WOMEN'S HOUSING

AND THE URBAN EXPERIENCE IN EGYPT

Editor: Hala Makhlouf

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

Women's Housing and the Urban Experience in Egypt

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

Egypt Office

Published by **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Egypt Office)**

Produced by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Egypt Office)

*This book does not express the opinion of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the authors bear full responsibility for the content of the book

Free Sample
https://egypt.fes.de/

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

Egypt Office

About Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Egypt

Inspired by its general aims to promote democracy and social justice, to support economic and social development, as well as to advocate for human rights and gender equality, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) started working in Egypt in 1976. Today, the office operates in cooperation with local partners within the framework of several agreements with the Egyptian government. This was first endorsed by Presidential Decree 139/1976 and the Egyptian parliament. The agreement was renewed in 1988, endorsed by Presidential Decree 244/1989 and approved by the Egyptian parliament.

In March 2017, a new Additional Protocol was signed in Berlin by both the Egyptian and the German governments, amending the Cultural Agreement of 1959. This protocol was ratified by the Egyptian parliament in July 2017 and entered into effect in November by Presidential Decree 267/2017.

While the legal framework of FES's engagement in Egypt has changed, its commitment to assist the Egyptian people during the ongoing transformational process remains the same. The Egyptian uprising of 2011 was driven by demands for profound social and political change. Responding to these aspirations is still and will continue to be the main challenge for stakeholders and the whole of Egyptian society during the coming years. Through a broad range of mutually agreed upon projects, FES contributes to the task of meeting this challenge.

The FES cooperates with Egyptian partners in the fields of:

Socio-ecological Transformation
Socio-economic Development
Empowerment of Civil Society
Cooperation and International Dialogue

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Egypt Office

4, El Saleh Ayoub Street
11211 Zamalek, Cairo – Egypt
T: 002 02 27371656-8
F: 002 02 27371659

Email: fes.egypt@fes.de
https://egypt.fes.de/

Contents

Introduction 1

Women and Urban Informality in Egypt 11

Rural Women and Housing in Egypt 44

The Case of Female Student Housing in Egypt: A Literature Review 52

Alternative Care Systems 63

Refugee Women's Access to Housing 79

Conscious Walking: Infrastructures of Gendered Lives in Cairo 92

Introduction

The idea for the book came from a horrible incident in 2021. The death of a female doctor in Dar Al-Salam, a lower-middle-class neighbourhood in Cairo, was broadcast all over the news. She «fell off» the balcony, and the forensics never determined whether she was pushed or cornered and «fell off» as claimed. The young female doctor, 34 years old then, was attacked in her flat by the landlord and the building's doorman, the *bawwab*, against claims that she had a male visitor, which, according to them, is against «society's» moral code. The male visitor turned out to be the gas canister delivery man, and the doctor is now long dead.[1]

Despite not being the first nor the only case in Egypt of this kind, it triggered this book project. It was the beginning of a series of questions on women's access to safe and adequate housing as a constitutional right and on women's safety both in the privacy of their homes and in public. It highlighted the lack of literature focusing solely on topics of women's housing in Egypt, their lived urban experience, their relationship to the city, and their homes and land tenure in the countryside. The book aims to define the gap in the literature and start developing focused literature on the topic of women in relation to housing in particular and urbanity in general as its main target.

Women experience the built environment, whether inside or outside their homes, quite differently from men. Women are still struggling to take up space as men do in the streets, at the workplace, and in commuting. The presence of women in public spaces has to be justifiable. Women are not expected to loiter or stroll around for no reason. They must be moving, sitting in a place, or shopping. Even while shopping, women might hear a comment from a bystander if they stood outside a shop window for too long. Women are expected to go and come home from work, university, or necessary errands. Despite that expectation, one will still easily notice that men outnumber women in the public space.

In the recent past, we have witnessed a series of mob attacks on women during Eid,[2] protests, and several public gatherings. Things seem to be changing a little, however. Looking at younger generations, one can see female teenagers glamoured up and loitering in the streets, mainly in middle-class neighbourhoods. In new suburban developments, the presence of young women in the streets is also more common – mainly in the gated compounds and shopping malls, which are still considered hangout spots despite the boom in online shopping in the post-COVID era.

There is a new wave of younger generations moving freely around the city on skateboards and roller skates. A large number of these groups are young women sliding smoothly between cars, fearlessly doing all the stunts boys pull off in the streets with colourfully lit boards and wheels. For bystanders, they are

1 Nehal Elmeligy,»On Chaos, Disruption, and Women in Public Space: Cairo's Street Situation and the Murder of the "Maadi Girl" and the Single "Al Salam Doctor"», Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 2021-12-01 00:00:00. doi: 10.28943/CSR.005.006

Read More at:

https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/chaos-disruption-and-women-public-space-cairo%E2%80%99s-street-situation-and-murder-%E2%80%9Cmaadi-girl%E2%80%9D-and

2 An official holiday celebrated in Islam.

on the move from a point to a point, even if the skaters are just moving aimlessly. Is it a question of movement, then?

Being part of a group also helps. They move in groups of males and females brought together by their love for the fun sport. Geographically, they are also limited. They meet somewhere central in the city and start from there. However, they can only be seen in some neighbourhoods.

Safe and adequate housing for women is at the core of gender equality and should be at the core of both policy and advocacy work in Egypt. Globally, women tend to suffer more to get access to adequate and safe housing, especially in Egypt. Houses are usually legally owned by men even when the woman is the main provider in the family. There are no government policies that directly target women's inclusion in housing. Despite the country's thriving real estate sector, there is no trace of women being represented in the market. There is not enough data to know the number of women who own or rent homes. Women who suffer from bad housing conditions are most likely to fall under the circumstances of poverty, low-paying jobs, no or under-representation in the formal economy, and urban and rural marginalisation. Women are also the most vulnerable groups at the receiving end of domestic violence. Ensuring access to housing for women provides them with safer and healthier environments. Dismissing women as main users of homes and cities hinders the creation of cities that are inclusive and safe for everyone.

The housing situation is a precarious one in general, let alone the precarity of the position of women in housing, given their vulnerability when it comes to ownership of homes and land and not having their names on contacts, despite being the breadwinners in some cases. This publication aims to investigate the unrealised constitutional rights to safe, affordable housing for women in Egypt. The intersectionality of the topic makes engaging with it crucial. This project investigates the ways women navigate their entitlement to housing in different contexts and their urban experience as a whole.

The book is composed of six chapters, in addition to the introduction. Each chapter discusses one topic related to women's housing and urbanity: Women in informal settings, migrant women and their urban experience, female student housing, women in relation to land (especially in the countryside), alternative care in the form of housing for the elderly and children, and last but not least, walking as a form of movement.

We hoped to discuss other topics like women's ownership in the real estate market, either as buyers in private development projects or affordable public housing. Unfortunately, developers often keep their sales data private and refuse to share it with the public except for revenues and the number of sales units. We were told, however, that women are usually the main target of the marketing campaigns, being the influential force behind the decision to purchase the house. It was also stated that they do not categorise sales by gender, but if they wanted to, they could find an estimated number of women owning units in a specific project. On the bright side, this makes room for more research, and hopefully, we will be able to write more extensively about women's ownership of homes at some point.

For now, bound by time constraints and the lack of available data and literature, it was important to release this small book, hoping we can build more on it in the future.

Logic and objectives

There is an outrageous lack of data on the situation of women's housing in Egypt; hence, there is a need to provide a clear understanding of the situation, its dimensions, and contributing factors to be able to work on policy solutions and recommendations. This project in no way undermines the research done by notable scholars covering some of these topics; it aims to put these related topics in one place and highlight the importance of linking them together. There is a decent amount of research on women in urbanity, which is a good indicator, but the main lack happens when it comes to housing. However, the information available on women and gender in urbanity helps a lot with deriving an understanding of women in housing in Egypt.

The book aims to provide a reader dedicated only to female housing and women's urban experience at large to start a targeted discussion on these topics and open the door for more to come.

The book is written by brilliant women researchers, for it affects their daily lives and has a direct relationship with these issues. We thought to continue the project with as many women as possible; the designer, the proofreader and I all identify as women.

Methodology

The chapters are written in different ways due to several factors, with the availability of data from one topic to the other on top of them. Indeed, little research is specifically dedicated to these topics, but the percentage varies from one topic to another. There is reasonably good material research written on women in informal urban settings, for example, but very little research on female student housing that we are aware of, hence, the information provided by the two chapters. One other factor is the different backgrounds of the researchers. Some come from academia, some from an urban background, some from a gender-focused background, and some are professional practitioners.

The papers are written mainly by building on current data and existing literature reviews. Due to the scarcity of data, the researchers depended to a great extent on trying to map the existing data and present it in a coherent and concise manner. Data consisted of published research and public data, as well as unpublished research with authorisation to use in the case of the female student housing chapter, thanks to the Population Council for allowing the author to use the data. Some authors drew a mock situation for a woman navigating her building and neighbourhood, using walking as a mode of transport for example. The papers aim to provide recommendations for policy-making and for research and how it could be developed further.

Chapters

The book starts with «Women and Urban Informality.» It is a crucial chapter as it is one of the few topics with enough data and research. It discusses women in informal urban settings, their housing and landsituation, and their accessibility to adequate housing. Urban informality is one of the topics that have been studied quite well. Academic institutions, development practitioners, and government bodies have been and are still working extensively on informal settlements. Each of these parties has a different take on studying the issue and also with different purposes. However, they all work towards studying, reforming, and upgrading informal settlements. This chapter focuses on women

in informal settlements, their access to safe, adequate housing, and their relationship to the land, community, neighbourhood, and city at large. The chapter also discusses women's access to public space and transportation and their role in the local economy and production. It also highlights women's role in terms of political participation and urban local governance.

The second chapter, «Rural Women and Housing in Egypt,» discusses women in relation to the built environment in the countryside. Discussing housing and the built environment in the countryside would open the discussion on the question of land ownership. Land is a crucial means of production, especially with the limited spaces in Egypt's villages. The question of land also addresses the case of inheritance in Egypt. Conflicts of land inheritance are quite common. In some cases, women are denied their land inheritance to keep the land in the family. This chapter addresses this issue and the link between land and property ownership and access to housing. It also discusses women's contribution to the local economic development through their work in agriculture.

The chapter on «Female Student Housing in Egypt» comes third. One of the most noticeable situations where women live away from their families' homes is the situation of female students. It is common for young women to live alone during their university years because the formal education allocation system after high school depends mainly on grades. Accordingly, school enrollment may take students elsewhere other than their hometowns. While very socially accepted, it still comes with its own difficulties. The chapter, though, tries to capture information on female student housing based on broader research done by the same author on student housing in general. The chapter mainly examines the existing literature, highlights the gaps in this literature, and provides recommendations for further research.

«Alternative Care Systems» looks into alternative care housing models. It covers two cases of alternative care housing: housing for children and housing for the elderly. As two different vulnerable groups, they are entitled to decent housing, yet they do not necessarily get decent access to it. The chapter tries to focus on the elderly and children according to international guidelines and local laws and regulations. It comes at an interesting time when the Egyptian parliament is discussing a unified law for the elderly in Egypt. The research takes a rights-based angle and focuses more on the laws and regulations governing this group, focusing on senior women and children without parental care. It also has an interesting intertwining approach to discussing and bringing the two topics together.

Then, we discuss women refugees in urban settings in Egypt. «Refugee Women's Access to Housing» examines refugee women and how they navigate their lives in the city. It also tries to understand the situation of the refugee women in Egypt at large. The author attempts to draw some information and understanding of their housing situation, accessibility to transport and services, and their urban experience in general. The author's research tries to capture the housing question in every possible discussion. It tries to understand it through economic possibilities and accessibilities, access to safe living environments, and being the head of the household in most cases, especially amongst those coming from conflict areas. The research draws on the work of international organisations with refugees and migrant communities. It also draws on international laws and regulations signed by the Egyptian state and at a time when a national refugee law is being drafted to be discussed in the

parliament, but it has not yet been published to the public.

Last but not least, we discuss walking as a form of movement in «Conscious Walking: Infrastructures of Gendered Lives in Cairo.» This chapter tries to understand women's urban experience through walking. It investigates walking as a means of movement on three levels: walking inside their housing unit, from their housing units to the entrance of their buildings and from their buildings to the means of transport they usually use. It tries to conceptualise women's movement and the materialised culture of construction and infrastructure. Women navigating the city is an important topic and is discussed widely in urban and gender studies, but women navigating the small spaces of movement is quite overlooked, especially in Egypt. The chapter highlights the importance of urban design in women's accessibility to both public and private spaces. It shows different modes of design and their impact on women's lives.

Next steps

The publication hopes to be an inspiration for further discussion of the situation of women in housing in Egypt in particular and women and their urban experience at large. It aims to motivate scholars and institutions to focus more on the topic and cover its missing related parts. It wishes to build on what has been done already and extend the research, covering more issues and deepening the discussion on the already existing ones. Also, we would like to extend the invitation to point us toward existing research that we missed or that was not accessible to us in covering the topics discussed in the following chapters. Finally, this book aims to highlight the gap in data and research so that further research can be done and to suggest policies to guarantee better, adequate, safe housing and living for women. We aspire to engage not only scholars and research institutions but also civil society and government, represented in policy-making bodies, legal entities, and executive bodies.

Editor

Hala Makhlouf

Biographies

Marwa Barakat is an urban development researcher and practitioner, and feminist writer. Currently, she is a fellow of University College London (UCL), UK, and holds the position of the communication and fundraising officer at Sierra Leone Urban Research Center, focusing on the development of informal settlements in the cities of Sierra Leone and West Africa. Marwa holds a Master's degree in urban development planning from UCL and a postgraduate degree in Architectural Studies from Cairo University. Her multidisciplinary background and diverse work experiences allowed her to work for, engage with, and gain exposure to several governmental, private sector, civil society, and academic institutions. She also delivered consultancies to several policy research institutions and United Nations organisations in Egypt and the MENA region. Marwa has extensive fieldwork experience and grassroots involvement in many parts of Egypt, in addition to Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, South Africa, England, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone. Her work explores the intersections between urban development and gender, environmental sustainability and preservation, governance and institutionalisation. She works under the ideological and conceptual frameworks of social and environmental justice.

Omnia Khalil is a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Interdisciplinary Programs at City College of New York and a PhD holder in the anthropology program at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY). Her research and writings focus on urban geography, violence, and political economy, with revolution as a cross-cutting theme. Since 2008, as an urban researcher, Omnia has focused on community participatory action planning and has led many projects in Cairo, working with local communities.

Nada El-Kouny received her doctoral degree in sociocultural anthropology from Rutgers University. Nada is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the American University in Cairo (AUC) for the multi-sited project «Traces of Mobility, Violence, and Solidarity: Reconceptualising Cultural Heritage through the Lens of Migration.» At AUC, Nada also teaches Sociology. Nada's research spans migration, social mobility, and infrastructure in Egypt's Nile Delta.

Salma Abou Hussein is a social researcher and development practitioner with more than 12 years of experience and a demonstrated track record of working in the fields of gender equity, sexual and reproductive health, refugee/migration issues, and, most recently, youth employability. She is currently working as a senior project officer at the Population Council in Egypt, where she is conducting research on menstrual health. Salma has a proficient understanding and knowledge of social policy analysis, quantitative/qualitative research, and project management. Salma has worked for multiple UN agencies and international NGOs. She recently received a second Master's degree in humanitarian health at Johns Hopkins University. She received her first Master's degree in social development practice from UCL and holds a Bachelor's degree in mass communication from the AUC.

Nada Wahba is an independent researcher based in Cairo. She holds an MA in social anthropology of development from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). She has a decade of experience working in local and international civil society organisations in both programmatic and research capacities. Her research interests lie at the intersection between gender and economic justice and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Sarah Yousry is a researcher and consultant with over ten years of experience in international development and migration issues. In researching transnational migration, she has become particularly interested in the lived experience of migrants and migrant health. She has previously worked with international agencies, including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as academic institutions, such as the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the AUC. She holds an MA in social anthropology of development from SOAS, the University of London.

Hala Makhlouf is an independent researcher and consultant with 15 years of work experience in the development field. Hala has two degrees: an MSc in urban studies from UCL and an MA in development economics and international cooperation from the University of Rome Tor Vergata. She worked as the socio-economic program manager for Friedrich Ebert Stiftung from 2021-2023. Hala worked as a consultant for other international organisations like UN-Habitat, Care International, ILO and others. She has experience working in Egypt, the UK, and the MENA region.

Women and Urban Informality in Egypt

Marwa Barakat

1. Introduction

1.1 Urban Informality and Relevance of a Gender Lens

Urban informality is a complex phenomenon that has been persistently growing across multiple sectors of the global economy. Informal land markets, housing, industries, trades, and other informal economies are all spatially manifested in the so-called 'slums' or 'informal settlements.' Informal settlements are not merely an exception in contemporary cities across the globe, specifically in the global south. They are deeply embedded in the city's economic, social and political systems. According to the latest reports, the majority of the world population experiences their lives in the context of informality, whether by living in informal settlements or by working in the informal economy or both (Cities Alliance, 2021). Informal settlements are often the result of a distinctive type of land and housing market that achieves affordability and good location through compromising formal planning standards and regulations. The trends of informality in cities exist in a complex continuum: from illegal squatters' settlements in risky and deteriorated areas of the city to upscale informal subdivisions of legally owned lands. In some cases, the lands and houses are even exchanged through legal market transactions with proper deeds, but in violation of land use regulations and formal building codes. Informal housing is also the primary mode of urban expansion in the rural/urban interface on the peripheries of existing cities in many countries, including Egypt. Urban informality, consequently, is viewed as the predominant mode of metropolitan urbanisation in the global south (AlSayyad, 2004; Roy, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2003, 2009). In Egypt, governmental reports indicate that more than 60% of urban lands around the country are developed in an informal fashion (Khalifa, 2011). In the metropolitan city of Greater Cairo, the largest city in Egypt and the capital of the country, the informal mode of urbanisation is evidently dominant, hosting about two-thirds of the city's population. In 2011, the population of the informal areas was estimated to be 12 million inhabitants – 67% out of Cairo's 18 million at the time (Sims, 2013). Building on this estimation, the informal population in Cairo today can be roughly estimated to be more than 15 million people.

