single or without any financial support. The CSOs generally prioritize services to widows and divorced or deserted women, followed by the elderly and those with disabilities or chronic ill health. Children and orphans are also key targets for CSO services. This is true for both religious and non-religious CSOs. Religious institutions in particular have strict notions of who is a 'deserving' person. In recent focus group discussions with beneficiaries of these institutions, all the women invited by the CSOs were widows. This tendency was corroborated by one of the CSO workers, who confessed that the organizations have difficulty believing that a married woman needs support, arguing that Islam is clear in identifying widows and orphans as deserving of charity. In fact, Islam offers another poverty-based criterion to be eligible for charity (known as *sadaka*). *Sadaka* is crosscutting women and men as well as married and non-married.

Some CSOs that support married or divorced women focus on micro-credit lending, which in many cases has been shown to burden women, pulling them further into debt and putting them at risk of imprisonment in case of default. In recent research, women taking loans from CSOs said that the terms were harsh, the interest rate was high, the repayment schedule too tight and the amount too small. Borrowing and credit are heavy burdens that women bear in the course of their daily lives. Women borrow from each other, from female money lenders and from CSOs. Experts argue, however, that the very poor need income, not debts. Micro-credit works if people have access to markets, if lending is to groups of people who support each other and realize the added social and moral benefits of solidarity and cooperation. Recent research in Ain Es-Sira, for example, illustrates that micro-credit programmes are sometimes removed from their developmental context and design and have become a process of burdensome debt creation for the very poor. Those who have benefitted from micro-credit are not the poorest section of the community; the very poor have borrowed money and either 'consumed' it or invested it in projects that have had limited returns. Other than unregulated micro-credit, there is very little financial infrastructure that serves the poor.

While the micro-credit movement may be a development success story in some places, that has not been the case in Ain Es-Sira. All CSOs present in the community have offered forms of micro-credit and lending. Some dispense Social Fund for Development grants, meant solely for fixing sewage and water supplies. These grants can only be used by people who live in registered premises that they own or have some form of legal title to, or if they are paying rent to a formal owner. As such, the grants exclude practically all slum dwellers who bought their shacks from others who did not have the right to sell them in the first place. Other loans are made to women to encourage entrepreneurial activities, but many of those loans have led to debt and the liquidation of women's assets. Women who cannot make enough money from their ventures often are forced to sell mattresses, pots, pans, bangles and rings to repay debts.

In the gendered burden of slum life, women are divorced from basic rights, without the resources needed to access services or demand support. Moving away from conceptualizing women's empowerment and citizenship as quotas in elected councils, the focus must be on empowering women within their contexts as mothers, wives and citizens by focusing on their entitlement to support. While civil society attempts to fill a gap, the accepted assumption in the literature that CSOs are the answer is flawed. Moving towards gender-aware, rights-based social policy with a focus on women's entitlement to support is a necessary step in the right direction. Future evaluations of the pilot CCT programme are expected to show that direct transfers, not micro-credit lending, are more direct and more beneficial to the women of Ain Es-Sira and their families.

This special feature was written by Dr. Hania Sholkamy (associate professor at the SRC, American University Cairo).

# urban governance through participation: from rhetoric towards reality

The concept and methodology of participatory development came to Egypt and other developing countries primarily through the work of international organizations. Along with it came high expectations and big promises, framing participation as a new and direct means of solving complex, endemic problems such as poverty, inequity and slum housing. Initially, participatory processes were limited to specific donor-driven development projects, but recently, attempts at institutionalizing participation in Cairo have gained traction. Interest and practice are replacing rhetoric as ideas of participation begin to permeate through the culture and structure of urban governance, with direct involvement of NGOs and the private sector.

Egypt continues to struggle to move away from its long-established centralised and bureaucratic system of governance. Generally, over-centralization is regarded as disempowering to local administrations and prone to bureaucratic indecision within the system. Local administrators are discouraged from promoting participation lest it raise expectations that later cannot be met. Although participation is embedded in the local administration system through elected Local Popular Councils (LPCs), which have the mandate to set and approve plans, budgets and projects, alleged irregularities and ineffectiveness of LPC members negatively affect people's perception of participation in government-led development.

Participation is increasingly discussed and promoted in official rhetoric and policy statements, such as presidential election speeches, the recent government's five-year plans, the new building law (law 119/2008) and the strategic plans of Egyptian villages and cities. Although the acceptance of 'participation' in the local tiers of government is even lower than at the central government level, it is becoming a legitimate factor to consider in local development planning. In the governorates of Greater Cairo, the German development agency, GTZ, is training local administration staff in participatory development processes with emphasis on how to practice it within the institutional setting and capacity of local government. In several districts, government staff members are able to assess community needs in a participatory way and use the outcome to promote local initiatives such as priority service improvements from bread distribution to school renovations.

For NGOs, participation is an indispensable ingredient in almost all development projects, whether effectively implemented or not. Few expert NGOs professionally practice grassroots participation, and some of them are driven by international recognition and funding. Influential NGOs, associated to political leadership, are also capable of implementing participatory projects by mobilizing inputs directly from ministries. In most cases, both types of NGOs bypass local government and residents' participation takes the form of a one-time, wish-list-come-true. On the local level, smaller community development agencies (CDAs) are mostly charity organizations focusing on a narrow scope of welfare services or compensating for the deficiency in public services. Although they are closer to communities and know their needs, they often suffer limited and inactive membership. Most CDAs, therefore, do not act as a channel of participation or communication between the community and the government.

Some experts believe that the formal system has been weak in promoting sustainable participation genuinely, or on a scale that can reach the masses. In the rush towards adopting global forms of participation, more established traditional forms of civic engagement are being overlooked. The relative success of the traditional pooled-savings finance mechanism (*Gama'eya*) over the recently introduced micro-credit schemes is one such example. Likewise, the system of elected representation functions in parallel to the system of natural community leaders based on culturally rooted norms. The latter, although not officially recognized, are more trusted by the community and can better mobilize and organize community action according to shared social norms.

Informal areas and many of the popular districts of Cairo are managed on a daily basis through community participation. Social networks, inherited merchant traditions and charity mechanisms substitute for the modern participatory concepts practised by NGOs and CBOs, and the end result is that people manage most of their living environment without direct government involvement. Community strategies run short when it comes to aspects that cannot be provided through self-help means, such as public services, public transportation, police protection and portions of the infrastructure and waste management mechanisms. However, community members have succeeded in providing themselves with housing, services and private means of transportation despite the debatable quality of such self-help strategies. Informal, society-based forms of participation either remain untapped or show up in ways that are not compatible with the formal system. Mistrust between citizens and the government often reflects negatively on the participatory efforts put forth in the formal system. In this context, participation is pragmatically valued by community members only on the basis of what tangible benefit it brings to them, where they can see their influence on tangible actions and where they can shape those gains to suit their priorities and preferences.

Accordingly, participation through self-help initiatives brings to many residents of Greater Cairo tangible gains that provide different user groups with solutions and interventions to fit their needs, resources and lifestyle. Yet, the process of social and political participation is increasingly seen by development practitioners as equally important, as a vehicle for community empowerment and access to decision-making. It is an important step towards overcoming widespread feelings of marginalization and towards empowering people to communicate and establish a dialogue with the formal system — and in the long term to be part of the formal system.

To avoid making participation a mere routine of urban management, some say it should be viewed as a means to an end from both the top and bottom of the decision-making system; political will from the top, and a culture of activism and civic engagement from the bottom. When mainstreamed in such a way, participation can lead to a democratic system of good urban governance. In this direction, the Participatory Development Project in Urban Areas (PDP)-GTZ programme promoted different forms of institutionalizing participation, enabling the local administration in two districts (Boulaq el Dakrou in Giza and Manshiyat Nasser in Cairo) to form committees that organize participatory needs assessment and local action planning processes (top-down), and allowing district administrators to acknowledge natural leaders as extensions of elected representatives in the community (bottom-up). At the level of the Greater Cairo governorates, committees formed of government officials were managing fund allocation to NGOs and supporting local initiatives.

Sources: Madbouly 2008; Ministry of Economic Development 2002; Ministry of Economic Development 2008; Shehayeb 2009a; Shehayeb & Abdelhalim, in press; Singerman 1997.

This Special Feature was written and developed by Dina K. Shehayeb, Ph.D. [dina@dkshehayeb.com](mailto:dina@dkshehayeb.com) Professor at Housing and Building National Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt and Khaled M. Abdelhalim, Ph.D. [khaled.mahmoud@gtz.de](mailto:khaled.mahmoud@gtz.de) Head of Urban Development Unit; Participatory Development Program, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Cairo, Egypt.

Mahmoud Omar (used by kind permission)



**Popular demonstrations in Cairo in February 2011.**

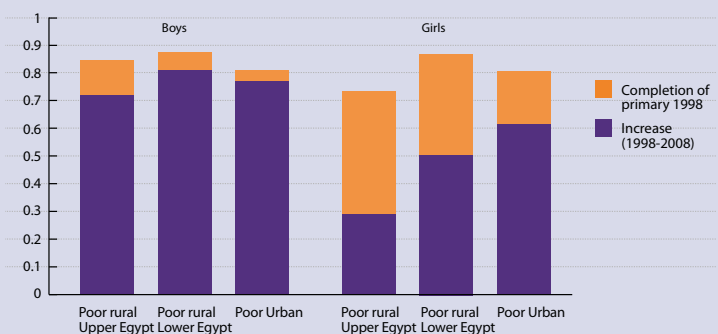


## poor urban boys: their dilemma of school, or work

A recent study examining the educational achievements of youth aged 14 and 15, classified by their socioeconomic status, revealed that although more poor youth completed a basic education in 2008 than in 1998, poor urban boys showed the least improvement over the 20-year period. Figure 1 shows that while increases in the rate of completing primary education among poor girls ranged between 18 and 44 percentage points, the range of increases was lower among boys (4 to 13 percentage points) and was the lowest among poor urban boys (4 per cent).

School and work are two interrelated experiences for poor urban boys. However, while turning to work at a young age is the ultimate result of failing in school, work is not necessarily the reason boys drop out. A study on child abuse in deprived communities in Egypt (Ein Helwan and El Nahada in Cairo governorate and West Alexandria in Alexandria governorate) revealed that 15 per cent of poor urban boys aged 12 to 14 and 25 per cent of those aged 15 to 17 in these communities were not currently enrolled in school. Maltreatment in schools, teachers' neglect and lack of supervision (particularly in overcrowded classes) were the most commonly cited reasons by parents for their children dropping out of school. One-third of school-aged children (34 per cent) reported having been physically punished at school within the current school year, and more than 19 per cent were physically punished within the two weeks preceding the survey.

Figure 1: Completion of primary education by region and poverty level (1998-2008)



Source: El Zeini, 2008

Cost of attending school and failure in scholastic work ranked second among reasons for dropping out, as reported by parents and children. Despite the free (and compulsory) nature of public schools in Egypt, there are various external and additional costs associated with education (discussed in Part Two of this publication). In addition to transport costs, uniforms, books and lunch money, the greatest additional cost for many is the virtually obligatory private tuition (*majmu'at*) which characterizes Egyptian education these days. However, the study showed that scholastic failure and cost are strongly related to maltreatment. Children who perform poorly in school suffer from teachers' maltreatment and increased pressure by teachers to take up private tutoring. This pressure in turn increases children's resentful attitude towards school and exacerbates their poor scholastic achievement. Failure to join the extracurricular *majmu'at* (organized and run by the teachers themselves) carries high risks of educational failure and prejudice. With the tight economic conditions experienced by many poor urban boys, the magic cure for maltreatment and pressure — private tutoring — is not possible, and the end result is their dropping out and going into the labour market, which for poor urban males is predominantly informal.

Work is essentially a male phenomenon among urban children. In the above study, about 14 per cent of the boys reported ever having worked, compared to less than 2 per cent of the girls. Among boys, only 3 per cent had ever worked before age 12. This percentage increases to more than 28 per cent in the 13- to 17-year-old cohort. A fuller discussion of child labour in Egypt and the results of the SRC/UN-HABITAT survey are elaborated in Part Two of this publication; the findings corroborate those of the surveys cited here.

The study showed that boys currently in school are less likely to work, and only 6.4 per cent were reported to have ever worked. However, work for school boys rises substantially with age, increasing from 1.2 per cent among boys between the ages of 6 and 12 to 16 per cent among those aged 13 to 17. For school boys, combining work and school was observed in 23 per cent of the cases, while the remaining 72 per cent worked during the school summer break. The majority of boys worked in workshops (36 per cent) and factories (24 per cent), followed by working in shops (17 per cent) and in the street (17 per cent). They commonly work with strangers (82 per cent), for cash (95 per cent) and for six days per week (73 per cent). Satisfaction with their work experience and learning new skills was reported by 94 per cent of working boys, although 18 per cent of them reported that they were beaten at work and 20 per cent reported being scolded at work.

In focus group discussions, parents living in poor urban settings usually express a strong positive attitude towards boys' work. Mothers perceived boys' work as a way to provide for their own needs and to help care for their family financially, while fathers insisted that learning a vocation could be more beneficial to the child's future than finishing school.

Image: Pascale Nader

The very high employment rate of males with low educational achievement (in formal and informal occupations) contrasts starkly with the high unemployment rate among highly educated males, who must compete for a limited number of formal jobs available in Cairo. This suggests that poorer families may be making short-term logical economic decisions with respect to the evidence of returns on educational investments.