While there are many intersections between the issues of urban poverty and urban informality, informal settlements are not just the domain of those living in poverty anymore. They have been increasingly growing to cater to the housing and livelihood needs of a large segment of the middle class. Lack of affordability and accessibility in the formal land markets pushes more people to settle in the informal areas that meet their housing needs. Informal settlements also tend to be close to more affluent areas, as they play a significant role in the economies of the upper classes by providing cheap labour and other economic services.

There is an overdue need for applying a gender lens of analysis when intervening with the issues of urban informality in Egyptian cities, which affect millions of women, men, girls and boys. Egypt is ranked among the highest levels of discrimination against women in many international gender inequality indicators[3], which include women's

3 According to the World Bank study, Egypt ranked 134 out of 144 countries in the Gender Gap Index (GGI) in 2017 by the World Economic Forum with a score of 0.608. In the Gender Inequality Index (GII) by UNDP, Egypt ranked 135 out of 159 GII with a score of 0.565. In the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) by OECD in 2014, Egypt's score was 0.428, which put the country in the lowest category, "very high level of discrimination", while the sub-categories reflected high discrimination in family codes and also restricted resources and assets, including houses.

access to and control over assets such as lands and houses (Zeitoun, 2018). Gender is rarely discussed or recognised in the making of the slum eradication and informal settlement upgrading policies in Egypt. Many gendered dimensions are overlooked, which leads to further exclusion of women and girls from the city plans and benefits. There is a gap in information and analysis about women's share of land and property ownership, security of tenure for women, women and girls' safety in public spaces, transport needs, food security, healthcare needs and many other data gaps. As a large segment of the population, women's involvement in the economy should also be studied, recognised and planned. Globally (UN-Habitat, 2013) and in Egypt (Tadamun, 2019), resources suggest that women, more than men, are highly engaged in informal, irregular, lower-quality, lower-paid employment. These diverse informal economies often provide essential urban services to a large segment of the population and help the city survive. Besides, the share of women in the informal economy and in the overall urban economies would be much higher if unpaid domestic and caregiving work in the home and the community is included.

Another source of inequality is the gap between what women give to the city, «gendered inputs,» and what they get from the city, «gendered outcomes» (UN-Habitat, 2013). Women in informal settlements contribute significantly to the provision of housing and essential services; they carry increased burdens in terms of paid work and unpaid care work in order to enhance the quality of life in their homes and communities, yet they are often the least benefiting among city dwellers from the economic, social, political and cultural opportunities that come with urban development plans and upgrading projects. International organisations have been broadening their analysis away from the classic focus on women's poverty and focusing more on their share of «urban prosperity» to realise this gap between women's contributions and their gains (UN-Habitat, 2013). This approach can be instrumental in studying women's state in the context of urban informality. It is important to apply a gender lens when investigating the quality of life of the people concerning any progress the state is making. Not every progress means a better life for women, as gender gaps determine who benefits from development the most and who is left out. Experts suggest the following:

> While levels of urbanisation and economic wealth broadly correspond positively, as well as display an inverse relationship with poverty, the correlation of these variables with quantitative indicators of gender equality is much less systematic. This undermines the common hypothesis that urbanisation and economic growth are good for women and suggests that in order for urban prosperity to reach women, more efforts to advance gender equality are required. (UN-Habitat, 2013, p. VIII)

This means that without setting designated criteria and policy instruments to respond to gender issues, there is no guarantee that women will benefit from any progress or positive impact of urbanisation. It is not enough to upgrade public spaces; measures should be applied to ensure that women and girls can access these spaces without jeopardising their safety. What instruments are put in place to ensure equal access and rights to land, housing and property for women? When providing new investments and livelihood opportunities, it is critical to consider how many jobs are available for women and what barriers prevent them from accessing these opportunities. Would the policy help them overcome these barriers?

Does eradicating poverty in the community automatically translate into a better quality of life and improved food, shelter and health conditions for women or girls, or do we have to consider intrahousehold inequalities and discrimination against women and girls inside their homes?

These inequalities and differences between men and women were exposed and amplified by the major shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an inherent vulnerability to shocks within informality since people with informal houses or jobs or both live in much more precarious conditions than others. This means that any economic or environmental shock, individual or systematic, can dramatically destabilise their lives and incomes and weaken their ability to survive. However, these vulnerabilities are also gendered. It is widely claimed that women, more than men, were particularly negatively affected by this systematic shock of the pandemic. The devastating impact of COVID-19 on all people in informal settlements and informal economies worldwide hit women even harder in terms of their ability to navigate the city, access transport, food, and health services, secure tolerable housing conditions, and afford rent (UCLG, 2020). Data from Arab countries also indicates that women, in general, suffered higher risks and worse conditions during the peak of the pandemic due to «pre-existing inequalities, social norms and unequal power relations» (UNDP, 2021). Women suffered the most tremendous loss in income and work, especially in the informal sector, such as street vendors, food sellers, domestic workers, waste pickers, and those in informal industrial or trade businesses. Women experienced more layoffs than men and a steeper drop in income (ILO, 2020a, 2020b; WIEGO, 2020). Additionally, with the closures of schools and child care services and the increased risk of sickness, the daily care, cleaning, cooking, and other domestic responsibilities increased dramatically and burdened women even further. Women who work from home or have their small informal businesses (like tailors and homemade crafts or food producers) had to deal with the sudden overcrowding in the house and the lack of sufficient space to manage work and family needs. Women also suffered to provide food for their families, and in many cases, poor women compromised their own nutrition in order to give the available food to their children and the men in the family. Although many governments, including the Egyptian government, implemented policies to overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic, few of these policies were considered gender-sensitive by international organisations, few focused on the informal sector, and even fewer - if any - targeted women in this sector.[4]

4 The data on the ILO social protection dashboard indicates that between 2020 and 2022, only 15.5% of social protection measures were gender sensitive worldwide. The percentage drops to only 12.37 % in the Arab states and 14.29% in Egypt. The analysis included measures announced by countries regarding income support, housing and basic services, food and nutrition, unemployment, old-age and other functions. Available on:

https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowWiki.action?id=3426&lang=EN. Accessed 20 April 2023.

For further policy response in Egypt, see the IFPRI COVID-19 Policy Response Portal. The Egyptian government distributed several batches of aid to irregular workers (EGP 500 per month) that covered in total 2.26 million "eligible" workers out of 6 million applicants. Other social protection measures included adding 100,000 families to the Takaful and Karama monetary subsidies programme and distributing food boxes to poor families. None of these measures, however, targeted women specifically or dealt with existing gender barriers that hinder women and girls' access to such aids. Available on:

https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ifpri.td7290/viz/CPRPORTAL/Overview?publish=yes. Accessed 20 April 2023.

Ultimately, applying a gendered lens requires understanding the concept of intersectionality. Despite sharing a common identity and basic gender roles, urban women are still a highly diverse group. They experience different barriers and opportunities based on class, age, religion, race, physical or mental disability, marital status, education level, employment, migration, citizenship situation, spatial location, and many other characteristics. Women in informal settlements are also very diverse. It is essential to identify the experience of each group of women (the young girls, the seniors, the married, the single mothers, the professionals, the domestic workers, the refugees, and those from a minority religious or ethnic group) in order to address the different barriers and development gaps each group faces within the context of informality. Each of these identity markers can determine many factors that can inspire different policy responses. Age, for example, not only reflects specific needs but also determines women's roles and power position, as Tacoli and Satterthwaite explain:

> The stage at which a woman is in her life cycle [...] makes a fundamental difference, as it determines her care responsibilities and her ability to combine these with paid work. It also largely defines her identity within the household as daughter, wife, mother, or grandmother, each of which entails different gender relations. (Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013, p.3-4)

Also, having a male partner or the lack of one can affect a woman's state dramatically. Urban areas, in general, and urban informal settlements, in particular, have higher proportions of women who head their households worldwide (UN-Habitat, 2013). These women encounter major challenges as they face social stigma, manage larger responsibilities and have a heavier work burden; therefore, they require special policy focus. In Egypt, female-headed households (mainly divorcees and widowers) are recognised by government agencies as a vulnerable group that receives support from different housing and social solidarity programs. This group represents a significant segment of 17.8% of total Egyptian households and is rapidly increasing (Hamad et al., 2018). They are more concentrated in urban areas, with the highest percentage in the metropolitan regions (El-Laithy, 2001; Hamad et al., 2018), which are greatly characterised by informal urbanisation modes. In the 2016 census, the percentage of female-headed households in Cairo reached a little less than 30% of all households (Hamad et al., 2018). Despite that, their preferences and perceptions are not studied well, leading to their exclusion from most housing provisions by the public and private sectors (Hamad et al., 2018). On the other hand, some policy researchers argue that focusing on female-headed households only in receiving state subsidies or support might generate discrimination against women in male-headed households and ignore their vulnerabilities and gendered poverty (Abdel Latif et al., 2017). Applying a gender lens, therefore, has its own challenges. As much as policy focus is needed for such a group of women, it can dismiss other women's needs and reinforce the patriarchal norms that assume a woman is only at risk if she does not have a man to protect her and provide for her. Gender bias can only be avoided by using critical and thorough gender-based measurements and indicators to gather and analyse data effectively.

This paper explores ways to incorporate the gender lens into our analysis and understanding of the multiple aspects of urban informality. It aims to enhance the results of informal settlement upgrading

projects by guiding policy towards important policy areas that need specific gender focus when being addressed. This paper proposes four pillars for informal settlements upgrading policy: 1) Land, housing and basic services; 2) Public spaces, mobility and transport; 3) Local economies, employment and productivity; and lastly, 4) Political participation and engagement in local governance. In this effort, the paper depends on available literature and the latest reports by development agencies, as well as my field notes from working within informal settlements in Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Minya, Qena and other cities between 2010 and 2022, which allowed extensive observation and examination of the informal urban settings in Egypt.

1.2 Understanding "Urban Informal Settlements" in the context of Egypt

Informality in Egypt is an obvious «state of exception» (Agamben, 1998, 2005; Roy,2005; Schmitt, 1985). Many scholars have argued that informality in housing and economic activities is prevalent in Egyptian society and goes far beyond poor neighbourhoods (Singerman, 2009; Deboulet, 2009; Dorman, 2009). Ananya Roy argues that informality, especially in the global south, «must be understood not as the object of state regulation but rather as produced by the state itself» (Roy, 2005). This is particularly true in the context of Egyptian cities. Yahia Shawkat tackled the complicated relationship between the Egyptian state, the law, and informal urbanisation as follows:

> Looking back at six decades of elaborate de facto tolerance of informal self-building, it appears to be less a series of cobbled-together knee-jerk reactions than a deliberate policy on the part of the government. [...] Instead of recognising self-building as a legitimate form of housing provision – and so designing policy that accommodates and encourages it – successive regimes have sought to trap builders, and lately buyers of informally built homes, in a manufactures informality. […] This waxing and waning of authority is reflected in the varying forms of recognition extended by different governments – from discretionary extension of infrastructure between the 1950s and 1980s, to the full, legalised electricity extended to the 'ashwa'iyat between 1993 and 2011, through a diluted semiformal recognition by way of the coded electricity meters from 2011 onwards. As the government has been actively commodifying the housing market over the last decade, informal housing has also evolved from being almost exclusively owner-built by the marginalised to real-estate that can be capitalised on by developers. Government has responded in an increasingly arbitrary way, legalising particular infractions, while demolishing others using the very same laws. (Shawkat, 2020, p. 55-56)

Urban informal settlements in Egypt should not be treated as marginal or limited phenomena. It is widely claimed that informal urban development has for decades been, and will continue to be, the most dominant mode of urbanisation in contemporary Egyptian cities (Dorman, 2013; Piffero, 2009a; Sejourne, 2009; Shawkat, 2020; Sims, 2010). It is considered «by far […] the most extensive» in the region of Arab states (Sims, 2013). Sejourne (2009) even argues that given the spatial and demographic extents of the phenomena, it can be perceived as the «normal situation» in Egyptian cities. Most research work has focused

on the largest cities in Egypt, namely Cairo and Alexandria, and their metropolitan areas. Informal areas appear to be accommodating around 67% of the population in Greater Cairo and around 40% of the population of Alexandria (Sims, 2013). Less data is available on other Egyptian cities. However, David Sims (2013) anticipates even higher proportions of informal areas' inhabitants in most cities and towns in the Delta and Upper Egypt. However, most informal settlements in Egypt neither fit the common perception of the developing world's «slums» nor demonstrate any of their characteristics (Khalifa, 2011; Piffero, 2009a; Sims, 2010; Shawkat, 2020). This raises the problematic issue of defining «slums» and «informal settlements» whether in the global literature and policy or at the national level in Egypt. As many scholars have pointed out, there are significant discrepancies in definitions, population statistics and geographical borders of Egypt's informal settlements between data sets used by different authorities and sometimes even in different departments within the same authority (Khalifa, 2011; Sabry, 2009; Sims, 2010; Tadamun, 2014). Furthermore, urban experts have recognised and classified multiple forms of informal urbanisation in Egypt's urban and preurban areas. Detailed descriptions of the differences between informal settlement typologies were drawn by Sims (2000) and Soliman (2004), among others. These distinguished types of informal areas reflected very different circumstances in terms of legality, tenure rights and governing legal frameworks (rental control, Awqaf (religious endowments) laws, and historic areas codes), and mode of land development (agricultural or desert lands, privately or publicly owned lands, among others). They also emphasised the diversity, heterogeneity and complexity of the phenomenon that was influenced by the long history of informality and the incremental development and expansion of such areas over time, along with the different groups of society they were built to cater for and the actors involved in their development.

Experts have attributed the wide-spreading and the rapid growth rate of informal urban development to many factors. Among these factors are the inadequate housing policies and insufficient formal housing provisions (Sejourne, 2009; Sims, 2013), the high requirements of Egypt's restrictive building codes and the burdensome procedures to obtain an official building permit (Piffero, 2009a). This is in addition to the unrealistic physical planning logic that drives the Egyptian planning system, or what Deboulet calls the «dictatorship of the straight line» (2009), while the actual government plans to tackle informality were described by Dorman to be «a combination of wishful thinking and elite aggrandisement» (2013). Shawkat (2015) argues that the root cause is the «deregulated housing market,» where house prices exceed any increase in wages for most Egyptians. The formal planning authority's assumptions and attitudes towards acceptable urban areas are based on outdated conceptions of modernity and urban planning that are oblivious to local environments and the financial constraints people face. Therefore, they are dismissive of the traditional ways people have used for building for centuries (Deboulet, 2009; Dorman, 2013). On the other hand, people have been developing their own housing by subdividing lands and planning and building their houses in an informal fashion. They retrieved more suitable solutions or what experts labelled as «self-help solutions» (Dorman, 2013), «self-built» (Shawkat, 2020) or «do-it-yourself homes» (sims, 2013), indicating the same urbanisation processes. Shawkat (2020) explains that incremental building of one's house is the most convenient way for those who earn irregular incomes and cannot commit to monthly payments (rent or instalments). Official data indicates that two-

thirds of the Egyptian workforce is employed informally, and 50% of this group does not have a regular income/job -regardless of their income level (Shawkat, 2020). This easily explains the inadequacy of most formal housing financing schemes to the largest portion of the population of urban areas. It is also much cheaper to self-build than to purchase, and it allows building design flexibility (Shawkat, 2020). Most house-owners in informal settlements designated workplaces on the ground floor of their houses (such as workshops or small factories, shops, clinics, pharmacies, cookeries, bakery shops, etc.) either to use them for their own business or to rent them out. They also provide themselves and their neighbourhoods with small mosques, churches, nurseries for toddlers and other essential community spaces. This flexibility offered by the informal mixed-use development is usually missing in formal housing schemes targeting middle- and low-income classes.

The advantages of living in such areas for a large segment of the population are evident. They are «self-sufficient» and are built in a way that ensures all needs can be found within walking distance from one's house (Shehayeb, 2009). They provide proximity to the house and workplace, whether by including the workplace inside the building or very close by (Piffero,2009b; Shawkat, 2020; Shehayeb, 2009). These factors reduce the need for transport, which saves money and energy and promotes walkability. These areas also provide a sense of community, social acceptability, safety and security, all due to the proximity of neighbouring houses and the extended social networks that allow better policing of these streets and protection from suspicious strangers (Shehayeb, 2009; Tadamun,2014). They also have a high level of social solidarity and a very high degree of dependency on social networks (family/kin, extended family relatives, and neighbours) in every aspect of daily life, like borrowing money for personal crises, collectively financing improvements of houses and neighbourhoods, helping in child rearing, finding job opportunities, and more (Shehayeb, 2009; Singerman, 1995). However, this is not an attempt to romanticise informality. Understanding the benefits people seek in these areas allows a comprehensive understanding of their assets, needs and demands. However, these informal settlements often suffer many problems and disadvantages, as explained in Piffero (2009a) and Shehayeb (2009). The neighbourhoods are quite inaccessible due to the extremely narrow and unpaved streets. They lack sufficient services and infrastructure, and they often suffer from the absence of recreational and open spaces. The buildings have high residential densities and poor living conditions, such as poor ventilation and lighting, often leading to health hazards. Some informal settlements might be built in risky or environmentally hazardous locations that can be life-threatening or impose serious safety and health risks (Piffero, 2009a; Shehayeb, 2009). There is also a very tiny percentage of shacks or «deteriorated slum pockets» (Sims, 2010; UN-Habitat, 2003), which host the poorest and most vulnerable communities living in a severely precarious situation in terms of legality and tenure, quality of life and structural safety of their houses (Shawkat, 2020; Sims, 2010). People consciously decide to trade these basic rights for other economic and social gains, given their limited resources and the structural barriers that prevent them from seeking better housing options.

When it comes to policy interventions, the Egyptian state classifies informal settlements into two categories, unplanned areas and unsafe areas, and intervenes differently with each category. The unplanned areas represent the vast majority of the informal settlements around Egypt, consisting mostly of properly structured concrete houses built

through «extralegal processes» outside the official urban planning and building control systems (Sims, 2010). The unsafe areas, which represent a small portion of the phenomenon, are further classified into four degrees of risk, with the highest degree being life-threatening housing (Khalifa, 2011). Unsafe areas are also not necessarily part of any unplanned areas; they mainly exist as inner pockets in the core of old cities (Khalifa, 2011; Sims, 2003, 2010). While the Egyptian government had a history of policy interventions with urban slums and informal areas that goes back to the first half of the twentieth century, it was not until 2008 that a dedicated authority was established for informal settlements, the *Informal Settlements Development Facility* (ISDF), as an emergency response to the disastrous event of the Dwaiqa landslide that killed more than 115 persons of the informal settlement residents (Shawkat, 2015; Tadamun, 2014). In 2014, the Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements was established to oversee ISDF, only to be dissolved 15 months later in 2015, reflecting high resistance within the government to such a body. The ISDF then became under the authority of the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, emphasising the limited focus on housing unit building and provision without further consideration of an integrated, holistic vision of intervening with such a complex ecosystem of economic and social networks. In 2021, a cabinet decree re-established the ISDF and changed its name to the Urban Development Facility (UDF), indicating a broader mandate than focusing on the issues of urban informality. In a press interview, Executive Director of UDF Khaled Seddek stated that the UDF has begun a new era of operating as a «special economic agency» with a «private sector logic» and is expected to enter into market competitions to establish elaborate urban development projects all over Egypt, depending on state budget allocations, Gulf investments and potential Central Bank loan (Omar, 2022). The size of the affiliated businesses that UDF currently runs is estimated to be 1.1 Trillion EGP, according to Seddek, with a diverse list of projects including the rehabilitation of the World Heritage site of Historic Cairo, Building residential complexes in different governorates and continuing ISDF interventions with informal settlements, which comprise the demolition of areas classified as «unsafe», resettlement or relocation of residents or both, upgrading/relocation of informal markets, and limited, and rather random, interventions in unplanned areas. Seddek particularly mentioned their plans to continue the «demolition of unsafe areas» that are not necessarily limited to safety concerns and goals but in order to align with the larger urban planning vision (Omar, 2022). These changes represent the continuation, and even expansion, of highly problematic policies that prioritise profitability and financial feasibility of individual projects and the agency in general without recognising the social function of land and housing or setting up clear measures for affordable housing and a sustainable local economy. Bringing Gulf investments to the game and competing within private sector ideologies will most probably lead to further commodification of land and housing, which are, paradoxically, the root causes pushing people towards informal housing.

2. Pillars for a Gender-Aware Policy

2.1 Land, Housing, and Basic Services

Land and housing are the core of any upgrading policy addressing informal settlements. Developing a gender-sensitive policy requires a deep understanding of what housing means to women. Housing is an essential human need and right for everyone. It goes beyond the basic need for shelter, as it is considered a critical factor in the realisation of people's identity and sense of belonging, and it plays a significant role in shaping their lifestyle, networks and opportunities. Improvements in housing are considered a meaningful pathway out of poverty and precarious living conditions (UN-Habitat, 2013). Due to the strong linkage between women and the domestic domain, women tend to be exceptionally affected by housing conditions and changes within and around the housing environment. As Miraftab explains:

> Housing is a key resource for women; it is an asset important to their economic condition and central to their physical and social well-being. It is the site of child rearing and income generation and a nexus for social networks of support and community-based reliance [...] Housing is a significant economic asset to women that contributes to their independence, economic security and bargaining power with men in their households and in society at large. Most importantly, it helps women determine their own futures and make the decisions that affect their lives. (Miraftab, 2001, p. 154-156)

Women's equal rights to land and property, housing, and essential infrastructure and services have been established through many international and regional human rights conventions. Women and men should be able to own, access, control, and inherit land and housing equally. Women should be able to mobilise resources, organise, lobby and advocate for their equal land and housing rights (UN-Habitat, 2006). However, these international human rights obligations have not been translated into corresponding national legislation in many countries including Egypt. There is a massive gap between the rights guaranteed in the existing national laws and the practices on the ground. Statistically, women represent a tiny percentage of land and property owners worldwide (Chant, 2013) and in Egypt (World Bank, 2023). They also rarely have control over family assets, especially houses, in many countries, including Egypt (UN-Habitat, 2013; Zeitoun, 2018), and they are the most affected by infrastructure and service deficiencies (Chant, 2013; Cities Alliance, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2013).

In the spatial case of urban informal settlements, where legal and political marginalisation and lack of tenure security and adequate housing and services are dominant, women face the same risks as men, in addition to specific gendered vulnerabilities and challenges. Following is a discussion of the global literature on women's access to land, housing and services in the context of informality, with potential links to Egyptian informal settlements.

2.1.1 Women's Access to Informal Land and Housing Markets

Land subdivisions and transactions in informal settlements, although they happen outside the formal land management systems, are

still facilitated according to distinct locally-managed informal practices for accessing, trading and holding lands (Royston, 2013). Most official legal land systems fail to recognise the social function of land and do not protect people's rights/claims to these informal houses, which they have negotiated and fought for (Marx & Rubin, 2008). This gap in legal protection and political recognition between the formal and informal systems contributes to inequality and marginalisation of the informal settlements residents, including the women. Urban planning regimes in most countries are too inflexible and do not prefer in-situ upgrading; hence, planning reforms and adopting appropriate inclusive legislation are highly needed (Cities Alliance, 2021). However, recognising these informal practices might not be enough to ensure women's rights since they might discriminate against women and exclude them from any decision-making and control over land and property. These traditional systems should be carefully assessed and addressed with multi-leveled policy interventions to ensure gender parity. As Roy points out, policy and planning can easily «consolidate and formalise gendered divisions and hierarchies, deepening the insecurity of women» (Roy, 2005, p.). Formal property and land management systems, as well as informal systems, are both enriched with patriarchal and class power. Formalisation, therefore, without critical examination of such dynamics and implications, can lead to deeper gender inequalities while also making lands less affordable and less accessible to many families living in poverty.

To understand women's access to land and property in informal settlements in Egypt, we should expand our analysis to capture the legal and socio-cultural constraints that determine women's rights to property in Egyptian society in general. Although no law restricts women's ownership of land, they rarely own land in Egypt. The latest available data from the Egypt Agricultural Census 1999-2000 indicates that women represented only 5% of land owners while men were 95%. Female ownership was mainly characterised by small plot ownership - less than one feddan (FAO, n.d.). One of the main ways to access land is through inheritance. Due to Islamic inheritance laws,[5] women are only entitled to a share of 50% of men's inheritance rights. These laws apply to all religious communities in Egypt, including non-Muslims (Hassan et al., 2021). In practice, many Egyptian women are not even able to claim and realise their lawful (uneven) share of the inheritance, especially when it comes to land and houses (Hassan et al., 2021). It is especially evident in Upper Egypt, where women are forced to sell their land to male siblings or relatives for the land to remain in the family. This process reflects the profound attachment between land ownership and family legacy, social status and power, which are only passed through men - given the patrilineal descent system. In 2017, in order to overcome such a major gender issue, the inheritance law was amended[6] to impose severe penalties for those who intentionally deprive an heir of their inheritance rights (Hassan et al., 2021). However, it is too soon to measure if the law has any positive impact on women's inheritance rights, especially if it is not followed by enabling mechanisms and measures that deal with the socio-cultural barriers.

While in urban areas, it is more likely to acquire land through the market rather than through inheritance, the obstacles and discrimination facing women still exist in most

5 Law No. 77/1943 on inheritance and Law No. 71/1946 on wills.

6 Inheritance Law No. 77/1943 amended by Law No. 219/2017.

cities of the world (Chant & McIlwaine, 2016). Less data is available on market transactions over urban lands in Egypt and their gender aspects. However, since the majority of informal settlements are built on privately held agricultural lands – as large as 80% of informal urbanisation in Egypt, according to the Ministry of Housing (Khalifa, 2011), and 83% of the total land area of informal Cairo (Sims, 2010; 2013), the previously mentioned data on agricultural lands ownership are very indicative of the possibilities of women accessing land in such market.

As for homeownership, in a typical Egyptian household, the deed to the marital home is often in the husband's name only due to socio-cultural norms that normalise such discrimination of asset ownership within the family (Zeitoun, 2018). It is deeply rooted in Egyptian society that men are expected to provide a home for their family in the case of marriage, which reinforces the gender gap and discourages women from seeking homeownership (Assaad et al., 2017). In the case of divorce, the woman is only legally entitled to the marital home if she holds custody of children under 15. When the children turn 15, the man is expected to take back what is considered to be his property.[7] If the woman gets remarried, she might lose her custody rights and, consequently, her house.

Access to secure tenure and property rights for women in informal settlements is even more complicated and problematic. Women in informal settlements face dual discrimination since informal settlements' dwellers have precarious land and housing rights in general. In many cases, especially in the informal settlements built on state land, people lack proper deeds that prove their property rights/claims. The processes of formalisation and obtaining land titles are often too expensive. They involve relatively complicated and lengthy procedures and do not recognise the financial and non-financial investments involved in purchasing or building these lands and houses, which led to the failure of multiple in-situ land titling projects (Dorman, 2009; Piffero, 2009a; Tadamun, 2015a). This leaves people with limited choices and prevents them from legally securing their tenure, which is relatively protected by de facto arrangements (Tadamun, 2015a). Another in-situ development approach that the government experimented with in privately owned unplanned lands is «land re-adjustment» (GLTN, n.d.), which was introduced and implemented by UN-Habitat Egypt. Despite being very progressive in the way it is participatory and responsive to the actual gap between building codes and people's practices (Soliman, 2017), the tool fails to challenge the deep-rooted gender parities existing in local communities around Egypt. Women who do not own land in the first place will not be invited to the negotiations to «redistribute» the existing lands, and those who own land are often represented by their male partners or siblings, depriving these women of their right to make decisions related to their property.[8]

While settlement demolitions and mass evictions of the communities were not historically a common practice in Egypt, they increased starting in the early 2000s in dealing with areas that the government later classified as «unsafe,» which contain the most vulnerable population amongst Egypt's informal

7 This is according to Egyptian Personal Status Law No. 25/1929 amended by Law No. 100/1985. Retrieved from: https://manshurat.org/node/12369 (Arabic).

8 These observations were part of my reflections on the process of community meetings in my capacity as the community engagement consultant in the UN-Habitat land readjustment project in Qena governorate, Upper Egypt.

settlements (Amnesty Int, 2011). Demolitions and evictions have become even more frequent and aggressive in the big cities in recent years as part of the government's «reconstruction» vision that aims for zero slum/unsafe areas and prioritises city beatification, gentrification and securitisation (Khalil, 2019). Despite all the evidence that relocations have devastating impacts on the communities of the informal settlements and cost people many losses that take years to recover from (Tadamun, 2014; 2015b), the Egyptian authorities still mainly depend on this approach. There are also many documented cases of using excessive force to violently evict people in informal settlements in the name of development (Amnesty Int, 2011; HIC, 2015;2011; 2007; Khalil, 2019), which highly affect men, women and children and threaten their safety and physical and emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, when the community is relocated to a new area, and families get compensated with new homes, the legal rights to the new housing unit have been almost exclusively given to the man - who is considered the head of the household. Only recently, a new relocation project in Asmarat, Cairo, was claimed to set a new precedent by giving equal lease rights to the housing unit to both the man and the woman in the family as part of their gender-focused goals. Formalisation, in this sense, can empower women and, if institutionalised and mainstreamed across all projects, would mark historical progress in women's property rights in Egypt. However, more data should be gathered to prove the enforcement of such a rule. Besides, many other gender aspects should be prioritised, like property rights in relation to livelihood and asset mobilisation, as, when relocated, women often lose their enterprises and workspaces attached to the house.

Women's limited access to land and property affects them in several ways. They have to deal with the mental and financial stress that is caused by the precarious shelter situation. They can lose control over their lives and become entirely dependent on their male partners, relatives or both. Such dependency can sometimes force women to stay in abusive or dysfunctional relationships to avoid homelessness. Besides, their inability to prove property ownership can limit their access to funding and formal financial services and, therefore, restrict their ability to establish small enterprises or afford house improvements. Despite all that, women make significant time, money and labour contributions to provide housing in urban areas. In many cases, the woman may sell her jewellery and valuable items to help buy/rent a house for her family. Women are often responsible for enhancing everyone's living environment by designing, utilising, and furnishing the spaces to accommodate all family needs and providing oversight of house maintenance. In self-built houses in poorer communities, where people put labour into the construction of their own houses, women may also help build the house and provide it with necessary services and means of proper living. These contributions of women to provide better housing for their families are a perfect example of what Marx and Rubin (2008) consider as «non-financial value» that people attach to their homes, as these material and emotional investments are not reflected in tangible legal and financial rights. When formal planning intervenes in such areas, it rarely recognises such non-financial value (Marx & Rubin, 2008; Royston, 2013), which deprives women of fair compensation and furthers the existing gender inequalities.

2.1.2 The Gendered Burden of Providing Infrastructure and Services

Infrastructure and basic services in human settlements include many physical and social

assets, networks and institutions. They include the delivery of water and sanitation, waste management, social welfare, transport and communication facilities, energy, health and emergency services, educational facilities, public safety and management of open spaces, among others (UNTT-HIII, 2015). Adequate provision of infrastructure and services is central to the realisation of many human rights, which stresses the need for inclusive quality services for all, including women and girls. Availability of these services, therefore, is not the only factor to assess; accessibility and affordability are also crucial to the most vulnerable and marginalised. Infrastructure and service-inclusive development will lead to improved home and work environments for women and allow access to education and health care, which can consequently lead to women's full engagement in urban life and productive work (UN-Habitat, 2013).

Lack of services and infrastructure poses many burdens on women and girls. The responsibility women and girls carry to compensate for these services - as part of their reproductive responsibilities - increases their workload dramatically and leads to what scholars describe as «time poverty» (Chant, 2007, 2013; Gammage, 2010; Morrison et al., 2010; UNMP/TFEGE, 2005). Research suggests a pattern of «gender-inequitable time burdens resulting from service deficits» in many urban areas, especially informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2013, p.). In order to overcome the lack of decent, affordable services, women spend a significant amount of their time and labour to provide alternative ways for their families, which burdens women with tiring tasks, reduces their chance for rest and recreation and prevents them from participating in many aspects of urban life. It is also argued that the lack of services compromises women's and girls' self-respect and dignity (Chant, 2013). Lack of access to water and sanitation, for example, poses extreme discomfort for women and girls, in addition to the high risk to health and the challenge of labour and affordability of cleaning (Hughes & Wickeri, 2011; Kar & Chambers, 2008). While the lack of adequate sanitation at home affects all members of the household, women and girls are argued to suffer the most, especially when experiencing menstruation or when pregnant. In some cases where there are no toilets inside the house, women have to restrict the times they use shared or public toilets, which increases the negative effects on their health and well-being (Chant, 2013). While this case is not common in the Egyptian context, it is still a threat to some families living in poverty and sharing toilet facilities in the most deteriorated informal settlements. Moreover, in many cultures, particularly in Egypt, when a woman is unable to maintain a clean house, provide clean, sanitary facilities for her family and her guests, and meet norms of personal hygiene for herself and her family, she gets stigmatised as a ‹bad wife and mother.' This puts tremendous stress and risk on women's mental health as well as their physical health and well-being in general. Furthermore, a woman with poor personal hygiene will not be able to present for employment or education, which limits her chances for a better life (Joshi et al., 2011).

Despite the great efforts and investments, the Egyptian government has put into increasing coverage of utility networks (i.e. water, sewer, and electricity) to Egyptian households, including those in informal settlements, issues of quality and consistency of supply are still unresolved. Especially in bigger cities, most settlements today have toilets and water taps inside the houses and are connected to electricity. In Greater Cairo, statistical data in the early 2000s indicated good connectivity to the three main utility networks, with over 97 % coverage, which is almost the average citywide (Sims, 2010). Newer settlements might have more issues since it takes decades

to provide full connectivity to services and utility infrastructure in any given urban settlement, especially if it is informally built. Even in settlements fully covered by utilities, the networks are old, declined and overburdened by the massive population increase. People, especially women, have to deal with frequent cuts in water and electricity services, increased cost of bills, and lack of maintenance. Local authorities (districts) and utility companies are alleged to be totally unresponsive to residents' complaints and requests. Settlements found in established urban districts often have higher connectivity and quality of services than those located in village clusters inside the city and extensions into agricultural lands. For the utility companies to decide to provide an area with their networks, the decision is based on the proximity of existing networks, which determines the cost of such provision, as well as the political pressure of the local authority and the community. Consequently, the further we move away from central big cities, the worse the situation is and the more people suffer. In the peripheral and most deprived informal communities, especially in small and medium cities in upper Egypt and Delta, women have to buy water from informal sellers or walk to a public tap to get water daily for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene and cleaning. If the water is unclean, the woman will make the extra effort to clean it by boiling it. Some also have to use plastic pockets or other alternatives to toilets, and women are responsible for the cleaning and frequent disposal of the waste in a nearby dump or waterfront. They also rely on unclean energy sources for cooking and other uses. Although they are not representative of the majority of informal settlements, the negative impacts of these practices on these women's health, time, and well-being require an immediate response.

Services such as garbage collection, street lighting, street cleaning and maintenance also vary, as they are most likely to be performed informally by the community itself and depend on how organised the community is. Usually, when the informal community consists of large connected extended families or specific ethnic groups, they are highly collaborative, and the services are organised successfully in their narrow residential streets. In contrast, in wider main streets, people do not tend to invest that much labour and the state fails to organise such services, which creates poorly lit streets that are unpaved and full of piles of garbage (Shehayeb, 2009). These territorial arrangements are fundamental in understanding gender aspects of service provision. Private domestic spaces are the most maintained and clean because the burden of this labour is put on women, which also applies to narrow semi-public residential streets that are considered the extension of their homes. As for the main public streets and roundabouts, this labour requires higher levels of organisation and is expected to be compensated for since it is recognised as actual labour, automatically shifting the responsibility to men and male-dominated institutions rather than women.

Schools, hospitals, sports clubs and other social infrastructure are more complicated and problematic. Since these settlements are developed by private developers/landlords and do not comply with accepted planning standards for service provision, they are driven by market and profit. There is no incentive for informal developers to provide large lands for public service, and few of them are willing to invest in and capable of running private schools and hospitals. Government attempts to provide such services also face the challenge of scarcity of available public/vacant lands (Sims, 2010). Therefore, most affordable services in these areas are provided by religious institutions (mosques and churches), along with few public services and less affordable, privately provided services. In general, most of these services are small-scale and not always

sufficient or responsive to the specific needs of women and girls, which pushes people to use public services in nearby formal areas, putting more transport costs and accessibility challenges on their shoulders.