Work is also perceived by both parents as a protective strategy against bad peer influence and a positive contribution to the development of a responsible personality. School boys expressed favourable attitudes toward work, considering it a proper means to get money and to spend their energy during their spare time. They also took pride in their learned skills and considered them a backup strategy in case they fail to finish school. Work was perceived less favourably for young boys, when they are overworked, underpaid, exposed to insults, forced to quit school or mocked by their peers. But poverty is the chief factor that drives child labour. As mentioned in Part Two, in recent years, Egypt has fought to reduce the number of children involved in the workforce. In 1993, 16.5 per cent of children in urban areas between the ages of 6 and 14, and 40.4 per cent of children in rural areas, were found to be working, according to an International Labour Organization report. In a 1998 report, the Egyptian government estimates that of 10.9 million Egyptian children between 6 and 14 years of age, 1,309,000 or 12 per cent, were child workers.

In very poor families, often rural, another form of abuse of girls in particular, is their early marriage to wealthy old people as second or third wives. While it is clearly important to continue increasing the level of girls' participation in and completion of primary school, it is also vital to help more poor urban boys finish primary school, at least, before they enter the workforce. In the current climate of well-educated unemployment and the shortage of well-paid jobs, the extension of technical training schools and promotion of vocational training may serve the economy well and formalize a process that is already happening in the informal sector in unregulated and less than desirable conditions.

Source: Global March Against Child Labour, Langsten, R. and T. Hassan. 2007, El Zeini, L. 2008

This special feature was written by Dr. Zeinab Khadr of the Social Research Center at American University Cairo.



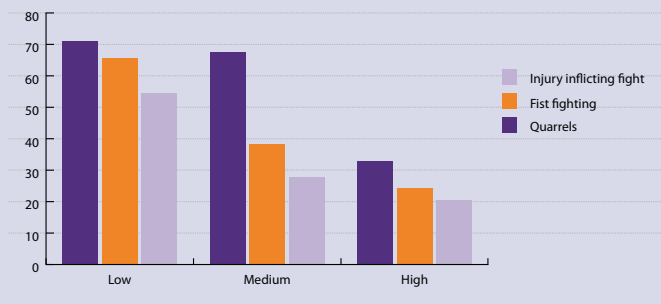
*In recent years, Egypt has fought to reduce the number of children involved in the workforce.*

## public safety in cairo: perceptions of changing security

Cairo, and Egypt as a whole, is generally regarded as a safe place, evidenced by relatively low crime statistics. Incidences of violent crime appear to be rare, and even non-violent crimes are statistically lower in Cairo than in many other African and European cities. But with rising populations, explicit urban inequalities and increasingly conspicuous wealth, violence in urban settings has become more common everywhere. It significantly affects the quality of life of all city dwellers, affecting not only their actual security but also their perception of insecurity, their fear of public and private places and their confidence in personal safety. Despite the relatively low crime statistics attributed to Cairo, there is a growing sense that street violence and threats to personal security are becoming more prevalent.

As illustrated throughout this publication, those living in poorer neighbourhoods and with lower socioeconomic power experience the main burden of urban inequity. In virtually all aspects of living conditions in Cairo, there are moderate or significant differences in equity between the poor and non-poor. The same is true of violence in the city. In a recent study conducted by SRC/UN-HABITAT, more than 20 per cent of those living in deprived areas indicated feeling insecure in their neighbourhoods, compared to only 10 per cent of those living in privileged areas. Comparatively these levels of insecurity are very low for both groups for a city of this size and especially when compared with violence and insecurity in sub-Saharan cities. However, other studies have shown that the distribution of crime and sense of threat in informal areas greatly differs from residential streets to main streets. The former are more secure due to community surveillance, but the latter suffers from the lack of (and need for) formal policing. The same analysis found that informal areas are rarely a security threat to neighbouring formal areas and that the sense of safety within informal areas is reasonable despite insufficient formal policing, owing to the high sense of community surveillance.

Figure 11.1: Reports of rows, street fights, and violent assaults by type of *mantiq*



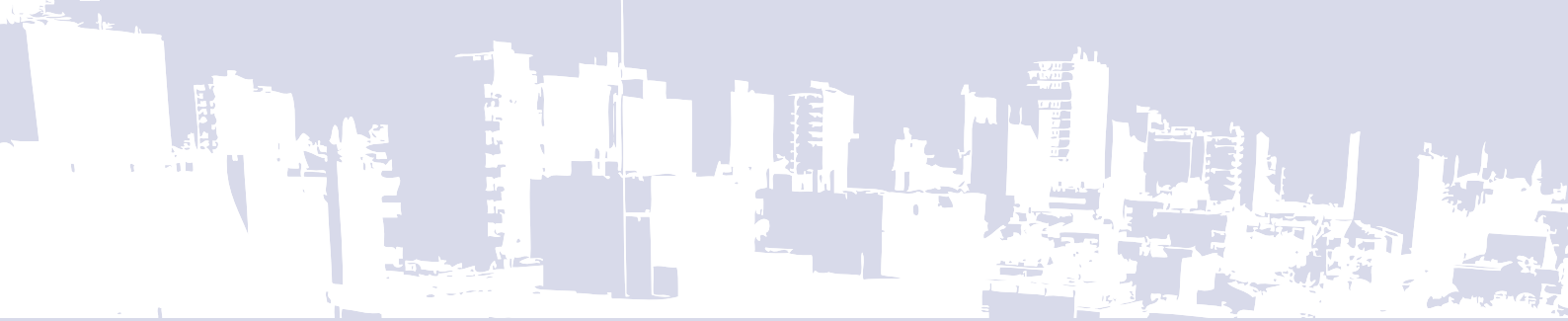
### *Street fights, harassment and violent assault*

The most visible crimes were most common in the deprived areas. The culture of physical contact differs between social strata. What may be considered 'violence' and 'fight' may mean different things to different people of different backgrounds. Notwithstanding this qualifying dimension, survey respondents from deprived *mantiq* reported the highest incidence of street fighting (71 per cent of respondents affirmed that street fights happen in the neighbourhood), followed by those in the medium *mantiq* (67 per cent) and those in the privileged *mantiq* (33 per cent). Physical and fist fights were reported most often in the deprived *mantiq* (66 per cent), compared with the medium *mantiq* (38 per cent) and the privileged *mantiq* (24 per cent). Witnessing the use of injury-inflicting instruments in fights again was reported most frequently in low (55 per cent) followed by medium and privileged *mantiq* (reported by 29 per cent and 21 per cent of their residents, respectively).

Street harassment was reported by more low and medium *mantiq* residents (46 per cent) compared to those of high *mantiq* (16 per cent). However, 'outrageous harassment' that went beyond the 'acceptable limits' was slightly more prevalent in the low *mantiq* (31 per cent) than in medium *mantiq* (29 per cent) and in low *mantiq* (8 per cent). Street assault, without the use of force, was reported more frequently in the low *mantiq* (13 per cent) compared to medium (11 per cent) and high (3 per cent) in *mantiq*. Interestingly, assaults that involved the use of force were more frequent in the medium (22 per cent) and high (18 per cent) *mantiq*, compared to low *mantiq* (16 per cent), suggesting that the close-knit and congested environment of poorer areas mitigated against the use of force in assault, or is more unacceptable amongst communities where the perpetrators may be known.