Women in informal settlements repeatedly express their need[9] for social and recreational spaces such as parks, community centres, sports facilities and more. The few available recreational spaces in most Egyptian urban areas - formal and informal - are youth centres and coffee shops, which are almost 100% exclusive for men. Parks and social and cultural spaces are utterly nonexistent in most informal areas. Women and children, therefore, are forced to spend most of their time inside the house and only afford to visit the city's big parks a few times every year.

2.1.3 Inside the House: Intrahousehold Inequalities and Domestic Violence

A gender-sensitive housing policy should not stop at the level of housing provision. It should consider how resources and spaces are allocated within the household. Egyptian planning and data collection systems fail to capture the inequalities within the household, where women and girls are mostly affected. In her field research that included different informal communities, Sara Sabry (2010) realised how poverty is systematically underestimated due to the common «sharing assumption» in the planning authorities, which assumes fair distribution of the resources within the same household. This gender-blind measure tends to miss a large number of poor people within households, such as women, girls, the elderly, and the sick. The research results illustrate the severe inequality, where the man alone was found to spend more than half of the income, and the rest of the family had to manage all of their needs with the remainder. A male child sometimes gets more food with better nutritional value and better health care than his female siblings. Shortage of income sometimes makes families focus more on the male children because they are seen as more important to the future security of the family (Sabry, 2010). In a study about gender equity in raising children, it was found that there is some discrimination in resource distribution between boys and girls, especially for less educated mothers in larger families (Ragheb & Guirgis, 1998). In one household with several daughters and only one son, the father explained that despite caring for all his children, his number one priority is the son, hoping he will take care of him when he grows older and retires while the daughters will be considered as part of their future husbands' families. Not only women and girls are affected, but there are many individuals who can suffer chronic poverty and less quality of life within the household, such as the chronically ill, the disabled, the elderly and live-in domestic servants or extended family members who live and help with domestic work.

> Surely, a measure that captures more dimensions of well-being than income alone is necessary in the context of informal settlements. It must take into account housing quality, access to basic infrastructure and services, and the quality of work people are engaged in. It cannot be gender blind and must consider chronically poor individuals within non-poor households. (Sabry, 2010, p. 539)

9 Women expressed these needs during multiple participatory events that I personally attended in different informal settlements across Egypt.

Domestic violence is another aspect of intrahousehold politics that the planning systems fail to take into consideration. Women and girls who are victims of domestic violence are forced to give up their needs, share expenses, and avail their savings for the use of their male partners or siblings. The lack of financial resources and access to secure housing tenure leave them in a situation where they have to choose between an unsafe domestic environment or homelessness. Safe houses for women who suffer domestic violence are one of the components that have to be included in any gender-sensitive upgrading plan. Furthermore, serious measures should be taken to enhance women's access to housing through different affordability instruments and rental schemes.

2.2 Access to Public Spaces, Spatial Mobility and Transport

Access to and use of public space in urban areas is unquestionably gender-differentiated. Women face constraints to movement due to patriarchal norms and power relations that prioritise men's right to public space and freedom to move and use the streets, whether for economic activities, transport, social interactions or recreation. In many local contexts, these gender norms impose multiple restrictions and risks on women and require specific ways of dressing and behaviour and limited social interactions to render women invisible or unapproachable (Chant, 2013; Fenster, 2005; Jarvis et al., 2009). Limited female spatial mobility can threaten women's ability to benefit from urban opportunities linked to education, social interactions and participation in public life and the labour force (UN-Habitat, 2013). Only through full access to public spaces and transport systems would women be enabled to «appropriate their right to the city and to realise a fully rounded and substantive urban citizenship» (Levy, 2013).

Personal safety and security are important factors affecting women's access to public space and public transport. Verbal, physical or sexual harassment and assaults are all threats that discourage women from moving freely around the city. With no measures to protect women from such violence, women can face physical harm and psychological anxiety and fear (Peters, 2001). Women in Egyptian cities experience excessive levels of sexual harassment in public spaces. Fatma El-Nahry argues that in Egypt:

> ... harassment is [...] an institutionalised system of violence that functions to police women's participation, freedom of movement and behaviour in public spaces. It is not how women behave in the public sphere that makes them vulnerable to street harassment; it is that they have chosen to enter the public sphere at all. (El-Nahry, 2012; as cited in Levy, 2013, p.57).

Violence against women and girls in Egyptian cities, while prevalent in both formal and informal parts, requires further investigation and data collection in the informal settlements. Women in informal settlements are less likely to report such incidents due to complex economic, political and cultural reasons that complicate the relationship between informal settlement dwellers and the police in general. Poor street lighting and the high-security risk in some places where there is drug use and crime can also affect women's safety and, therefore, their decision to use the street. However, in the residential parts and especially in older and more established urban informal settlements, the side streets are claimed to be more secure and safer for women since they are policed

collectively by the community and governed through strict cultural codes that prioritise the protection of women and children.

There is an implied hierarchy of the spaces within Egypt's informal settlements; the narrow streets are considered extensions to the domestic domain. They are mainly pedestrian and relatively closed and controlled, meaning women and girls can move freely using these streets all day. However, the wider the street gets, the more «public» it is considered, and the fewer women are welcome to use it. Women's use of and access to public spaces is also highly bound by time since women's mobility at night can be a source of many threats. Even during the day, there are certain times when women and girls more extensively exist and move around the public spaces. Women are much more likely to walk their children to school and back daily as part of their child-rearing responsibilities. They also often run errands like grocery and food shopping and bringing water for domestic use. Many women in informal areas work in informal part-time jobs, such as cleaning houses or workplaces, selling homemade goods in street markets, or working for small enterprises, which all entail women's need to travel and commute to different non-centralised zones of the city and usually take non-peak time journeys. Also, because of the time burden, women tend to take chain journeys, meaning they go on multi-purpose, multi-stop journeys to allow them to cluster all their errands and trips outside the house together. These patterns of behaviour and practices should have many implications for the planning system. Planners should study women's trips outside their houses and the timelines of their usage of public spaces and public transport in order to plan accordingly. Instead, gender-blind city planning and transport planning often assume male labour patterns and focus on men's journey to work, prioritising commute to central parts of the city and during peak hours using motorised vehicles while ignoring women's needs and activities (Chant, 2013; Levy, 2013).

Affordability of transport is another issue to consider in policy. Poor women face economic barriers related to their inability to pay for proper transport. The cost of the trip is usually too high and often forces women to trade off their comfort and safety by taking inadequate transport means, especially for working women who travel long distances to reach their workplaces. Moreover, local cultures and practices often have much more powerful restraints on women's access to vehicles. In a patriarchal society, men tend to maintain control over transport means, whether motorised - such as cars, buses, and motorbikes - or non-motorised -such as bicycles and animal carts (Peters, 2001). This is evidently common in Egyptian cities where the majority of owners and drivers of motorised and non-motorised vehicles are men. Women's limited access to motorised and non-motorised means of transport forces them to walk. The walkability of the city, therefore, is very crucial to women. Traffic that is mainly dominated by male drivers poses threats of injury and contamination. Introducing walkable street solutions can improve the experience of women's movement around the city.

Gender roles not only determine women's need for mobility and access to space, but they also play a part in shaping the informal city. One case study investigating the establishment of a street food market in *Saft Ellaban, Giza*, shows that the vendors chose this location in response to the women's walking route. After the government built a new public school for the children of the area, suddenly, hundreds of women were walking the street leading to this school back and forth daily. This captured the interest of the food vendors since women are their target customers. Gradually, the street attracted more vendors. Over the years,

it became one of the most recognisable street markets in the area, where most buildings turned the ground floor into grocery and food shops, and street vendors continued displaying their goods. As for transport, another case study in Imbaba, Giza, mapped specific modes of transport and specific routes serving women and children during the day. These vehicles change routes in the evening when primarily men are using transport.[10]

The flexibility and responsiveness of these space arrangements and transport options in the informal systems might be the answer to many planning/policy concerns. These informal systems recognise the needs of their users, capture the networks and dynamics of these communities, and provide them with much more efficient solutions than the top-down planning interventions. That emphasises the need for locally adapted gender-sensitive mobility and transport strategies.

2.3 Local Economies, Employment and Unpaid Work

As a global trend, women are overrepresented in the informal economy (Cities Alliance, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2013; World Bank, 2011). Consequently, women are exposed to higher risks and challenges of precarious jobs and livelihood, gendered wage gaps, lack of social protection, and vulnerability towards economic shocks (Cities Alliance, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2013). During the COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed that women in the informal economy worldwide faced higher rates of job losses and income drops (WEIGO, 2020). Data from the Arab countries indicated similar trends (UNDP, 2021). Women also face the additional risk of «time poverty» resulting from the increased labour burden (Chant, 2013). Addressing women's position in the informal economy is highly problematic. As explained by *the Cities Alliance* policy brief:

> Women informal workers face a triple day of work (paid work, unpaid work, and community work) and a triple burden of constraints (as women, informal workers, and members of poor households and disadvantaged communities). They face legal barriers associated with private laws and public laws that reflect gender norms biased against women and economic models biased against the informal economy. They operate in a legal and policy environment that is often hostile or punitive towards informal enterprises and informal workers. They also operate in markets or supply chains often on unfair or unequal terms, largely because of their lack of organisation and bargaining power. (Cities Alliance, 2021, p. 8)

The increase in women informal workers can be attributed to two global trends: 1) manufacturing production processes have been shifting from big factories to small-scale workshops and individuals working from home, a labour force that mainly consists of women; 2) women are progressively starting their own small-scale enterprises, as street vendors, shop owners, or small home-based manufacturers (UN-Habitat, 2013). Women merge informal work with childcare and domestic work while developing several livelihood strategies to help mobilise assets and income to deal with increased poverty in the household and a decline in the consumption of basic goods

10 I observed these practices while working on different projects in Giza city as a senior researcher in Takween Integrated Community Development.

(ILO, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2013). Much of the work in the informal economy tends to be invisible or hidden from traditional market studies. However, these informal economic activities are crucial to the sustainability of the global economy (Skinner et al., 2021). Informal businesses mobilise critical investments and are directly linked to formal markets through supply chains and exchange processes (Cities Alliance, 2021).

In the Egyptian labour market, women face major disparities compared to men in entering the labour force and are pushed to accept lower quality and less protected jobs (Tadamun, 2019). Studies have shown a pattern of declining labour force participation for Egyptian women, from 27% in 2006 to 23.1% in 2016 (Zeitoun, 2018). This might mean that women are retreating from paid productive work or increasingly joining informal jobs that are not captured by statistical data.

Although men in the informal economy suffer multiple challenges, gender is still a relevant lens to mapping inequalities within the sector. Women are often more restricted in their movement or spatial mobility and use of space, which limits their access to many jobs and vocations. In many societies, particularly in Egypt, some vocations are highly male-dominated, such as informal drivers for microbuses and toktoks, carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, butchers, and construction workers. The fewer women who take such jobs are usually paid less than men for the same job, they face a higher risk of harassment and violence, and they often face social stigma related to their jobs. Due to these constraints and to women's ties to the domestic environment/work, many informal economic activities that employ women are based at home (Chant, 2013). Lower value is given to women's work in the market regardless of the nature of the work itself due to the strong links between women and unpaid tasks (Perrons, 2010). Women also have fewer opportunities to access education and vocational training, which leads to lower levels of skills and work experience than their male peers. Women have limited access to funding (start-up capital). They often hold secondary roles in family businesses, and in many cases, they are underpaid or unpaid for their participation (Chant, 2013). In some peripheral locations in informal settlements outside metropolitan cities, limited access to markets and competition between women in similar situations can constrain women's ability to generate much income from their economic activities (Chant & Mcllwaine, 1995). Poor access to power and water supply in these locations might also affect the home-based enterprise. All the above factors contribute to the inequality gaps between women and men within the informal economy. However, despite the constraints and inequalities women face in their informal employment and self-employment, these income-generating activities are necessary for the survival of these women and their families. Home-based enterprises and ventures provide women with cash, help them gain skills and empower them to participate in urban life and develop «prosperity at the grassroots» (UN-Habitat, 2013).

The more significant burden on women is the highest portion of care work, especially unpaid work, which women are obligated to do in the patriarchal systems. The deep-rooted gender division of labour, linked to the association of women with childbirth, childbearing and the making of a home, is the main reason women are disproportionally carrying out unpaid work (Chant, 2013; Razavi, 2007). Even though women are increasingly engaging in income-generating activities outside and inside the house, they are still expected to carry out unpaid domestic and care work without almost any contribution from their male partner. Girls are also expected to participate in reproductive

labour related to domestic chores such as cleaning and cooking, which may affect their ability to pursue quality education or lead to early dropout and eventually hinder their ability to accumulate human capital (CPRC, 2010).

Feminist scholars have been using the term «care economy» (Budlender, 2004; Chant, 2013; Elson, 1999; Folbre, 1994; Perrons, 2010; Razavi, 2007) to underline the role of these reproductive activities in producing ‹value' that is in the core of the economy and should be recognised as so. It has been argued that while:

> From a gender perspective, there may be a good reason to recognise the household care economy as part of a value-producing informal economy, even when it does not generate income through the market [..] From the perspective of achieving more inclusive, green and climate resilient economy, it could be misleading to exclude those informal activities from the informal economy that are intentionally contributing to local resilience, environmental improvement and inclusion. (Sandoval et al., 2019, p. 16)

The value of the household care economy in Egypt, which predominantly relies on women's unpaid labour and time, was estimated at EGP 496 billion by the CAPMAS time-use survey 2015. The survey results showed that 91% of surveyed women spend time on unpaid household activities, compared to only 26% of men (Zeitoun, 2018). Women also reported that joining the labour market and contributing to household income do not reflect a decrease in unpaid domestic work. For mothers, childcare is the most timely-consuming care work they must take, especially with the severe lack of affordable formal childcare facilities available for these women. The unavailability and unaffordability of care affect women's choices regarding the type of jobs they take and the time they spend in these paid jobs. Hence, any policy response that claims to tackle the economic empowerment of women in informal settlements women must include strategic and systematic approaches to decrease the burden of care work on women and provide alternative facilities and investments for childcare.

2.4 Political Participation and Women's Engagement in Local Governance

Engagement in urban politics and governance is a fundamental right and a major aspect of the change towards gender equality and women empowerment. In formal political structures (such as the parliament, the local councils and local government departments), women are severely underrepresented, not only in Egypt but across the globe. Experts anticipate that it will take decades to reach gender parity when it comes to overcoming the gender gap in power and representation in political structures worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2021). Women in informal areas are even more marginalised politically and almost entirely excluded from these power positions and decision-making circles, citywide and locally within the neighbourhood. Patriarchal attitudes that encourage women's political exclusion are at the core of this discrimination. They are also often combined with many political, economic and cultural barriers, such as women's lack of time, education and political training, financial resources, or self-confidence. Many women in the informal settlements face prejudice, discrimination and violence from both people outside their communities and also the men

inside their communities. Their collective efforts to enhance the settlements they live in are not politically recognised or rewarded. Despite these discriminative practices, women in Egyptian informal settlements play a vital role in influencing the preservation and development of their communities. The roles women play in facilitating access to services for the household as wives and mothers, health care as nurses and through traditional healing techniques, education and childcare as teachers and nannies, among other contributions to improving the quality of life for their family and community members, are considered to be a form of active citizenship. However, as Kangas, Haidar, and Fraser (2014) argue, «this active citizenship and representation in informal decision-making processes are often hidden and not highly valued.»

Only active and organised involvement of women in civic/community participation can ensure women's rights and needs are visible and hold a place on the political agenda (Mitlin, 2013, 2016; Satterthwaite et al., 2014). However, in Egypt, the formulation of sustainable community-based organisations (CBOs) faces many issues. David Sims (2010) drew a picture of unreliable CBOs in Egyptian informal settlements. The existing grassroots and community organisations are few and far between cities, mostly small-scale informal organisations with activities limited to assisting social events like weddings and funerals, and fewer charitable organisations that provide healthcare and social support to poorer families, in addition to very few registered community associations from the Nasser era that only exist on paper and have not been active for decades (Sims, 2010) There is no evidence of any existing large-scale trans-local informal settlements organisations that negotiate land and housing rights, similar to those in other countries in South East Asia and South America. Many attempts have been made, mainly by development agencies operating with international donations, to organise the communities of some informal settlements. None of them, according to Sims, were successful in realising their aspirations (Sims, 2010). However, Diane Singerman's call for «restoring the family into civil society» (Singerman, 1995; 2006) might help understand how communities operate in informal settlements and how family ties and networks play the most significant roles in the politics and economics of such areas, which also offers a different and a more acknowledging view of women's participation in pollical life and governance of informal neighbourhoods.

After 2011, many informal settlements witnessed the establishment of popular committees or «*Legan Shaa'beyia*.» These committees started for the sole purpose of policing the neighbourhood and protecting houses from potential crime during the withdrawal of police forces in early 2011. They then developed into a new and most needed form of community organisations that played a role in negotiating with local authorities and even succeeded in facilitating service provision to their areas, such as the provision of a natural gas network to and paving the streets of *Mit Oqba, Giza*; allocating land to build a community centre in *Ard Ellewa*, Giza; and setting up a government-run subsidised bakery and a private hospital in *Awlad Allam*, Giza. However, women were almost completely excluded from meetings and activities of these committees, and therefore, they were oblivious to women's needs and demands. Most of these activities happened during 2011 and 2012, and shortly thereafter, these committees were dissolved as their members faced many obstacles and lost motivation. Local authorities returned and became less responsive and collaborative.