### *Public sale and use of illicit drugs*

In addition to fights, harassment and violent assault, Cairenes are increasingly concerned about the presence of drugs in the city. According to the national survey on drug use by the Ministry of Public Health carried out in eight governorates in 2005 and 2006, 9.8 per cent of the sample used illicit drugs. A study by the National Council for Fighting and Treating Addiction (NCFTA) in 2007 revealed that 12.21 per cent of school students in Egypt report using drugs: 9 per



cent of respondents said they had used *bango*, a strain of marijuana, and 3 per cent reported using cannabis, with the remaining 0.21 per cent reporting use of psychoactive pharmaceuticals and heroin. The survey also showed that 20 per cent of male students had used drugs at least once, as opposed to 4 per cent of female students. The majority of drug users are aged between 15 and 25, followed by those aged between 25 and 35. Again, these levels are remarkably low when compared to urban averages in other countries.

Several recent rapid assessment studies by the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (ODC) in Egypt, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, have confirmed the upsurge of marijuana abuse. The ODC also worked with street children in Cairo and Alexandria and found through surveys that almost 66 per cent of the selected sample of street children consumed various substances or drugs on a habitual basis (tobacco, glue sniffing, bango and pills). In his 2008 novel, *A ¼ Gram*, Essam Youssef wrote of the reality of rising heroin use in Cairo amongst the city's middle- and upper-class youth. But addiction and habitual use of drugs is more likely to be found amongst the poor with the frequent result of men being unable to work adding increased burdens on the women to become breadwinners and manage family affairs. The SRC/ UN-HABITAT survey showed that drug selling activities (periodic and in particular locations) were more frequently reported in medium *mantiq* (35 per cent) followed by low *mantiq* (28 per cent) and high *mantiq* (8 per cent). However, deprived *mantiq* were more likely to have these activities ongoing all day long with continual drug availability (12 per cent) followed by medium and high *mantiq* and accounting for 9 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

#### *Safety of women and girls*

Recently, concern for women's and girls' safety in public space has become more central in the social agenda, particularly with several recent incidences in which women were victimized in the streets. A recent study by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights on sexual harassment found that 83 per cent of women reported exposure to harassment, with more than 46 per cent reporting daily exposure to unwelcome behaviour, such as touching, noises (like whistling, hissing noises, kissing sounds, and the like), ogling, verbal harassment, stalking, phone harassment, and indecent exposure. Since 2008, numerous incidents of public assault of women have been reported in the media. However, two incidents have significantly shocked the public and brought sexual harassment in the street to the forefront. The first took place on the second day of the Eid El Fitr holiday in October 2008. A group of young men harassed three girls walking in an upper-class neighbourhood in Cairo; more than 100 young men gathered to watch and 38 were arrested in connection with the incident.

The second incident involved a pickup driver who sexually assaulted a woman in the street. The young woman's courageous testimony led to the assailant receiving a custodial sentence of three years with a fine of EGP 5,000 (about US \$890). The fact that such incidents make the news illustrates again that Cairo starts from a relatively non-violent, safe standard. In other cities in the developing world and elsewhere violent sexual attacks including rapes are quite common..

In response to these incidents and others, three draft laws that criminalize and define sexual harassment have been submitted to the Parliament by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, the National Council for Women and a Member of Parliament. Furthermore, many government officials appear to be changing their attitude from denial to the launching of mass advertisement campaigns that fight sexual harassment, and increasing the presence of security forces in the streets of Cairo, particularly during the holidays.

While the statistics imply that Cairo is a low-crime capital, there may be a rising trend of crime and street violence in the city. The perception of safety in neighbourhoods is critical to residents' and city dwellers' sense of physical integrity and security, and, as this brief overview of the issues suggests, these perceptions may be deteriorating faster than researchers can statistically prove a decrease in public safety. The government of Egypt has committed itself to adopting an integrated strategy to combat street violence. This effort is currently led by the National Council for Women and is being discussed in many different public forums.

Sources:

Leila 2007; UNODC 2002; Shehayeb & Abdelhalim 2010; Williams 2010; Abul Komsan et al 2008; SPAAC in press;

Khadr, Z et al 2008 unpublished.

This special feature was a collaborative work between Dr. Zeinab Khadr of the SRC at the American University Cairo and Dr. Sahar Sheneity (assistant professor at the SRC and Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Department of Statistics, Cairo University), with contributions from the author.

# Zeinhum: a model public-private partnership slum transformation

The case of Zeinhum is the story of slum transformation spearheaded by a unique public-private partnership. It's a case study often quoted in Cairo by those interested in urban renewal, slum upgrading and bridging the urban divides. It is also often cited by those who value the power of public-private partnerships to fight social problems. In many ways, Zeinhum is heralded as a new model of urban community development. But for other analysts, however, it is an example of an excessively top-down, non-replicable model which produced a somewhat contrived, showpiece.

In 1999, Zeinhum was one of the largest squatter areas located at the heart of Cairo governorate. It occupied an area of 50 *feddans* (52 acres) and housed more than 18,000 inhabitants. It had all the main features of an urban slum. The settlement began as a small number of government buildings, which expanded over time randomly and in the absence of any proper urban plans. According to some experts, the area was in fact a mash of emergency housing units built over a number of years, some good, some bad, and with some squatters added in the spaces. Many were wooden shacks to house migrants from Suez following the 1967 war.

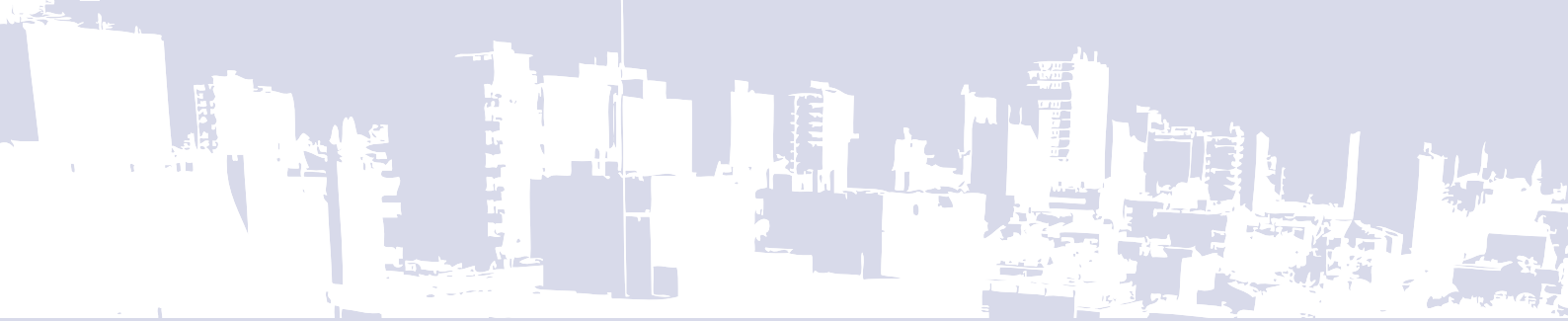
By 1999, Zeinhum's precarious residential area was populated by squatters and poor people. Its inhabitants were characterized by high levels of social and economic deprivation, and their average income was only EGP 272 (less than US \$50) per month. Among Zeinhum's residents, 31 per cent were illiterate (compared with 24 per cent in Cairo governorate as a whole) and only 2.5 per cent of residents had a university education. More than one-fifth of the heads of household were unemployed, with the majority of those employed working in service (domestic or public) jobs outside of Zeinhum. A polluted environment contributed to widespread infectious disease, particularly among children, and led to an infant mortality rate that exceeded twice the national figure of Egypt. Insecurity, pollution and economic and social stress contributed to disruptive family relations and a high prevalence of violence and delinquency among children. On the other hand, other research interviews in 1999 suggested that Zeinhum residents also enjoyed the proximity of public schools and hospitals and the connectivity to downtown. While they complained of their housing environment, their location offered them many privileges.

In 1999, The Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) pioneered a development initiative targeting the root causes of the health problems and poverty in Zeinhum through the adoption of what they described as an integrated and comprehensive community development approach, with particular emphasis on individuals and the welfare of families. This approach emphasized building of trust and opening channels of communication and interaction among different partners and stakeholders involved in the development process, and emphasized the importance of individuals' and families' role as active agents of change in their neighbourhood. Myriad urban planning, social and economic activities provided to Zeinhum reflected the initiative's priorities. The urban planning was directed to secure a healthy environment for the families, while the social activities aimed to build the residents' social and human capital as well as secure full engagement of the community in the upgrading process and its sustainability.

The ERC initiative in Zeinhum was built on two important pillars: the full collaboration of and partnerships among the ERC, local authorities and business stakeholders; and the social development of the community through community members' ownership of the process. While the first pillar secured the resources and the capacity required for undertaking the physical upgrading efforts, the second pillar was equally important for the sustainability of the development efforts. Each partner had specific responsibilities and role to play in the project. The municipality and governorate handled the engineering work in terms of planning, supervision, demolition of slum houses, construction of infrastructure and placement of utilities. Big businesses contributed by building the residential apartment blocks. Planning and design of the new housing was conducted by a consultant hired by one of the businessmen contributing to the project. Provision and supervision of community social development, and emphasizing community participation and involvement were carried out by the ERC. The ERC also played the important role of mediator between the local authorities and the dwellers of the community by building trust among partners and communicating the needs of the community members.

The project was carried out in three stages, each dedicated to the upgrading of one segment of Zeinhum. This was followed by complete demolition and removal of the old and precarious residential buildings and the rebuilding of new, planned residential apartment blocks with public parks and gardens. Social services were incorporated into the physical planning of each segment.

At the beginning of the project, all Zeinhum residents were relocated to two transitional areas (Mothalath Helwan and El Nahda city) and were guaranteed a unit to return to upon the completion of the restructure of their segment. According to some observers of the project some 'marginal' inhabitants were removed without being offered alternative housing. Nevertheless, with the relocation of the majority Zeinhum families, ERC launched its comprehensive social development and community engagement effort. It worked on many dimensions, including solving basic daily transportation,



education and nutritional problems experienced by the relocated families; establishing a new ERC centre in Motalath Helwan to provide relocated families with health and social services; and building social ties with community members to help them voice their complaints and worries and to participate in setting the appropriate solution.

These services extended over the transitional period and were further expanded with the return of the families to their newly renovated Zeinhum. Again, critics of the project allege that a portion of the residents was never able to return, simply because the number of units created was less than half of what had existed. The ERC centre in Zeinhum was transformed to act as social and cultural centre, housing a variety of social activities, classes and resources in addition to working as a medical centre. Residents could take advantage of seminars and awareness campaigns, hands-on training, informative field trips and neighborhood gatherings, organizing competitions among building blocks with the aim of creating tight and strong social ties among community members.

A recent study on the impact of the upgrading efforts in Zeinhum between 1999 and 2010 revealed significant improvements in the residents' socioeconomic status. The illiteracy rate dropped by half, from 31 per cent to 14.5 per cent, and those enrolled in higher education increased from 2.5 per cent to more than 8 per cent. Furthermore, 40 per cent of the residents reported an increase in their income compared to its level before the upgrading efforts. More than 50 per cent of the residents felt more secure in the neighbourhood compared to the pre-upgrading period. However, some studies claim, and the Cairo governorate itself admits that it is only 20 per cent of Zeinhum original shack residents that were relocated back to the new houses. The rest remained in Helwan and Nahda.

Ten years after the launch of the public-private upgrading project, the changes in Zeinhum are tangible: residents clearly sense pride in and ownership of the area, manifested in their determination to sustain the development process and safeguard what many regard as a success story of the 'comprehensive community development model' that incorporated private finance and commitment with public resolve. [Alternative perspectives on the activities and achievements this project can be found in the additional source listed below.]

This special feature was written by Dr Zeinab Khadr of the SRC, at American University Cairo with additional input from the author and reviewers. Additional source: Sims 1998