Community participation in development and

upgrading projects, despite the lack of well-established CBOs, has been promoted by development agencies operating in Egypt for decades, with the prospect of «empowering the marginalised» (Sims, 2010). Participatory approaches and tools have been introduced and implemented in collaboration with the local governments. The spread of rights-based and multi-stakeholder agendas in local governance opened space for women's participation. However, there are still many problems in women's engagement. «Women» as a group to empower and engage and «gender» as a component of development projects are becoming increasingly vague and problematic concepts. The results of the thorough investigative work of Elena Piffero (2009b) of Cairo's informal neighbourhoods' participatory upgrading projects led by the German organisation GIZ showed that women were forgotten until far in the process. Project administration then added a separate component about women by organising workshops for women. The selected women were selected only based on their willingness to participate with no consideration for their background and the group of women they represent (rich, poor, employed, unemployed, minority ethnicity, etc.), and they were assumed to represent all women. The participation of such women is often a check box that the project's administration has to check while it is extremely crucial to take meaningful participation seriously (Piffero, 2009b).

Finally, political change that entails equal rights for men and women to engage in decision-making and public life is a long-term, multi-dimensional struggle. It should not stop at engaging women as a vulnerable group but rather empower women and allow them to join the decision-making circles. One can argue that without meaningful engagement of women in all decision-making processes, gender issues will not be fully considered or addressed. In informal settlements, one strategic goal should be to encourage women to take leadership positions within their communities and help them overcome the many structural barriers they face economically, politically, and culturally. Also, strategically speaking, policy and legal reforms might be required to create an enabling environment for community organisations, activating elected local councils and participatory local governance. Only when these minimum levels of local democracy are established could measures be implemented to counter the existing resistance to engaging women in politics and power positions. It is highly crucial to develop mechanisms for change that deconstruct and overthrow the deeply-rooted patriarchal and class systems in the long term. This can only be achieved when women have more choices and opportunities and with women's participation in the decision-making processes.

3. Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendations

This paper is an attempt to explore ways of incorporating a gender lens focused on women, in particular, in our analysis of the different issues related to informal settlement development and the implications of a gender-aware, inclusive and integrated policy. Scanning the available resources reveals a massive gap in information and knowledge regarding the state of women in Egypt's informal settlements, especially outside big metropolitan urban centres. Part of this is the general gap in information about the informal settlements' population. Gender-sensitive interventions require comprehensive sets of sex-disaggregated data and statistics. Policies that seem to be gender-neutral can easily generate gendered consequences that are harmful to women or blind to their needs. Critical diagnosis of the power dynamics, barriers to development, and existing inequalities would thus help tailor policies and laws that can achieve progressive changes in women's lives.

Informal settlements are not as haphazard as many planners claim. They are built and governed through complex markets and systems of housing and services provision that achieve economic viability for those who live and work with limited resources and in very precarious conditions. For planners and decision-makers to intervene in such a dynamic and highly complex socio-economic ecosystem, they must understand its components as interlinked and deal with it as a whole rather than dealing with individual components separately. The current approaches that depend on the demolition of existing areas and relocation to apartment blocks that are strictly residential-only do not respond to these communities' needs for mixed-use urban areas where they can preserve their socio-economic networks, businesses and community spaces. Informal settlement upgrading projects need a holistic, integrated approach that provides solutions for local area governance, considers linkages between different systems of infrastructure and services, enhances collaboration between different authorities, and recognises people's need to use and abilities to maintain such infrastructure. This is extremely important for women since their survival mechanisms are based on the human and social capital they cultivate in these areas. They depend on providing their care responsibilities on the support they get from other women in the community. Many of their income-generating activities are home-based or in workplaces or streets near the house. Most of the errands that help the family survive are carried by women in the form of errand chains to nearby food markets, schools, and other public spaces, which help them reduce their time poverty.

The significant burden of unpaid reproductive care work on women can be highly decreased by improving the housing conditions and adequate provision of basic services and infrastructure, especially water, sanitation and energy, along with supportive, affordable childcare services. As long as women are overwhelmingly occupied with tasks to meet their care obligations and overcome infrastructure deficiencies, they will remain unable to fulfil their health, well-being or financial goals. Reducing time spent on domestic and care work will allow time for self-care, and for seeking economic opportunities, and, eventually, economic independence. Also, to further women's economic and political empowerment, instruments that

ensure property rights and tenure security are key policy interventions. These instruments can include legal titles - individual or collective - that acknowledge and protect women's rights, representation of women in land and housing negotiations (especially in the case of resettlement), paralegal services that support women in the case of conflict, provision of safe houses for survivors of domestic violence, and many other.

Addressing gender inequalities, discrimination, and violence against women requires more than political power. It needs multi-level effective policy instruments that can counter the deeply-rooted patriarchal social and cultural systems. Civil society, especially feminist and women's rights groups, can play a significant role in mobilising political support, lobbying for legal and institutional reform, and challenging patriarchal norms and attitudes. Depending only on formal laws and procedures can be counter-productive and ineffective since most women in informal settlements have little access to courts, formal litigation systems, formal credit and finance institutions, and power and political influence. Alternative ways that employ some of the informal mechanisms should be considered. The participation of female informal settlement dwellers and informal workers is, therefore, a key enabler to achieving such innovative alternative mechanisms. Engaging women in reclaiming and realising their rights should be the core of any long-term plan. On the government and planning levels, many reforms are overdue. Legal and institutional reforms are needed to ensure women's right to the city and well-rounded citizenship, address barriers against women's full access to urban spaces, services and prosperity, and end all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination in public and domestic environments. The physical planning regime also needs reforms that would allow revisiting the traditional diagnosis of informal settlement issues and developing planning tools that can effectively regulate land and housing markets and force them to cater for the interests of the people.

References

AbdelLatif, L., Ramadan, M. and Elbakry, S. (2017). How Gender Biased Are Female-Headed Household Transfers in Egypt? Working Paper No. 1126. Economic Research Forum.

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press (original in Italian, 1995).

Agamben, G. (2005). *State of exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

AlSayyad, N. (2004). Urban Informality as a «New» Way of Life. In A. Roy, & N. AlSayyad (Eds.), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia*. (pp. 7-30). Lexington Books.

Amnesty International (2011). *'We are not dirt': Forced evictions in Egypt's informal settlements*. London: Amnesty International.

Assaad, R. & Arntz, M. (2005). Constrained Geographical Mobility and Gendered Labor Market Outcomes Under Structural Adjustment: Evidence from Egypt. *World Development, Vol. 33(3),* pp. 431-454.

Assaad, R. (2015). Women's Participation in Paid Employment in Egypt Is a Matter of Policy Not Simply Ideology. *Egypt Network for Integrated Development Policy(Brief): No.22.*

Assaad, R., Krafft, C. and Rolando, D. (2017). The Role of Housing Markets in the Timing of Marriage in Egypt, Jordon, and Tunisia. Working paper no. 1081. The Economic Research Forum.

Bayat, A., & Denis, E. (2000). *Who is afraid of ashwaiyyat? Urban change and politics in Egypt.* Environment & Urbanization, 12(2), 185-199.

Budlender, D. (2004). *Why Should we Care about Unpaid Care Work?* New York: UNIFEM.

Cities Alliance (2021). Ghost Citizens: *Women and Informality in Cities*. Brussels: Cities Alliance.

Chant, S. (1984). *Household Labour and Self-Help Housing in Queretaro, Mexico*. Boletiń de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, 37, 45-68.

Chant, S. (2007) *Gender, Cities and the Millennium Development Goals in the Global South*. LSE Gender Institute, New Series Working Paper, Issue 21, London.

Chant, S. (2013). *Cities through a «gender lens»: a golden «urban age» for women in the global south?* Environment & Urbanisation, Vol. 25(1), Pages 9-29.

Chant, S. and McIlwaine, C. (1995). *Women of a Lesser Cost: Female Labour, Foreign Exchange and Philippine Development.* London: Zed.

Chant, S., and Mcilwaine, C. (2016). *Cities, Slums and Gender in the Global South: Towards A feminized Urban Future*. NY: Routledge.

Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC), (2010). Stemming Girls' Chronic Poverty. London: ODI.

Deboulet, A. (2009). *The Dictatorship of the Straight Line and the Myth of Social Disorder: Revisiting Informality in Cairo*. In D. Singerman (Ed.), *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*. Cairo: A American University in Cairo Press.

Dorman, W. (2009). *Of Demolitions and Donors: The Problematics of state intervention in informal Cairo*. In D. Singerman (Ed.), *Cairo Contested. Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*. Cairo : American University in Cairo Press.

Dorman, W. (2013). *Exclusion and informality: The praetorian politics of land management in Cairo, Egypt*. International Journal of Urban and regional Research, 37(5), 1584-1610.

El-laithy, H. (2001). *The Gender Dimensions of Poverty in Egypt*. Working Papers 0127, Economic Research Forum, revised 09, 2001.

El-Nahry, F. (2012). *She's not asking for it: street harassment and women in public spaces*. Gender Across Borders: A Global Voice for Gender Justice.

Elson, D. (1999). *Labour Markets as Gendered Institutions: Equality, Efficiency and Empowerment Issues*. World Development, 27:3, P 611-627.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (n.d.). *Country profile: Egypt*. URL: https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/general-introduction/en/?country_iso3=EGY

Fenster, T. (2005). *The right to the gendered city: different formations of belonging in everyday life*. Journal of Gender Studies Vol 14, No 3, pages 217–231.

Folbre, N. (1994). *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*. London: Routledge.

Gammage, S. (2010). *Time pressed and time poor: unpaid household work in Guatemala*. Feminist Economics Vol 16, No 3, pages 79–112.

Gaventa, J. and McGee, R. (eds) (2010). *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform*. London, Zed Books.

Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) (n.d.). Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). URL: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/1407237675wpdm_Land%20Readjustments.pdf

Habitat International Coalition (HIC) (2007). Egyptian security forces brutally attack and forcible evict residents from blaze site. URL: https://www.hic-net.org/egyptian-security-forces-brutally-attack-and-forcibly-evict-residents-from-blaze-site/

Habitat International Coalition (HIC) (2011). Egypt: Homes destruction and forced displacement in Imbaba neighborhood, Gize – IMMEDIATE ACTION is needed! URL: https://www.hic-net.org/egypt-homes-destruction-and-forced-displacement-in-imbaba-neighborhood-giza-immediate-action-is-needed/

Habitat International Coalition (HIC) (2015). Urgent Action: Forced Eviction and Excessive Force in Egypt. URL: https://www.hic-net.org/urgent-action-forced-eviction-and-excessive-force-in-egypt/

Hamad, R., Abd Elrahman, A. and Ismail, A. (2018). Homes or Just Houses: The Housing Needs of Female-Headed Households in Egypt. Journal of Building Construction and Planning Research. Vol. 6:3, 138-150.

Hassan, A., Ali, H. and Elborai, H. (2021). *Empowering Women to Claim their Inheritance Rights. Post-Project Impact Analysis*. Consultar for management services and training and Care international.

Hughes and Wickeri, E. (2011). *A Home in the City: Women's Struggle to Secure Adequate Housing in Urban Tanzania.* Fordham International Law Journal, 34:4, 788-929.

International Labor Organisation (ILO) (2010) *Women in Labour Markets: Measuring Progress and Identifying Challenges* (Geneva: ILO).

International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2011) *Global Employment Trends 2011: The Challenge of a Jobs Recovery* (Geneva: ILO).

International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2020a). *COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy: Immediate responses and policy challenges*. Briefing Note.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2020b). *Social Protection Responses to COVID-19 Crisis around the World.*

Jarvis, H., Cloke, J. and Kantor, P. (2009). Cities and Gender, Critical Introductions to Urbanism and the City. Routledge, London.

Joshi, D., Fawcett, F. and Mannan, F. (2011). *Health, hygiene and appropriate sanitation: experiences and perceptions of the urban poor*. Environment and Urbanization Vol 23, No 1, pages 91–112.

Kangas, A., Haider, H., and Fraser, E. (2014). *Gender: Topic Guide*. Revised edition with E. Browne. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, UK.

Kar, K. and Chambers, R. (2008). *Handbook on Community-led Total Sanitation*. London/Falmer, Brighton: PLAN UK/IDS.

Khalifa, M. A. (2011). *Redefining slums in Egypt: Unplanned versus unsafe areas* . Habitat International. Pp. 40-49.

Khalil, O. (2019). *Negotiation and Violence in the "Reconstruction" of Greater Cairo Region.* Alternative Policy Solutions. URL: https://aps.aucegypt.edu/en/articles/86/negotiations-and-violence-in-the-reconstruction-of-greater-cairo-region

Levy, Caren (2013). *Travel choice reframed: "deep distribution" and gender in urban transport.* Environment & Urbanization, Vol. 25(1), Pages 47-63.

Marx, C. and Rubin, M. (2008). *Urban Land Biographies: A study of co-existing Land Use and Land Use Management in Three Precincts in Gauteng*. Urban LandMark.

Mbembe, A. (2019). Necropolitics. Duke University Press.

Miraftab, F. (2001). *Risks and opportunities in gender gaps to access shelter: a platform for intervention.* International Journal of Politics, Cultre and Society, 15(1), 143-160.

Mitlin, D.; Satterthwaite, D., and Bartlett, S. (2011). *Capital, Capacities and collaboration: the multiple roles of community savings in addressing urban poverty*. IIED Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas, Working Paper 34, International Institute for Environment and Development. London.

Mitlin, D. (2013). *Endowments, Entitlements and Capabilities – What urban social movements offer to poverty reduction*. European Journal of Development Research, vol. 25, No. 1, pp.44-59.

Mitlin, D. (2016). *Spatial informality in the Global South: New challenges for service provision and neighbourhood improvement initiatives*. In Deboulet, A. (2016) Rethinking Precarious Neighbourhoods. Paris: Agence Fracaise de developement.

Morrison, A., Raju, D. and Singa, N. (2010). *Gender equality, poverty reduction and growth: a Copernican quest*. In Kanbur, R. and Spence, M. (eds). *Equity and Growth in a Globalizing World*. World Bank, Washington DC, on behalf of the Commission on Growth and Development. pages 103–129.

Omar, S. (2022, December 22). Khaled Seddek for "Al-Mal": Urban Development Facility begins a new era based on investment ideologies and partnerships. Al-Mal News. URL: https://almalnews.com/خالد-صديق-لـــالمالصندوق-التنمية-الح/

Perrons, D. (2010). *Gender, Work and Poverty in High- income Countries. In Chant, S. (ed.) The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty: Concepts, Research, Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. P. 409-414.

Peters, D. (2001). *Gender and transport in less-developed countries: a background paper in preparation for CSD-9*" . Background Paper for the Expert Workshop on Gender Perspectives for Earth Summit 2002: Energy, Transport, Information for Decision-making, Berlin, 10–12 January 2001.

Piffero, E. (2009a). *Beyond Rules and Regulations: The Growth of Informal Cairo. In GTZ. (2009). Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials*. Cairo: Kipper, R. and Fischer, M. (Eds).

Piffero, E. (2009b). *What Happened to Participation? Urban Development and Authoritarian Upgrading in Cairo's Informal Neighbourhoods*. Bologna: I LIBRI DI EMIL .

Ragheb, S., & Guirgis, W. (1998). *Family Size and Gender Equity in Childrearing*. Cairo, Egypt: Summary of final Report Prepared for The Women's Studies Project, Family Health International and The Research Management Unit of The National Population Council, Cairo, Egypt.

Razavi, S. (2007). *The political and social economy of care in a development context: Conceptual issues, research questions and policy options*. Geneva, UNRISD.

Roy, A. (2005). *Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning*. Journal of the American Planning Association, 71(2), 147-158

Royston, L. (2013). *In the Meantime: Moving Towards Secure Tenure by Recognizing Local Practice*. In Napier, M. el al (eds.)(2013) Trading Places: Accessing Land in African Cities, Somerest West: African Minds for Urban LamdMArk.

Sabry, S. (2009) *Egypt's informal Areas: Inaccurate and Contradictory* Data. In GTZ. (2009). *Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials*. Cairo: Kipper, R. and Fischer, M. (Eds).

Sabry, S. (2010). *How poverty is underestimated in Greater Cairo, Egypt*. Environment & Urbanization, 22(2), 523-541.

Sandoval, V., Hoberman, G., and Jerath, M. (2019). *Urban Informality: Global and Regional Trends*. DRR Faculty Publications. 16, 2019.

Satterthwaite, D. and Mitlin, D. (2014). *Reducing Poverty in the Global South*. Routledge, London and New York.

Schmitt, C. (1985) *Political theology: four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*. Translated into English by George Schwab; foreword by Tracy Strong. University of Chicago Press. Originally published as *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveranitat,* 1922, revised edition, 1934 by Duncker & Humblot, Berlin.

Sejourne, M. (2009). *The History of Informal Settlements*. In GTZ. (2009). Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials. Cairo: Kipper, R. and Fischer, M. (Eds).

Shawkat, Y. (2015). *Government failure to upgrade informal settlements in Egypt: a brief history.* Open Democracy. URL: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/government-failure-upgrade-informal-settlements-egypt-brief-history/

Shawkat, Y. (2020). *Egypt's Housing Crisis: the shaping of urban space*. Cairo: AUC Press.

Shehayeb, D. (2009). *Advantages of living in informal areas*. In GTZ. (2009). Cairo's *Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials*. Cairo: Kipper, R. and Fischer, M. (Eds).

Sims, D. (2000). *Residential informality in greater Cairo: Typologies, representative areas, quantification, valuation and causal factors*. Cairo: ECES, ILD.

Sims, D. (2003). *The case of Egypt*. In UN-HABITAT: *Understanding slums: Case studies for the global report on human settlements*. Nairobi, Kenya.

Sims, D. (2010). *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Sims, D. (2013). *The Arab Housing Paradox: Middle East Decision Makers Must Address the Spiral of Informal Settlements*. Cairo Review 11/2013. Pp 70-83

Singerman, D. (1995). *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Singerman, D. (2006). *Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt*. Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 2(1), 1-32

Singerman, D. (2009). *The Siege of Imbaba, Egypt's Internal ‹Other', and the Criminalization of Politics.* In D. Singerman (Ed.), *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity* (pp. 111-144). Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Skinner, C., Barrett, J., Alfers, L., and Rogan, M. (2021). *Informal Work in South Africa and COVID-19: Gendered Impacts and Priority Interventions*. WIEGO.