*Image: Chris Horwood*

***In high-density central Cairo, it is easy to see how low-income housing projects struggle for survival.***



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## Endnotes

- 1 UN-HABITAT 2010,
- 2 Rodenbeck 2010.
- 3 Gini coefficient for 1997 from UN-HABITAT 2010, p.192.
- 4 UN-HABITAT 2010, p.177 and p.180.
- 5 Sims 2011.
- 6 Sims 2000.
- 7 Séjourné and Sims cited in World Bank (2008a).
- 8 Sims 2011.
- 9 Ibid. p. 271.
- 10 This observation was established from Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008, based on 2004-2005 figures.
- 11 These three typographies are taken from Sims 2011.
- 12 All official statistics here are quoted in World Bank 2008.
- 13 Observation made by Sabry (2009), citing the fact that India's definition of an urban area includes those areas of more than 5,000 inhabitants that also meet other criteria for density and proportion of the workforce engaged in non-agricultural activities.
- 14 Bayat & Denis 2000.
- 15 Interestingly, the UN's Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs using Egypt's own unrealistic definitions show that between 2020 and 2025, the urban population will eventually overtake the rural population.
- 16 World Bank 2008, p.8.
- 17 World Bank 2008, p.8.
- 18 World Bank 2008, p.10.
- 19 Shorter 1989.
- 20 World Bank 2008, p.11.
- 21 World Bank 2008, p.11.
- 22 World Bank 2000, p. 1/82.
- 23 Metwally 2006.
- 24 World Bank (2000) report quotes GOPP as claiming that some 282 square kilometres of desert lands under development around Greater Cairo were not sanctioned by the approved 1997 Master Plan.
- 25 *Wadaa yed*, or 'hand claims' have been abused to justify outright illegal squatting in many cases. The concept seemingly allows certain customary rights to local people to possess desert land in certain circumstances and has a long historical antecedent. Only recently have the authorities begun to control and restrict this process of informal expansion (World Bank 2008).
- 26 World Bank 2008, p.24.
- 27 Main access streets in informal areas develop along the former access roads and covered irrigation canals in the private agricultural land (Shehayeb & Sher 2003).
- 28 Typically water from tube wells and wastewater and sanitation drained into septic tanks.
- 29 de Soto (1998) famously revealed that in one case (buying state desert land and registering property rights), 77 steps would be needed, involving 31 state entities. Kafkaesque official bureaucracy and repeated corruption have led many Egyptians to exchange through informal systems.
- 30 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008, p.11.
- 31 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008.
- 32 Denis 2008.
- 33 Ibid., p.1098.
- 34 Data in these two paragraphs is from World Bank 2008 and the author's meetings with NUCA.
- 35 World Bank 2008, p.61.
- 36 World bank 2008.
- 37 Data given to the author in August 2010 from NUCA.
- 38 As listed in Sims 2011.
- 39 World Bank 2008, p.33.
- 40 The opposite is often true. While many are employed in the informal sector, there are also high levels of diversity in professions, such as found in semi-legal areas in parts of Dar El Salam, where residents include many professional and working-class employees, artisans and public managers (Singerman 2009, p. 204).
- 41 Informal areas are rarely a security threat to neighbouring formal areas. The sense of safety in informal areas, despite lack of formal policing, is attributable to the high sense of community surveillance (Shehayeb & Abdelhalim 2010).
- 42 Shehayeb et al. 2003.
- 43 K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 44 Deboulet 2009.
- 45 One minister claimed it cost three times as much to implement post-facto infrastructure in informal areas. In one large informal area (Imbaba), GOPP states that 40 new schools are needed to meet demand and to meet Egyptian educational policy stipulations. But there is no land available in the informal settlement to build the schools. Another example of the difficulty of installing water and sewage networks in built-up informal areas is the KFW/GTZ project in Boulaq el Dakorur, which was delayed for two years in part because there are no maps showing infrastructure networks installed by the government.
- 46 Estimation made by World Bank (2008) using MHUUD, Housing and Utilities Sector data.
- 47 Sims 2011.
- 48 Deboulet 2009, p.206.
- 49 Sabry 2009, p.21.
- 50 Séjourné 2009.
- 51 Shehayeb 2009a.
- 52 Shehayeb & Sabry 2008.
- 53 The dynamics, rationale and work of the ISDF are discussed in Special Feature 5.
- 54 Bell 2009, p.364.
- 55 This figure draws generously on the work of Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008 and World Bank 2008.
- 56 There was no housing mortgage system in Egypt before 2001. The purchaser relies on his/her own equity and money from informal and personal sources. Even by 2008, very few house purchases were being financed by mortgages.
- 57 Sims 2000.
- 58 World Bank 2008.
- 59 World Bank 2008.
- 60 World Bank 2008.
- 61 Dorman 2009, p.274.
- 62 Quoted in Sabry 2009, p.17.
- 63 Dorman 2009, p.282.
- 64 These issues will be discussed more fully elsewhere in this publication. Sabry (2009) analyses this carefully.
- 65 Deboulet 2009, p.207.
- 66 World Bank (2008) Executive Summary.
- 67
- 68 Singerman 2009, p. 5.
- 69 Bayat 1996.
- 70 Abu-Kughad 2004, page.144.
- 71 Korayem 1996, p. 26.
- 72 Singerman 2009, p.12.
- 73 Singerman 2009, p.30.
- 74 Sims, Kamal & Solomon, p.21-22.
- 75 World Bank 2006.
- 76 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p. 7.
- 77 Ibid. p.7
- 78 Wikipedia n.d.
- 79 One calculation by Beinin (2001) suggests that in Cairo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Gini coefficient averaged 76.0.