Soliman, A. (2004). *Tilting at Sphinxes Locating Urban Informality in Egyptian Cities*. In A. Roy, & N. AlSayyad (Eds.), *Urban Informality. Transnational Perspectives from the Middle-East, Latin America and South Asia* (pp. 171-208). Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

Soliman, A. (2017). *Land readjustment as a mechanism for New Urban Land Expansion in Egypt: experimenting participatory inclusive processes*. International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development, 9, 313 - 332.

Tacoli, C., & Satterthwaite, D. (2013). *Editorial: Gender and Urban change.* Environment & Urbanization, Vol. 25(1), Pages 3-8

Tadamun. (2014). Coming Up Short: Egyptian Government Approaches to Informal Areas . URL: http://www.tadamun.co/coming-short-government-approaches-informal-areas/?lang=en#.ZDF4GS2l0_U

Tadamun (2015a). Land Titling: Is it the solution for Egypt's Informal Areas? URL: http://www.tadamun.co/land-titling-solution-egypts-informal-areas/?lang=en#.ZDF6Ei2l0_U

Tadamun (2015b). *The hidden cost of displacement: The move from 'Izbit Khayrallah to Masakin 'Uthman. URL*: http://www.tadamun.co/hidden-cost-displacement-move-izbit-khayrallah-masakin-uthman/?lang=en#.ZFrxrC2l2qQ

Tadamun. (2019). Women and Precarious Employment: A spatial analysis of economic insecurity in Cairo's neighbourhoods. URL: https://www.tadamun.co/women-and-precarious-employment-a-spatial-analysis-of-economic-insecurity-in-cairos-neighborhoods/?lang=en#.ZDF0Fi2l0_U

Tadamun. (2020). Know Your City: Manshiet Nasser. URL: http://www.tadamun.co/?post_type=city&p=11354&lang=en&lang=en#.ZDF2ay2l0_U

Tadros, M. (2011). *Women Engaging Politically: Beyond Magic Bullets and Motorways.* Pathways Policy Paper. URL: https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-out- puts/women-engaging-politically-beyond-magic-bul- lets-and-motorways

UCLG. (2020). *Live Learning Experience: Beyond the immediate Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19 Addressing COVID-19 in Informal Contexts*. Briefing & Learning Note, 29 April 2020.

UNDP. (2021). *The socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in the Arab region: Assessing the potential impact of Covid-19 on women and girls in Arab states*. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UN-Habitat. (2003). *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*. London and Sterling, VA: United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UN-Habitat. (2006). *Women's Equal Rights to Housing, Land and Property in International law.* Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

UN-Habitat. (2009). *Planning Sustainable Cities: Global Report on Human Settlements 2009.* London - Sterling, VA: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

UN-Habitat. (2013). *State of Women in Cities 2012-2013: Gender and the prosperity of cities* . United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

United Nations Millennium Project (UNMP) Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (TFEGE). (2005). *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. Earthscan, London.

United Nations Task Team on Habitat III (UNTT-HIII). (2015). *Habitat III Issue Paper 18 – Urban Infrastructure and Basic Services, Including Energy*. New York.

UN-Women, & UN-Habitat. (2020). Harsh Realities: Marginalized Women in Cities of the Developing World.

Varley, A. (2007). *Gender and Property formalization: conventional and alternative approaches.* World Development, Vol. 35(10), Pages 1739-1753.

WIEGO. (2020). *Informal workers in the Covid-19 Crisis: A global picture of sudden impact and long-term risk*. Moussie, R., Alfers, L. and Harvey, J. (Eds.).

World Bank. (2011). *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (WashingtonDC: World Bank)

World Bank. (2023). Egypt: Job Creation and Affordable Housing are Vital to Women's Empowerment. URL: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/03/07/egypt-job-creation-and-affordable-housing-are-vital-to-women-s-empowerment#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20biggest%20assets,versus%2095%25%20of%20Egyptian%20men.

World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

Zeitoun, N. (2018). *Women Economic Empowerment Study*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. URL: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/861491551113547855/Women-Economic-Empowerment-Study

Rural Women and Housing in Egypt

Nada El-Kouny

Introduction

There is a significant gap in research and available scholarship on women's access to housing in Egypt. This paper provides a step to aggregate some of the available information on rural women and housing in Egypt. While there is significant literature on Egyptian women's economic and reproductive rights, there remains much less on women's access to housing and home ownership. One of the main reasons for this gap is mainly related to women's limited land and home ownership opportunities, despite their significant participation in farming and agricultural production (UN-Habitat, 2023). Many women are also the primary breadwinners of their households, but their labour is insufficiently accounted for in reflecting active economic independence. This paper will propose the main points to consider in understanding rural housing from the vantage point of women's access to housing. The paper will first address women's economic security through their work in agriculture, then address their access to housing and lack of fulfilment of property rights. It will then examine issues related to access to inheritance rights. The fourth section of the paper will then delve into more overarching issues concerning the geographic divide between rural and urban Egypt in terms of how access to services and resources is experienced, further disenfranchising women. The paper will lastly propose a few recommendations on ways for improvement concerning women's property, housing rights, and inheritance rights in Egypt.

Women, Economic Security, and Agriculture

Poverty rates in Egypt are significantly higher between rural and urban Egypt. Egypt's main agriculture sectors and where rurally designated communities exist are both concentrated in the Nile Delta region and Upper Egypt. The more disenfranchised groups, such as women and children, as well as households with many members in the family, experience increased poverty (Arab Land Initiative, 2023). According to Egypt's national poverty line, as of 2019/2020, poverty was defined as earning less than 10,300 Egyptian pounds (about $562.68) annually (Galal, 2022).

Concerning women's poverty rates as connected to their labour participation, women's recorded labour force participation in rural areas was 21%, while men's labour force participation was higher, reaching up to 81% (UN Women, 2018). Additionally, child poverty is much higher in rural areas, where 40% of children under five live in poverty. These rates compare with urban statistics in the following way: Women's participation in the labour market reached 26%, as opposed to men's reaching 79% (UN Women, 2018).

Within rural Egypt, disparities also exist between Upper Egypt (south of the Nile Delta) and Lower Egypt (the Nile Delta). Poverty rates are particularly high in rural Upper Egypt, where 43.7% of the residents live in poverty (Galal, 2022). These disparities place residents of Upper Egypt at a disadvantage, significantly affecting the women who reside there and who make up the more disenfranchised segments of the population (UN Women, 2018).

One of the most marginalised groups in the world is women, and approximately 70% of the world's poorest people are women. They produce most of the world's staple crops and put in roughly 60% to 80% of the world's work time. However, women only comprise 2% of worldwide property owners and 10% of global income earners. In developing countries, 43% of agricultural workers are women, and in the Middle East, this number rises to 50% (Arab States Civil Society

Organisations and Feminist Network, 2022). Notably, in the Middle East, less than 10% of women own land for agriculture.

Nevertheless, official work statistics are not always representative of the reality of women's availabilities for work. Additionally, there is a need for data regarding rural women's access to property and housing. This dearth of data on rural women was expressed by the 2018 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee review of Egypt. The review voiced worry over the shortage of recorded information on rural women, particularly with regard to topics like housing, health, education, labour, and employment (UN Women, 2018).

Agriculture is the main source of work for women, and many of those who work in agriculture also work in unpaid family work. Women comprise 15% of agricultural landowners worldwide but around 43% of the agricultural labour in rural areas. In half of the world's nations, women lack the right to own property, are unable to borrow money for equipment and fertilizer or to harvest their crops and have limited access to markets where they can sell their produce (Arab States Civil Society Organisations and Feminist Network, 2022). In the MENA region, women have the fewest opportunities for land ownership in the world despite their practical work in the agricultural field. This low rate in agriculture production is despite agriculture being a significant component of the Egyptian economy, making up 14.5% of its GDP, and despite the sector employing nearly half (45%) of all working women (UN Women, 2018).

The MENA region has the lowest rates of land ownership in the world, accounting for as low as 5% (UN Women, 2018). This low rate of landownership leads to inadequate access to a stable source of income and food security for women. However, 20% of the rural women mentioned having farmland in their families, and one-third assisted their household members on these agricultural lands (Baseera, 2019). Landownership in rural areas is significant concerning rural women and housing since most residential homes in rural Egypt are built on land owned by the households who own or cultivate them or rent them to other farmers for cultivation. Nevertheless, there is a minority of home ownership situations where rural house dwellers rent the homes where they live. However, data on rentals in rural communities is not sufficient.

Access to housing requires, first, economic stability. However, it is important to note that even when rural Egyptian women have money, home ownership is not a priority for economic investments. Based on a 2019 paper by Baseera, the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research, which addressed rural women's living conditions, only 6.1% of respondents mentioned they would save money for home ownership (Baseera, 2019). The majority of respondents mentioned saving the amount in the Egyptian post office (35.3%), saving it in a bank (27.4%), or establishing an enterprise (18.8%). Interestingly, these statistics reflect that home ownership is not a priority amongst rural women. This may be due to the lack of expectations of their ownership of homes, as it is instead a social expectation and demand of the male family members once married. It could also be due to their prioritisation of having easily accessible cash as opposed to investing in property, especially amongst the more disenfranchised women.

Rural Women and Socio-economic Development

Rural women, as a significant segment of the population, are the subject of numerous development program initiatives. CEDAW

requires state parties to implement specific measures to ensure that the convention provisions are fully applied to women in rural areas. These measures include working towards the elimination of numerous forms of discrimination in all spheres of life, including health and access to housing, adequate health care, education, employment, and participation in socio-political life. The Arab Republic of Egypt is a signatory of the CEDAW convention, having ratified it in 1981 (National Council for Women, 2012).

More specifically, the priority theme of the 56th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW56) was rural women's empowerment. The 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women also focused on issues such as the potential problems facing gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (CSW62). The CSW62 emphasised the key problems that rural women and girls confront worldwide (such as food security and nutrition, land, water, food, work, and a life free from poverty and violence) (UN Women, 2018). Nevertheless, one of the main issues concerning rural women is the lack of adequate statistics.

Accompanying issues limiting women's ability to be homeowners is that most rural women live in communities without secondary schools for girls. The lack of schools reduces their odds of finishing their secondary education and their possibilities of joining the labour force and finding a job. Their lack of employment, in turn, would affect their ability to own land. While Egypt has invested in improving education and health opportunities for women, there remains a gap in translatability into participation in the labour force (The World Bank, 2023).

Housing needs for women fulfil not only an economic asset but also a social right, as mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (The Built Environment Observatory, 2022). They are also important in contributing to increased food security. Ensuring women's access to property ownership and tenure security can provide better access to healthcare, education, and protection from gender-based violence (UN-Habitat, 2023). The increased security women have could also impact the distribution of financial resources within the family and reinforce gender roles. This will help move the narrative beyond seeing women as unpaid domestic workers.

Rural Women and Property Ownership

Women rarely own property, such as homes, as their housing remains under the patronage of their father or male family member. Once married, rural women are most likely to reside within their husband's family home, owned by their husband or the husband's family. Based on a 2008 study, grooms in Egypt are expected to contribute three-quarters of the cost of marriage, including housing, while women are expected to contribute to their marriage with the remaining quarter of expenses (Singerman, 2008). These costs are mainly provided through investments in furniture and appliances for the home. While this norm may have changed since 2008, and exceeding economic fluctuations might have affected this arrangement, the main responsibility of wedding costs in Egypt relies on the groom.

The lack of tangible availability for property ownership by Egyptian women, especially rural Egyptian women who are more economically dispossessed, also poses a problem for women who are divorcees, do not have family support, or have deceased male family members. These women who become primary household heads are put in a situation where their access to housing is also, as a result, compromised.

Another of the main issues concerning women's access to housing and home ownership in Egypt lies mainly within the issue of inheritance. Inheritance rights in Egypt mainly favour men as the primary breadwinners in their families and entitle them under Islamic law to inherit double the share of women. Therefore, a female sibling's inheritance is only half of her male sibling's entitlement to inheritance. Moreover, the wife would only inherit one-eighth of her husband's inheritance if she has children and one-quarter if she does not (The Built Environment Observatory, 2022). This is especially the case in Egypt, where land assets and other natural resources play a significant role in people's ability to support their physical and financial well-being. However, in 2017, Egypt's Inheritance Law No. 77 of 1943 pushed to stop the dispossession of women of their legal inheritance rights, as was customarily practised (CARE, 2021). However, despite this amended law to Law No.219 of 2017, it has not been followed yet.

Women's and human rights organisations reflect on the shortcomings of the Egyptian state's implementation of the stipulations of CEDAW. Some of these include upholding discrimination and violence experienced daily, as well as inheritance rights (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2021). A report on women and land rights in the Arab region concluded that women are discouraged from requesting their inheritance rights due to various reasons such as fear of family judgement (60% of surveyed women), lack of awareness of these women's rights (13%), lack of clarity of laws and procedures regarding divisions of inheritance (10%), and lack of resources of paying court costs (7%) (UN-Habitat, 2023).

Women in rural Egypt experience harsher familial and patriarchal social structures that limit their ability to achieve social and economic independence (UN Women, 2018). Interpretations of Islamic inheritance laws are not the sole reason why women in Egypt fail to access their adequate share of land. For example, in a study conducted in the village of Beni Suef, women were documented to own only 5% of their land, not necessarily due to religious understandings but more so to local customs (UN-Habitat, 2023). The issue at hand appears to be a patriarchal social structure that does not afford women equal participation in decision-making processes like land management and resource distribution. As a result, despite inheritance being the main way women can acquire land, social pressures limit their chances of accessing their inheritance rights.

Rural-Urban Divide in Housing

The geographic distinctions created between rural and urban Egypt are also political divides that affect what kind of resources, planning, and government policies are invested or disinvested in these areas. A significant part of what rural women experience also relates to their greater disenfranchisement of rural-designated lands. This section lays out the distinctions between rural and urban Egypt through a focus on land and housing. This will be done through a focus on service provision, central planning, and budget allocation between rural and urban Egypt, which is crucial in contextualising and understanding home ownership at large in rural Egypt and, specifically, why women are more disadvantaged than men.

Rural and urban distinctions in Egypt are largely geographic but also more social and infrastructural and dictate how government resources are distributed in Egypt. Social science scholarship on rural areas has moved away from Raymond Williams' (1973) distinction of the country and city and has moved more towards understanding the fluidity between urbanisation and ruralisation in defining rural spaces as peri-urban (El-Hefnawi et al., 2005). Today, rural villages point to the need to re-

question the rural-urban distinction, especially with the infrastructural boom experienced more recently in Egypt at large.

Today, one cannot assume a resident of an Egyptian village has an agricultural occupation since many young male villagers today work in mobile occupations such as urban construction labour (Abu Hatab et al., 2022). The village and city boundaries have become more fluid, with self-identified villagers living part of their lives and working in the city. Reem Saad notes: «What is defined as rural in the census consists of everything outside the seats of governorates and district towns, that is, the urban is defined in terms of its administrative role, and the rural is residual» (Saad, 2004). Saad specifies the urban-rural distinction — deeming certain areas rural and others urban — as a political means to limit the provision of services such as sewage, transportation infrastructure, and electricity. «We thus have many places which socially, economically and demographically are ripe for an urban status but remain deprived of the necessary services to effect this transformation smoothly», Saad (2004) notes. Therefore, the lack of service provision in rural-designated areas continues to produce discrepancies between rural- and urban-designated areas in Egypt. Women are at a double disadvantage as men by living in villages long-term, experiencing these forms of disadvantage, and taking responsibility for their upkeep, sometimes in place of male members of their family who do not permanently reside in the villages for work-related reasons.

Conclusion

This paper has covered some primary aspects that concern rural women's access to housing in Egypt. It addressed rural housing from the vantage point of women's access to housing. It presented the need for women's economic security through their work in agriculture. It then addressed women's access to housing and their lack of fulfilment of property rights. More specifically, the paper looked at inheritance rights as the avenue through which lack of fulfilment of economic security is key. Lastly, the paper addressed the rural and urban geographic divide in limiting access to resources and further disenfranchising women.

Recommendations

As part of women's access to housing in rural areas, the main recommendations posed for improving their opportunities include:

- Improving property rights ownership for Egyptian women, specifically rural women, as a catalyst for social and economic development;
- Advocating for women's capability of property ownership and land ownership to help overcome underdevelopment and poverty in Egypt;
- Supporting rural women's economic security through the acknowledgement and compensation of their agriculture work;
- Providing economic and educational opportunities for women, allowing them to be more economically secure;
- Working towards amending inheritance rights for women and to abide by Law No.219 of 2017, which ensures women's access to their inheritance deeds;
- Striving towards informing women of the avenues to take and resources to access in order to gain access to their rights;
- Simplifying and working on disseminating inheritance rights;
- Encouraging rural women to invest in land and home ownership; and
- Increasing efforts towards aggregating adequate data and supporting quantitative and qualitative research to develop data on rural women's housing opportunities, access to housing, and home ownership.

References

Abu Hatab, A., Amuakwa-Mensah, F., and Lagerkvist, C.-J. (2022). Who moves and who gains from internal migration in Egypt? Evidence from two waves of a labour market panel survey. *Habitat International, 124,* 102573. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2022.102573

CARE International Egypt. (2021). Empowering Women to Claim Their Inheritance Rights. https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/empowering-women-claim-their-inheritance-rights-win-post-project-impact-analysis

Cherif, R. (2022). The Built Environment Observatory. Women and Housing 3: Systematic Barriers to Women's Right to Adequate, Safe and Independent Housing in Egypt. https://marsadomran.info/en/2022/02/2323/

Climate Justice and Women's Participation in the Arab Region. (2022). Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminist Network.

Egypt: Job creation and Affordable Housing are vital to Women's Empowerment. (2023). The World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/03/07/egypt-job-creation-and-affordable-housing-are-vital-to-women-s-empowerment

Egypt's Adherence to CEDAW Stems from its Own National Will. (2012). National Council for Women. http://ncw.gov.eg/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/en2.pdf

El-Hefnawi, Ayman., I.K. (2005). "Protecting' agricultural land from urbanization or 'Managing' the conflict between informal urban growth while meeting the demands of the communities (Lessons learnt from the Egyptian policy reforms)". Paper presented at World Bank urban research symposium, 4–6 April, Brazil. Accessed [August 13, 2020] www.worldbank.org/urban/symposium2005/papers/elhefnawi.pdf.

Galal, Saifaddine. (2022). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237041/poverty-headcount-ratio-in-egypt/#statisticContainer

Hopkins, N., Reem S. (2004). The Region of *Upper Egypt: Identity and Change*. Upper Egypt: Identity and Change. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Joint Submission: Egypt's CEDAW Review. (2021). The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. https://timep.org/2021/10/26/joint-submission-egypts-cedaw-review/

Rural Women Living Conditions and Opportunities. (2019). Baseera. https://en.enow.gov.eg/Report/10.pdf

Singerman, Diane. Marriage and Divorce in Egypt: Financial Costs and Political Struggles. (2023). Les métamorphoses du mariage au Moyen-Orient [online]. Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2008 (generated 26 mars 2023). http://books.openedition.org/ifpo/456>. ISBN: 9782351592748. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/books.ifpo.456.

UN Women. (2018). Profile of Women in Rural Egypt. https://egypt.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Egypt/Attachments/Publications/2018/05/Profile%20of%20rural%20women%20%20final%20version.pdf

United Nations Human Settlements Programme. (2023). Land, Women Empowerment, and Socioeconomic Development in the Arab Region: Evidence-Based Perspectives. https://arabstates.gltn.net/download/publication-release-land-women-empowerment-and-socioeconomic-development-in-the-arab-region-evidence-based-perspectives/

Williams, R. (1973). *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The Case of Female Student Housing in Egypt: A Literature Review

Salma Abou Hussein

Introduction

Higher education is the key to development and reform in any modern society. A higher education graduate is expected to possess the skills to build a knowledge-based economy, guide the community toward advancement and progress, and increase the country's competitiveness as it integrates into the global economy. However, higher education worldwide, especially in developing countries, including Egypt, has been suffering from challenges to its main principles: access, equity, and quality. Egypt currently has 27 public universities (with about two million students), 27 private universities (60,000 students) and 13 non-profit (non-governmental) higher education institutions (Higher Council of Universities, 2022). Even though Egypt abides by a free-education-for-all policy at the public university education level to ensure access and equity, the first challenge to public higher education is overcrowding resulting from an institutional inability to meet increased demands; the second is the rising costs of both offering and achieving higher education; the third is the inadequate financing resulting from the continuous fall in public funding per student and the scarcity of supplementary funding; and the fourth challenge inevitably resulting from the first three is poor quality.

The findings of the 2014 Survey of Young People in Egypt indicate that there are only slight differences in university education enrollment in terms of gender; yet, such differences are very distinct in Upper Egypt, where the number of female university students is half that of male university students, and the former do not represent more than 10% of the total number of female students of the age qualified to enrol in universities (Population Council, 2014). Such findings raise some questions regarding why limited-income families decline to send their offspring to university or the motives for students to choose specific majors despite their high grades in General Secondary examinations. One of these reasons is the costs imposed upon students and their families, such as the cost of textbooks, private tutoring, transportation, and housing. There is also the social burden, such as sexual harassment, poor marriage prospects for girls, or the cost of alternative opportunities, such as a lost job opportunity as a result of enrolling in university.

As a way of reducing the burdensome cost of university education, prospective students register to stay at university dormitories to benefit from a discounted fee of a maximum of EGP 350 per month, inclusive of meals. The on-campus dormitories are residence halls where most full-time students share facilities and common areas, such as bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, dining areas and study rooms. The bedrooms can be single or double, or, to accommodate a large number of students, maybe dormitory style with up to 8 students. The selection of students happens based on merit and high academic performance, which means that many students will have to find someplace else outside of the university campus to live. Students living in university hostels are a distinct group of students with unique needs and problems. They have particular physical, social and emotional characteristics. They are away from home for the first time and have to learn to manage their affairs and adjust to new living conditions without a family member of greater experience to guide them. It is also worth mentioning that the selected students are non-residents of the governorate where their university is located to reduce costs for them. Also, these students who live independently are subject to less parental control that can inhibit unexpected or unhealthy behaviour.

Studies globally show that such students are more prone to poor eating habits, lack of sleep, or the acquisition of new habits, such as smoking or drug use. All these factors do not contribute positively to the development of a healthy lifestyle. However, there is a dearth of literature on that front. Given the role that masculinities play in the context of Egyptian society, it is assumed that there are differences between male and female students residing in university dormitories. However, such differentials were not explicitly investigated previously. Therefore, this study is carried out to identify the difference in perceptions of male and female students and their parents in public university dormitories, what the benefits and challenges of using these dormitories are, and how best they could be improved to ensure better access and improved quality of service.

Methodology

This study relies on two methods: a literature review of previous studies on student dormitories in Egypt and a secondary analysis of primary qualitative data previously collected by the Population Council in 2016/2017.[11] The literature review included 32 publications, including journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, dissertations and grey literature that covered the topic from social, educational and public health angles. Regarding the secondary analysis of the qualitative data, the primary data collection was conducted in 2016 /2017 under the direct administration and supervision of the Population Council, Egypt. For the purpose of this paper, the author is re-analysing the data to document and generate further evidence on female university housing in Egypt. The methods included in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) using semi-structured interview guides. IDIs were conducted with 34 students of public universities, some of whom resided on-campus, to ask them about the borne cost associated with public university education. The interviews were conducted in four governorates, namely Cairo, Alexandria, Al Gharbeya and Sohag, thus representing the three major regional areas of Egypt - Greater Cairo, Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt.

Eight FGDs were conducted with male and female students in science and arts specialisations; four FGDs in either Alexandria or Sohag (two FGDs for male students and two FGDs for female students). The total number of participants was 63 male and female students of the 19-23 age group. In the selection process of student samples, it was taken into consideration that they were students who had passed their first year in university so that they would have information and experience regarding the costs of education. It was also taken into account that they were students in public universities and from limited-income families, with some of them living in rural areas.

Alexandria		Sohag	
2 FGDs with Male Students	2 FGDs with Female Students	2 FGDs with Male Students	2 FGDs with Female Students

Four FGDs were also conducted with limited-income parents who have sons or daughters studying in universities (2 FGDs for each governorate), and the number of participants was 33 mothers and fathers. The parents had various professions: drivers, employees, technicians, workers, workshop owners, and farmers. Regarding the samples of mothers, most of them were homemakers, and a few were employees working administrative jobs.

Alexandria		Sohag	
1 FGD with Mothers	1 FGD with Fathers	1 FGD with Mothers	1 FGD with Fathers

For the IDIs, 18 females and 16 males were selected from a range of majors: 22 from arts majors and 12 from science majors.

11 Approval was obtained from the Population Council- Egypt to re-analyse the qualitative data that was collected on the subject of public Egyptian university repeaters in 2016/2017.

Sohag				Cairo				Al Gharbeya			
6 Females		5 Males		8 Females		5 Males		4 Females		6 Males	
3 Sc.	3 Art	2 Sc.	3 Art	2 Sc.	6 Art	3 Sc.	2 Art	1 Sc.	3 Art	1 Sc.	5 Art

Professors and university administrators/ supervisors from the three governorates previously mentioned were also interviewed. Ten professors and five administrators who come in close contact with university students were asked about the university experience, the costs involved, the challenges students face amongst their peers and families, and what the university can offer to improve the education experience.

Sohag		Cairo		Al Gharbeya	
3 Professors	2 Administrators	3 Professors	2 Administrators	4 Professors	1 Administrator

The initial criteria for IDI participant selection were the condition that the recruited students had either received financial aid, resided on campus or repeated a grade at least twice to be considered «repeaters.»

The author collaborated with university professors and local NGOs in each area to identify participants for the interviews and discussions. The IDIs were conducted in NGO offices or university campuses in spaces that provided auditory privacy. Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic. To guarantee a high quality of data, the project officer regularly monitored data collection activities and transcription. During the field visits by the research team, data collectors discussed their experiences and challenges. The field visits also ensured that issues were quickly addressed and lessons learned applied. Transcribed interviews were manually coded, interpreted and categorised into emerging themes. Associated quotes were reviewed for their accuracy.

Since secondary qualitative data is being used, it is worth mentioning that the author of this paper sought ethical permission for data collection under the Population Council in 2016, which was obtained through the institution's Ethical Review Board (IRB) during that year (Abou Hussein et al., 2017). Once consent from students, parents, and professors/administrators had been given, the interviews were held in the place of choice suggested by the interviewer, where both the interviewer and interviewee could be seen but not heard.

Findings

Application and Criteria for Student Housing

Based on the responses received from the data collection and the literature review findings, it was found that female students, similar to male students, needed to be registered full-time to get selected for on-campus housing. They were also not allowed to register if they were of low-grade standing or repeaters, residents of the governorate where the university is located, previously sentenced to a disciplinary penalty or viewed as physically unfit (i.e. living with HIV). Students explained that the application for student housing differs from one university to the other, which can be either in electronic or paper form. For example, students at Cairo University are expected to submit an online application to get selected for on-campus housing, whereas it is a paper application at Sohag University. The students expressed that the online application process was easier and faster as they avoided the long and tiresome queues attributed to the hard copy applications in front of student administration offices. Also, married female students looking for on-campus housing may not be granted housing regardless of their grades. Such a decision may project these students into precarious housing situations and compromise their academic performance and outcomes. Unpacking the reasoning behind this decision, one of the Ain Shams University administrators mentioned that universities try to avoid the problems associated with married female students' possible pregnancies. It was further explained that this category of female students is almost always in their last year of medical school and that they sometimes hide their stomachs in fear of housing dismissal.

Reasons for Applying to Student Housing

It is generally recognised that more female students than male students reside on campus (Abou Hussein et al., 2017; El Ansari et al., 2014). The majority of students explained that their parents usually influence their choice to apply for student housing, as it offers a sense of safety and security for the girls who have left their homes to reside elsewhere for their studies. Given the conservative nature of Egyptian society and the restricted freedom of movement placed sometimes on women because of gender stereotypes, many families are discouraged from sending their daughters away for studies in fear of them compromising their safety and security. Such situations limit girls' choices in terms of quality of education and selection of majors since there is a broader and more diverse range of universities and faculties, possibly outside their governorate of residence. Therefore, on-campus student housing provides a decent alternative for parents and daughters seeking more freedom. Also, living on the university campus can reduce costs. Some students expressed that they no longer needed to search and rely on transportation, which challenges some students living off campus to arrive at lectures on time. A female student from Cairo expressed, «My housing is in Qanater, and the first lecture at the Cairo University campus starts at either 8.30 or 9 am, so I never reach the lecture on time because of the distance. Also, the majority of professors would not allow me to attend because of my tardiness.» (Abou Hussein et al., 2017).

Even though female students leaving their place of residence in pursuit of higher education is a scenario depicted amongst them as practising more freedom, some students expressed that the experience may still be burdensome.

Two cases (a female Cairene student in the faculty of home economics and another in the faculty of commerce) explained that living outside their homes in an attempt to be near their universities, either on the university campus or private apartments (off-campus), puts much pressure on them as they have to adjust to living with others, completing home chores, feeding themselves, building a reliable network of needed services (i.e. supermarket delivery, ironing services, among others), and taking care of their safety. This kind of responsibility is considered new to them and consumes much of their time, which would have been better dedicated to studying.

Female Student Perceptions of Housing

There was consensus that the students do not have the desire to live in on-campus housing, and they attributed this to several reasons, the most important of which are as follows:

- The increase in the expenses of student housing, set by the Supreme Council of Universities, amounted to a maximum of 350LE (inclusive of two meals). This may vary slightly from one university to another. Students may choose to pay the fees for their accommodation only, as in the case of Cairo University, where the student pays EGP 150 if they want a place to stay without meals. The relatively perceived high cost of university housing prompted some students to prefer furnished apartments off-campus over on-campus housing, as a student can rent a single room for EGP 500 per month. They can also rent a bed in a double room for EGP 300 and share a triple room for 200 EGP (Al Youm Gadid, 2019);
- The internal regulations and rules of on-campus housing are restrictive, whereby students need to abide by the entry and exit times of the residence and must confirm daily attendance (Al Youm Gadid 2019);
- Students are expected to presume their daily lives within the narrow perimeters of the assigned on-campus rooms, with their shared bathrooms and high student density. The rooms were small and may contain multiple bunk beds, desks and cupboards, which take up much of the already limited space. According to a study conducted in Alexandria University housing, 76% of male and 86% of female students were dissatisfied with their on-campus housing (Aboulfotouh et al., 2007).

On another front, a number of students complained about the poor services provided by the restaurants of on-campus housing. They mentioned that each student gets one loaf of bread for lunch and two for dinner, and one of them is supposed to be saved for breakfast. However, the bread was usually very stale. The students also complained about the lack of options in their meals, which were supposed to suffice them for breakfast (since they were not given a breakfast meal). They indicated that the meal used to include a variety of six or seven canned/packed goods, including different types of cheese, jam, honey, rice pudding and yoghurt, all produced by the universities' faculties of agriculture. This is in addition to a pack of milk and boiled eggs. Currently, their meals are limited to beans, which often taste bad, along with a dish of lentils on only one night of the week and a jar of either jam or cheese. Students expressed the need to increase canned foods for dinner, which can be used for breakfast, and provide appetizers and fresh vegetables for lunch.

Students expressed the desperate need for university administrations to maintain on-campus housing bathrooms that are not suitable for human use. One student explains, «The glass windows of the bathrooms are

usually broken, making almost anyone passing through the street see us naked. We submitted many complaints to the director of the university housing in Sohag, but nothing has changed so far.» Also, they mentioned there was no provision for menstrual hygiene products, and they would have to buy them off-campus. Other students complained that there were not enough electric sockets for students to charge their electronics, and no fans were installed in the rooms for the summer. That is in addition to the lack of cleanliness and the poor quality of beds, mattresses and sheets that «are washed every year once,» as mentioned by many participants.

Students added that many other problems still haunt them, including the imposition of fines on students who fail to collect their meals or the strictness to obtain departure permits at least three days before the departure date. In addition, the lack of an on-campus ambulance or a doctor within the housing could potentially subject students to increased health risks. Not to mention, female students complained of the high presence of male employees inside female housing, which compromises their privacy and obstructs social norms. Similarly, some housing facilities are very close to each other, whereby the «balconies» of the male student housing overlook those of the females, which makes female students vulnerable to verbal harassment.

The students explained that, despite all these prevailing issues, parents still favoured university housing due to the security, discipline and atmosphere of student life offered. Parents also fear the problems associated with off-campus furnished apartments that may influence the behaviour of girls negatively due to the lack of a regulatory body that would supervise such types of housing. As one of the Cairene fathers mentioned, parents usually associate off-campus housing with the high probability of clashes between residents, which usually end up being resolved at police stations. Also, parents feared that beds within off-campus housing might be offered to non-students, which may subject the female students to further danger.

Gender Differences in Student Housing

The rules and regulations of student housing do not differ between male and female students, except for slight differences represented in security times, as no female student is allowed to return to the residence after 8 pm, and they are also not allowed to leave before 6.30 am. Meanwhile, male students were allowed to leave at 6.30 am and enter before midnight. One of the supervisors within the student housing of Ain Shams University explains, «Girls are not allowed to leave [the residence] except after submitting a signed request to the designated warden, with the exact date and destination of the departure as well as the date of return to residence. They also need to provide a number for their legal guardian. In the case of a three-time violation in the first semester, with regards to daily delays or departures, the student is referred to an internal investigation, and their housing privileges can be compromised.»

Some participants also mentioned that there is a decision that prevents married female students from joining university housing due to the possibility of pregnancy. A female student in Sohag mentions, «These married female students are usually medical school seniors since they already spend approximately six years or more studying, so the possibility of them getting married is higher than the rest. In the event they get pregnant, they sometimes hide their stomachs when they reach the last months of pregnancy in fear of dismissal from university housing.»

It is evident that these unequal terms explicitly placed on female students, stemming from negative gender stereotypes, biases and norms, are institutionalised. The differences in housing regulations still aim to limit women's mobility and freedom as opposed to their male counterparts.

Impact of Student Housing

Generally, there is a dearth of literature regarding the impact of student housing on both male and female students. However, studies have shown that more female students reported a lack of physical activity and were overweight (Aboulfotouh et al., 2007). This could be explained based on the behavioural and sociocultural factors that guide students' lives, as female students have fewer opportunities to go outside the on-campus housing environment, whereas males can be more independent and mobile and share food and exercise with their peers. It could also be attributed to the lack of adequate sports facilities catering to women's needs on campus. Overall, female students residing in public university hostels do not appear to be satisfied with their situation in terms of accommodation, health and support. In addition, the prevalence of unhealthy behaviours among this group of students is of concern. Clearly, these issues need to be addressed in order to provide a supportive environment in which students can thrive, an environment that encourages healthy behaviours.

Limitations

Given the qualitative nature of the research, the present study has some primary limitations. The sample of participants involved in this research is not representative, and thus, results cannot be generalised. However, a literature review was conducted to eliminate bias and ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Also, in the qualitative research paradigm, a multi-method approach is considered a way of validating and ensuring the reliability of the research. FGDs, IDIs and KIIs with different categories of informants (students, parents, and professors) enabled a deeper understanding of the problem under study. It is also worth mentioning that the qualitative data collection was carried out over 2016/2017. New events and perceptions may have occurred since then that may not have been reflected in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following are the most crucial recommendations relevant to authorities and ministries on the policy, programme and research fronts in order to strengthen efforts towards achieving female student satisfaction with the housing services offered to them while studying, as well as addressing gender differentials in university housing.

Policy Recommendations

- The Ministry of Higher Education and the Supreme Council for Higher Education need to ensure the complete removal of discriminatory practices and address/ monitor any differences between male and female students in the implementation of policies or programmes within university housing.

Programmatic Recommendations

1- The Central Administration for Student Affairs is to:

- Update the electronic university portals for students by providing them with sufficient information about university housing across all public Egyptian universities;
- Maintain constant communication with students, requesting their feedback on the quality of hospitality services provided to them at the universities where they are enrolled;
- Implement environmental changes to reduce barriers to healthy lifestyles among students through the improvement of recreation facilities and the provision of sports facilities and equipment and good healthy food;
- Implement a peer-education programme at the dormitories, to be coordinated by one of the health educators or supervisors. Students who are strongly motivated towards appropriate eating and exercise behaviour should take a lead role in influencing their peers;
- Disseminate health education messages for students residing in university housing through formal or informal programmes to bring about behavioural changes in terms of smoking, physical activity, healthy dietary habits, and sleep behaviour; and
- Arrange recreational activities, such as weekend trips, for students at the dormitories.