- 80 Nagi 2001.
- 81 World Bank & Arab Republic of Egypt Ministry of Planning 2002, and UNDP 2003.
- 82 Abu-Kughad 2004, p.144.
- 83 Sabry 2009.
- 84 The World Bank recently revised its international poverty lines in view of purchasing power parity exchange rates. It is now US \$1.25 at 2005 prices. This relatively small change means that instead of 20 per cent of the world's population under the US \$1 poverty line, the proportion is now 25 per cent illustrating the impact of small methodological changes in analysis (Sabry 2009, p.4).
- 85 For example, the actual non-food costs in eight informal settlements surveyed for the ILED study (Sabry 2009) were much higher (often up to three times as high) than the non-food allowance agencies such as the World Bank create when trying to assess poverty lines.
- 86 Millennium Development Goal 1: To reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than US \$1 per day.
- 87 To illustrate this, they compare findings from the UN MDG Monitoring website, the Egyptian Human Development Report (EHDR) and the World Bank (2007) report.
- 88 Finding from World Bank 2007.
- 89 This report cites sources that claim the 2005 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey found 18 per cent of Egyptian children and 16.2 per cent of children in urban areas suffer from chronic malnutrition or stunting (Sabry 2009, p.viii).
- 90 Sabry (2009) and others cite administrative and definitional constraints in correcting counting urban poverty. For example Greater Cairo includes parts of five different governorates complicating the extraction of correct boundary limits. The official definition of 'urban' and 'rural' in Egypt is unrealistic and erroneous resulting in millions living in the periphery of the city still being classified as rural.
- 91 Sabry 2009, p.21.
- 92 Oxford University 2010.
- 93 Sabry 2009, p.35.
- 94 This definition was presented in Khadr et al. 2008.
- 95 Operating under a presidential decree, the Informal Settlements Development Facility has conducted this analysis of slum areas in Egypt and overseen the implementation of removal and/or upgrading.
- 96 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008.
- 97 Ibid., p. 56.
- 98 Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of State for Administrative Development 2008.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Khalifa 2010.
- 101 Forthcoming research by D. Shehayeb and colleagues conducted for the UN-HABITAT Gender Unit, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 102 See [http://www.idea.int/vt/country\\_view.cfm?country=EG](http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?country=EG)
- 103 For general analysis of security in modern Cairo, see Shehayeb & Abdelhalim 2010.
- 104 Shehayeb & Abdelhalim 2010.
- 105 Shehayeb & Eid 2007.
- 106 K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 107 This figure of 400 inhabitants per hectare was calculated in 2000 by the World Bank and quoted in World Bank 2008, p.6.
- 108 Even higher levels of density in excess of 2000 inhabitants per hectare were recorded in informal areas in Cairo and quoted in World Bank 2008, p.7.
- 109 World Bank 2008, p.7, and reiterated in Sims (2011), p. 141, where using GTZ statistics the author calculates the density as 1,925 inhabitants per hectare.
- 110 Sims 2011, p.158.
- 111 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008.
- 112 An elaboration of the same statistics made by Sims 2011, p.159.
- 113 Shehayeb 2009b.
- 114 UN-HABITAT 2003, p. 19.
- 115 Interestingly, there is no international standard on this aspect of housing and sleeping. One definition was found in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2006), which offers the following definition to cover sleeping arrangement: Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements. Enough bedrooms based on NOS requirements means one bedroom for:
  - each cohabiting adult couple;
  - unattached household member 18 years of age and over;
  - same-sex pair of children under age 18;
  - and additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under 5 years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom.
- 116 Sims, Kamal & Solomon (2008) used the 2006 CAPMAS sampling study frames, which as explained in Part One, are criticized for under-representing marginal areas (Sims 2011).
- 117 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008, chapter 4.
- 118 For example, in Dar al-Salam average height (not median) is eight floors high, while in Boulaq Al-Dakrouir the average height is four floors (the historic core is ground floor plus two stories only). (D. Shehayeb, personal communication November 2010.)
- 119 Cited in Bayat 1996.
- 120 UNDP 2009 statistical tables.
- 121 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p.54.
- 122 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008.
- 123 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development, p. 54.
- 124 Khater 2010.
- 125 Abdel-Gawad 2008.
- 126 Williams 2008.
- 127 Sabry 2009, p.32.
- 128 For example, Smith & El Komos 2009.
- 129 Abdel-Gawad 2009.
- 130 Hassanein & Khalifa 2006.
- 131 Sabry 2009, p. 32.
- 132 Arab Republic of Egypt, Holding Company for Water and Wastewater, n.d.
- 133 World Bank project document. [http://www-ds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/03/17/000076092\\_20080317142208/Rendered/PDF/PID0ISSIP010Appraisal0Stage.pdf](http://www-ds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/03/17/000076092_20080317142208/Rendered/PDF/PID0ISSIP010Appraisal0Stage.pdf)
- 134 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p. 54.
- 135 Ibid., p. 54.
- 136 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008, p. 32.
- 137 Sabry 2009, p. 32.
- 138 Ibid., p. 32.
- 139 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008.
- 140 Ibid., p. 30.
- 141 World Bank 2008, p. 36.
- 142 'Various laws prescribe the conditions and procedures under which a squatter (a condition called *wada'yed* or 'hand claim') can apply for freehold ownership of the land he or she occupies (most recently, Law 31 of 1984)' (Sims 2002).
- 143 de Soto 1998.
- 144 A deeper discussion of property rights and regularization can be found in Madbouly & Serry n.d.
- 145 Sims 2002, p. 81-82.
- 146 K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 147 Sims 2002.

- 148 Specific areas within Cairo may reveal somewhat different data due to historic and urban characteristics of the area. For example, a longitudinal study of low-income households in what would be a low *mantiq* by the SRC/UN-HABITAT classification showed that in 2009, 80.6 per cent of households rented their accommodation with 77.9 per cent as tenants of the old rent regime (Assaad & Rouchdy 1998).
- 149 D. Sims, personal communication November 2010.
- 150 Solid waste management has to contend with high daily quantities of household, commercial and industrial solid waste.
- 151 For example, it is ranked as the top priority facing households and listed as the top priority for government attention according to figures from GOPP quoted in UNDP 2010 (Cf: p. 201, Figures 14.1 and 14.2).
- 152 The Zabbaleen are an Egyptian community of mainly Coptic Christians who were allowed to collect and dispose of the city of Cairo's organic waste by feeding it to their pigs. They mainly live in an irregular, squatted area known as Rubbish City below Muqattam Mountain and attached to Manshiet Nasr informal settlement. They are mostly descendants of poor farmers from Upper Egypt who settled in the city in the 1950s. Traditionally using donkey-driven carts, the males collect waste from homes, to be sorted by female members of the family in Zabbaleen homes. It is claimed that Zabbaleen reuse or recycle 80 to 90 per cent of the waste they collect (Cf: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zabbaleen> and many other sources available online that discuss this community).
- 153 For example in the media, see Moussa 2010.
- 154 See Special Feature 2. Data from Lise Debout, PhD researcher at the CEDEJ (Cairo, Egypt).
- 155 Hahmi & Sutton 2010.
- 156 Fahmi 2005, p. 59.
- 157 Shehayeb & Sabry 2008.
- 158 Shehayeb 2009b.
- 159 Singerman 2009, p. 14.
- 160 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p. 15.
- 161 Ibid.
- 162 Sabry 2009, p. 26.
- 163 Sabry 2009, p. 26.
- 164 Ibid.
- 165 Sabry 2009, p. 27.
- 166 'Basically, *majmu'at* have become compulsory, even from Grade 1 in primary school. While in theory the costs of *majmu'at* are set by the government and should be identical for the same year of school across all schools, in practice they vary quite a lot even within the same area. *Majmu'at* for all subjects for Grades 1 to 4 in primary school were found to cost 20–45LE/month. At Grade 5, the cost is 30–60LE. Grade 6 and secondary school become significantly more expensive as the students are charged by subject. Each subject costs 15–25LE. Students are usually forced to take around five subjects' (Sabry 2009, p. 27).
- 167 Shehayeb 2009b.
- 168 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008.
- 169 Ibidl, p. 17.
- 170 K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 171 Calculated from CAPMAS, General Population Censuses, 1976, 1986 and 1996, and Labour Force Sample Survey, 1998. Posted to GMS 2003.
- 172 UNDP 2010, p.156.
- 173 Sabry 2009, p. 27.
- 174 Sabry 2009, p. 27.
- 175 GTZ suggests that the shortage is just 20 schools. This number is based on information from the Giza Governorate education directorate's estimate of Boulaq el Dakrou's educational needs from 2006 to 2017. K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 176 Sabry 2009. Research conducted in Ezbet El Haggana and Batn El Ba'ara settlements in Cairo.
- 177 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p. 17.
- 178 Paraphrased from Sabry 2009, p. 29.
- 179 UN HABITAT 2008, p. 64.
- 180 World Bank 2000, p. 5.
- 181 Data from World Bank 2000.
- 182 Yousry & Atta 1997.
- 183 Bahgat et al. 1999, p. 6.
- 184 Tour Egypt, n.d.
- 185 Data from Emerging Markets Information Service from Tegara Net Business News.
- 186 Jane's Urban Transport Systems 2005.
- 187 Data from the World Bank (2000) study.
- 188 Sabry 2009, p. 31.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 World Bank 2000, p. 8.
- 191 Figures and products lists from the U.S. Department of State (2010).
- 192 Afrol News 2009.
- 193 McGrath 2010b.
- 194 Sabry 2009.
- 195 Sabry 2009, p.32.
- 196 CAMPAS 2009.
- 197 El-Mahdi 2003.
- 198 Hassanein & Khalifa 2006.
- 199 The major work produced at that time was Hernando De Soto's (1998) *Dead capital and the poor in Egypt*.
- 200 Sabry 2009, p. 33.
- 201 Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003.
- 202 Frost 2008.
- 203 El-Mahdi 2003.
- 204 Global March Against Child Labour n.d.
- 205 Ibid.
- 206 Ibid.
- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Details are laid out in Human Rights Watch 2001.
- 209 Unicef n.d..
- 210 UNDP 2010, p. 149.
- 211 Ibid., p.149
- 212 McGrath 2010b.
- 213 Cited in Sabry 2009.
- 214 Sabry 2009, p. 33.
- 215 Ibid., p. 33.
- 216 McGrath 2010a.
- 217 Ibid.
- 218 El-Mahdi 2003.
- 219 World Health Organization 2010a.
- 220 Ibid.
- 221 Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development 2008, p. 30.
- 222 Sabry 2009.
- 223 Shehayeb 2008.
- 224 In a dramatic example, the prime minister's decree number 637 in 2007 announced the creation of the Egyptian Holding Company for Healthcare. All assets of the public health system were to be transferred to this commercial organization to be run on a profit basis. In 2008, the execution of this decree was suspended by the Egyptian Administrative court on the basis of being unconstitutional in terms of the right to health set out in the Egyptian constitution.
- 225 Shehayeb 2009b.
- 226 Sabry 2009, p. 29.

- 227 Sabry 2009, p. 10.
- 228 Shehayeb & Issa 2010; Shehayeb et al. 2003.
- 229 World Health Organization 2010b.
- 230 Boussen et al. 2004.
- 231 World Bank 2008, p.19.
- 232 Although not unique to Egypt, there were food riots in various Egyptian cities in 2008 due to fast rise in food prices. There were fatalities in Cairo in March 2008 in similar riots.
- 233 CAPMAS, Household Income, Expenditure, and Consumption Survey, carried out every five years with a large random sample of 40,000 households.
- 234 The UN Development Programme has used multidimensional indicators to assess human development and inform global poverty analysis, and recently collaborated with Oxford University to develop the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) that was launched in June 2010.
- 235 Sabry (2009) comments that the HIEC Survey of 2004-2005 surveyed 118 households in informal Manshiet Nasser, within a total of 5,898 households surveyed in Cairo governorate. Of the 118 households, only 6.8 per cent were counted as poor by the World Bank 2007 lower poverty line. Sabry argues that this figure is 'simply not plausible' given the prevailing conditions. Although sampling issues within the area could be a reason for this low incidence rate, she asserts that it is also due to poverty lines which are set too low. She claims that while the heterogeneity of informal settlements is acknowledged, the degree of this heterogeneity is actually not known.
- 236 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008.
- 237 Sabry 2009, p.23.
- 238 'In fact, obesity in Egypt is close to being an epidemic. Around 70 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men were overweight or obese in 1998 (Asfaw 2007). The latest 2005 EDHS found that 18 per cent of Egyptian children and 16.2 per cent of children in urban areas suffer from chronic malnutrition or stunting (El Zanaty and Way 2006). Lack of adequate nutrition for children impairs their mental abilities, learning in school, physical abilities for labour and a chance of healthy life (Harper, Marcus et al. 2003)' (Sabry 2009).
- 239 Abdelhalim 2002.
- 240 Sabry 2009, p. 24.
- 241 D. Sims, personal communication November 2010.
- 242 Sims, Kamal & Solomon, p. 17-18.
- 243 Ahmed et al. 2001.
- 244 Sous Le Manguier 2010.
- 245 Ibid.
- 246 World Bank 2007, p. 71; Youssef n.d.
- 247 Faruqi 2008.
- 248 D. Shehayeb, personal communication November 2010.
- 249 World Bank 2008, p.28.
- 250 Early features of statist approach to housing production saw a large number of housing produced for state employees and civil servants.
- 251 Data from Sims, Kamal & Solomon (2008), but suggested by Sims (2011) that the figure may be somewhat greater as some respondents had been gifted or inherited government-built housing and no longer report it as such. Population calculations used here are from Sims (2011), p.104, Table 3.1.
- 252 Quoted in Charbel 2005.
- 253 World Bank 2008, p.79.
- 254 Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008, Chapter 6.
- 255 World Bank 2008, p.71.
- 256 Both quotes taken Charbel 2005.
- 257 USAID 2008.
- 258 de Soto 1998. It should be noted that in keeping with the dominant informal systems that define business and particularly the real estate markets in Egypt, landlords and tenants have in many cases come to various extra-legal agreements whereby more realistic amount are transferred between them and complex subletting arrangements emerge and prevail.
- 259 USAID 2008, p. 37-38.
- 260 World Bank 2008, p. 34.
- 261 There are other new cities planned throughout Egypt, but they do not come under NUCA's authority and are not part of the strategic planning of Greater Cairo.
- 262 Paraphrase of World Bank 2008 findings, p. 79.
- 263 Dorman 2009, p. 284.
- 264 Dorman 2009, p. 282.
- 265 Figures from Singerman 2009, p. 352.
- 266 K. M. Abdelhalim, personal communication October/November 2010.
- 267 World bank 2008, p. 65.
- 268 Quoted in Singerman 2009, p.27, from a speech by the Minister of Housing and Urban Development in 2007 to the American Chamber of Commerce.
- 269 World Bank 2008.
- 270 In Singerman 2009.
- 271 Singerman 2009, p. 20 and Bell 2009, p. 349.
- 272 Bell 2009, p. 365.
- 273 Gerlach 2009, p. 92.
- 274 Bell 2009.
- 275 2A full discussion of UN-HABITAT's approach to rental housing can be explored with Rental Housing: An essential option for the urban poor in developing countries. UN-HABITAT 2003.
- 276 UN-HABITAT 2010, p.177.
- 277 UN-HABITAT 2010, p.151.
- 278 Ibid., p.158.











UN-HABITAT's *Cities and Citizens* series examines urban inequality in the developing world through in-depth analysis of intracity data developed by UN-HABITAT and its partners institutions, on-the-ground interviews, insights and images. *Cairo — a city in transition* is the second book in the series. It is being released at an important and tumultuous time for the country and the city, and when Cairo is very much a city in transition. Despite this, many of the socioeconomic findings elaborated in this study have been prevalent and continue to characterise life in Cairo for the millions that make there home there. Without doubt, many of these characteristics will remain, and continue to challenge planners and policy-makers as they work towards a more just and inclusive city.

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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
PROGRAMME  
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya  
Tel: +254 20 762 3120  
Fax: +254 20 762 3477  
Email: [habitat.publications@unhabitat.org](mailto:habitat.publications@unhabitat.org)  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

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