2- The Ministry of Housing is to:

- Construct distinctive and specially designed off-campus housing units near universities to provide students with affordable housing under their direct supervision as an alternative to the overcrowded on-campus housing units;
- Monitor private housing owners off-campus who rent out their housing units to students and ensure that there is a mutual legal and moral obligation between the two parties to achieve public interest; and
- Encourage investors of ethnic restaurants to pay attention and provide services within areas surrounding universities.

Research Recommendations

- Focus group interviews with students by the designated university administrations should be conducted to elicit in-depth information about students' problems as well as their suggestions for improvement; and
- A comparative study between the students residing on campus and those off-campus regarding different lifestyle and health-risk behaviour is especially recommended to be conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education or research institutions in the Egyptian civil society.

References

Abolfotouh, M.A., Bassiouni, F.A., Mounir, G.M. and Fayyad, R.Ch. (2007). Health-related lifestyles and risk behaviours among students living in Alexandria University hostels. *EMHJ - Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, 13* (2), 376-391, 2007 https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/117259

Abou Hussein, S. and Hosny, O (2017) Public University Students' Year Repetition in Egypt: A Matter of Choice and Work. Population Council. (Unpublished)

Al Youm Gadid (2019) Opening the Portfolio of University Housing in All Governorates. Akhbarak. https://akhbarak.net/news/19804897/articles/36388942/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AD-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8%D8%A7%D8%AA

El Ansari, W., Labeeb, S., Moseley, L., Kotb, S., and El-Houfy, A. (2013). Physical and Psychological Well-being of University Students: Survey of Eleven Faculties in Egypt. International journal of preventive medicine, 4(3), 293–310.

El-Kaffass, I., and Sabry, M. (2009). «Are Current Strategies Increasing Higher Education Access for the Underprivileged in Egypt?». In *Financing Access and Equity in Higher Education*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087907686_012

Hafez, S. M., Ghazawy, E. R., Mahfouz, E. M., Rahman, T. A. A.-E., and Emam, S. A. (2022). Smoking prevalence among university students, Minia, Egypt. International Journal of Health Sciences, 6(S2), 7173–7182. https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS2.6800

Hassan, T., El-Dashlouty, M., and Salama, M. (2017). The Effect of Dietary Habits and Lifestyle on Gastrointestinal, Liver and Kidney Clinical Status in University Hostel Students. *Bulletin of the National Nutrition Institute of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 48*(1), 1-29. doi: 10.21608/bnni.2017.4229

Salem, Youssef Abdel Fattah, Zohry, Mohamed Abdel-Fattah, and Abdel-Maboud, Prof. Ashraf El-Sayed. (2022). Studying the Social Needs of the International Students in Hostel for Egyptian Universities. المجلة العربية لعلوم السياحة والضيافة والآثار, 3(5), 125-153. doi: 10.21608/kjao.2022.259524

Population Council (2015) The Cost Borne By University Students. [In Arabic]

Population Council (2014) Survey of Young People in Egypt. https://popcouncil.org/project/survey-of-young-people-in-egypt/

Alternative Care Systems

Nada Rafik

Introduction

The care economy refers to all labour performed to care for other individuals or upkeep daily life. The term encompasses direct care activities concerned with caring for vulnerable individuals such as children and the elderly and indirect care activities that include cleaning, cooking, and performing household maintenance tasks (Duffy, 2007). The invisibility and undervaluation of this labour is an issue that feminist economists have been pointing to for decades. Women bear most of the burden of this work, either performing it on an unpaid basis in households or in undervalued jobs in the market. Since women disproportionately carry the burden of providing unpaid care work at home, the lack of supply of formal care services translates into more unpaid domestic care work for women (Razavi, 2007).

Understanding care work as essential to the functioning of the economy and acknowledging the gendered effects of a lack of availability of quality formal care services, this paper will zone in on institutional care facilities in Egypt that cater to two vulnerable populations: children without parental care and the elderly. Quality, affordable care provided by these institutions is not only invaluable to the residents themselves but is also important because it takes the brunt off women who would take on this labour otherwise. Some of these women might want to engage in paid work instead. Moreover, since most of the workers in these institutions are women, ensuring that they are well-resourced and funded can lead to them providing higher-paying jobs for their workers, which means more quality jobs for women in the market.

Both these institutions require policy attention for different reasons: orphanages for their current standing as the most prevalent form of care for children without parental care, and elderly care facilities for the increasing demand for this service that is expected because of the growth in the elderly population.

Over the past decades, studies have shown that institutionalisation negatively affects children's social, physical, emotional, and mental health. The trend, both globally and in Egypt, is to move towards caring for children in family-like settings through adoption or «kafalah» or smaller, community-based organisations. Nevertheless, institutional care remains the most prevalent form of care for orphans both globally and in Egypt (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2011). On the other hand, only 2% of the elderly in Egypt frequent elderly care facilities, meaning that the majority are still cared for at home (Selwanes & Helmy, 2020). However, the percentage of the elderly population out of the total population, both globally and in Egypt, has been on the rise over the past decades and is expected to continue rising. Declining levels of mortality and fertility are leading to demographic changes. Globally, the number of elderly as a percentage of the total population went up from 7.9% in 1950 to 9.9% in 2000 and to 13.2% in 2019 and is expected to reach 21.4% in 2050. Egypt is following a similar trend, moving from 5.5% in 1950 to 7.2% in 2000 and to 8.11% in 2019 and is projected to reach 9.4% by 2050 (Eltaweel, 2022).

As explained, the lack of formal care services has a more pronounced effect on women who act as the primary caretakers. Beyond this, elderly women who are potential receivers of this care are also more affected by their lack thereof for several reasons. First, women have a higher life expectancy, and because sometimes there is an age difference between spouses (with men being older than women),

a higher percentage of women end up outliving them. Meaning that there are more elderly women than there are elderly men. In addition, women are also less likely to remarry, meaning that they are less likely to have access to informal care by their husbands as they grow older (Boggatz, 2011). Moreover, women often have fewer financial resources than men since they engage more in unpaid labour throughout their lives, have less authority over resources, own less property and have lower access to pensions. Therefore, female widows are more likely to live in poverty, which means that not only are they more vulnerable to health problems, but they are also less likely to be able to afford paid help at home. Investing in high-quality, affordable institutional care services is therefore essential to meet the needs of elderly women specifically.

This paper lays out the international and national legislative frameworks that govern elderly care homes and orphanages in Egypt whilst presenting the data available on the state of the facilities as well as the demographics of their residents. It sets out to put forth recommendations concerned with ensuring recent policy efforts are translated into positive effects on the ground, as well as to highlight gaps in the data and research available.

International Guidelines

There are two main international regulatory frameworks that govern the rights of children and the elderly that are meant to inform global policy and practice: The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

MIPAA, adopted in 2002, is the first and the most comprehensive international agreement concerned with elderly rights. The agreement was endorsed by 159 governments, including Egypt (UN, 2002). The scope of MIPAA is quite broad; however, it does touch on long-term care (LTC) arrangements for the elderly and on formal care institutions specifically.

Concerning LTC arrangements, MIPAA highlights the necessity of having a continuum of LTC options. It points to the need to conduct research, including age- and gender-sensitive data collection and analysis, in order to provide evidence for effective policies and decide on the appropriate mix of in-house care and residential care services to be provided. It also gives importance to the individual preferences of the elderly and highlights that they should be able to assess their own needs on the housing arrangements most suitable for them. Concerning formal care settings, it stresses the importance of the establishment and application of standards and mechanisms in elderly care homes to ensure quality service is provided (UN, 2002).

The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children is a resolution that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2009 to mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both this convention and studies that have been published over the past two decades suggest that countries should move away from institutionalisation to family-based care, such as fostering and adoption (United Nations, 2009).

Institutional care for children has been found to negatively affect children's social, physical, emotional and mental health. Arguments against institutionalisation stress the importance of family-like settings to the development of children and argue that institutional settings often do not provide individualised care to children because of low staff-to-child ratios in institutions -

especially large ones. Care provided within institutions can also be inconsistent because of staff turnover and the many specialists that come in and out of children's lives. The training caregivers receive - when they do receive it - focuses more on health issues than social interaction (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2011). Studies also report that children and adolescents are at a greater risk of being exposed to violence and abuse in institutional care settings (Bhatt et al., 2020).

According to the UN Guidelines for the alternative care of children, efforts should first be exerted to keep children in the care of their families. The state is responsible for ensuring that families receive the support they need to keep their children. If this is not possible, then other solutions that place children in family-like settings, such as adoption or kafalah, are recommended. If this is not possible or not in the child's best interest, then states are encouraged to utilise other means of alternative care, including residential care facilities, as long as they provide the children with supportive and safe environments. Ideally, these facilities should be temporary with the objective of eventually reintegrating the children with their families or with alternative families. Residential care facilities, in this case, refer to smaller, community-based organisations that are more similar to family-like settings. Large-scale institutions are only to be used as a last resort. All of this is to be implemented while taking into account the desires of the children themselves. When large-scale institutions are used, and until they are progressively phased out, care standards should be established to ensure the quality and condition of the institutions and that care is being provided for children individually or in small group settings (United Nations, 2009).

Egyptian Legislative Framework

Legislation concerning care for the elderly and children without parental care in Egypt has recently been advancing towards being more on par with international guidelines.

Elderly Rights

Before the enactment of MIPAA, Egypt had already made some strides in terms of policymaking for the elderly. The year 1981 saw the establishment of the General Association for the Care of the Aged, which is responsible for offering social, cultural, and religious services to the elderly. A higher committee for geriatric care was also established by the ministry in 1997. In the same year, a ministerial decree was released that set standards for care homes (El-Taweel, 2022). The establishment of those institutions is mentioned in various sources. However, there is little information on whether they are still functioning and what they were tasked with exactly. Elderly rights in Egypt today are guaranteed by the 2014 constitution. In 2017, another higher committee for elderly care was formed through decree number 432, dated 12/9/2017, issued by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) (El-Taweel, 2022). As per the ministry's website, the committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, CAPMAS, the National Center for Social and Criminological Studies, as well as representatives from the National Population Council and the civil society. It is tasked with developing an integrated plan to ensure the rights of the elderly, drafting and reviewing legislation and establishing a database for all services that target the elderly, among other responsibilities (MOSS, 2018).

In September 2021, a draft law was approved by the Egyptian cabinet, and it is currently being discussed in the parliament. The draft law translates some of the rights of the elderly as per the Egyptian constitution and international conventions into legislation stressing the importance of respecting the elderly's will and freedom of choice. Concerning care homes specifically, the draft law sets standards and regulations for establishing any institutions for the elderly, including elderly care homes, and requires the institutions to register under the Ministry of Social Solidarity. It also places the responsibility of covering care expenses of the elderly first on the elderly person themselves. If they are not able to, then the responsibility is passed on to their spouse, then to their children, then their grandchildren, then their siblings, before it becomes the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Solidarity to include the elderly in social solidarity programs and cover the fees of staying in elderly homes (Almal, 2021).

This brings national legislation closer to the standards of MIPAA on several levels. First, it is stated explicitly in the 2017 decree that one of the responsibilities of the committee is to establish a database for all services that target the elderly. Having representatives from CAPMAS and the National Center for Social and Criminological Studies is another positive step forward that would encourage the enactment of evidence-based policies. This brings the legislation closer to MIPAA's guidelines concerning research, data collection, and analysis. However, it is important to note that MIPAA also stresses the importance of ensuring data collection is gender-sensitive and on research that would be useful in deciding on the appropriate mix of in-house care and residential care services that are to be provided. Also in line with MIPAA is the mention of the importance of respecting the elderly's will and free choice in the draft law, as well as establishing standards and regulations for elderly homes - although regulations had already been in place since 1997.

Rights of Children without Parental Care

The rights of children in Egypt are governed by the 2014 constitution and the Egyptian Child Law that was adopted in 1996 and amended in 2008 (Hassanin & Kotb, 2021). Egypt is also one of the signatories of the most comprehensive international document on children's rights, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, referenced above, was released 20 years later to enhance the implementation of the convention.

Child Law No. 12, amended in 2019, holds the state responsible for all children deprived of family care. Under the amended law, social care institutions are meant to serve children between the ages of six and 18 who are ‹deprived of family care.' While adoption is not allowed in Egypt, «Kafalah» allows for children to be placed with alternative families without them taking on the family name or inheriting their foster families in accordance with Islamic Sharia (Abdel Aziz, 2019). In 1998, model regulations for residential nurseries were issued for the first time by Ministerial Resolution No. 277. In 2014, another decree was issued to mandate the quality standards for alternative care. In 2016, a higher committee for alternative families was established that includes representatives of different ministries: social solidarity, education, justice, and interior, as well as some national organisations (Abdel Aziz, 2019).

The most recent national strategies that address children's rights, including alternative care, are the National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018 - 2030) and the National Strategy for Human Rights launched in 2021. Under the umbrella of providing different means of taking care of children deprived of family care, the national strategy vows to support the development of alternative family systems and to develop more housing institutions and care nurseries for children. It also focuses on the implementation of quality standards for residential institutions and building the capacity of care workers (National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, 2018). The national strategy for human rights mentions that more nurseries are currently being established to receive children from birth until the age of four. It also mentions the intention to expand the alternative family system (Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights, 2021). In summary, Egypt's legislation concerning children without parental care has been moving towards de-institutionalisation for the past few years. This is a positive step forward and is in line with international standards and supported by evidence that has been accumulating over the decades.

Similar to the legislation concerning elderly rights, the formation of a committee in 2016 is also a positive step. However, while recent national strategies indicate that the state is moving in both directions in parallel - expanding the number of residential institutions and also expanding the alternative families system - the social solidarity minister announced in 2018 that the target is to close all residential institutions by 2025. This indicates an inconsistency in the state's vision of alternative care. Moreover, the UN guidelines for alternative care stress the importance of considering children's desires. It does not opt for complete de-institutionalisation, yet takes into account that sometimes other alternative care options may not be in the child's best interest, in which case it recommends that small residential care facilities that can offer a sense of community should be the resort. The distinguishment between large and smaller institutions is missing in Egyptian policies and legislation but is very present in the international legal framework and studies conducted. Future plans for developing more institutions, such as those in Egypt's national strategies, should specify the sizes of the institutions they plan on establishing, considering that large institutions are to be progressively phased out.

Overview and Demographics

Elderly Care Homes

Elderly care homes are institutional facilities that can cater to the diverse needs of older people as they experience declines in capacity, providing them with the support needed to carry on with their lives with dignity and freedom whilst enjoying their basic rights (Sun et al., 2021).

There are currently 169 homes operating in Egypt in 22 governorates, serving around 3000 individuals. This number is estimated to be around 2% of the elderly population. Eighty-five of these homes (around half of the total) are situated in Cairo (MOSS, 2022).

While this is the official information available on the Ministry of Social Solidarity's website (MOSS, 2022), it is likely that this number does reflect the whole reality. Egypt has a history of homes working under the umbrella of churches and mosques. In fact, the first homes established in Egypt in the early 20th century were initiated by local Christian and Jewish communities (Boggatz, 2011). A study conducted in 2011 found 31 unregistered homes working under the umbrella of mosques or churches on top of the 62 institutions mentioned in the official list back then. A simple internet search using the keywords ‹elderly care homes in Egypt' finds many facilities not included in the MOSS list. This is to say that the number of homes operating in Egypt is unknown and that while all homes in Egypt are required to register under MOSS, it is likely that there are unofficial homes that are operating outside of the official system (Boggatz, 2011).

The only study that has been found for the purpose of this research on the demographics of those who inhabit elderly care homes is one that was conducted in 2019 by the Centre for Sociological and Criminological Studies. It is important to note that these findings are based on research conducted only within care homes that operate under MOSS and, therefore, cannot reflect the full picture since many homes are not registered under MOSS (Centre for Sociological and Criminological Studies, 2019).

According to this study, 61% of residents of elderly care homes are women. The majority of the residents (66%) are between the ages of 60 and 80, 23% are above 80 and 11% are under 60. Some 50% of the total number of residents are widowers, and the other 50% are either divorced or single. Only 20% of residents are staying in homes free of charge, and the majority of those who are paying to stay are paying out of their pensions. While the majority of the residents (73) are able to take care of themselves, the study mentions that the main reason for resorting to nursing homes for the residents is that they need care and do not want to be a burden on their families (Centre for Sociological and Criminological Studies, 2019).

As mentioned above, one of the responsibilities of the committee that was established in 2016 is to create and maintain a database for all elderly services. It is important to ensure that all homes are registered under MOSS for this database to be useful. While the results of the study conducted by the Center for Sociological and Criminological Studies should be utilised with caution since they only include homes registered under MOSS, they reiterate that female elderly individuals are specifically in need of institutional care facilities, seeing that 61% of residents are female.

Care Facilities for Children Without Parental Care (Orphanages)

According to the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, children without parental care are all those who «are not in the overnight care of at least one of their parents, for whatever reason and under whatever circumstances.» The reasons for the loss of parental care are varied; they can be the result of parental death, abandonment, poverty, etc. When children do not have access to adequate care from their parents, it becomes the state's responsibility to ensure they receive appropriate alternative care (2009).

The word orphan refers to children whose parents are both deceased. However, the term is interchangeably used to refer to children who have been abandoned or relinquished. Orphanages house children who are either orphaned, have been abandoned or relinquished. The term used for all three categories is children without parental care. There are currently around 1.45 children who are orphans in Egypt, with both parents deceased (EDHS, 2014). There is no official data regarding how many children are abandoned or relinquished. Abandoned children here refer to those who are left in public spaces and, therefore, whose parents are unknown. Relinquished children are those who have been left cared for in alternative care systems by parents, meaning that their parents are known (United Nations, 2009). Consequently, there is also no official data on the reasons for abandonment or relinquishments, although the literature cites the most common reasons to be that the children are born out of wedlock, that parents are unable to provide for them, unwanted pregnancies, children born as a result of rape and parents being unwilling or unable to care for them.

There are different institutional care facilities for different ages in Egypt. Childhood and Motherhood Care Centers house children under the age of two. Shelter nurseries house children from two to six years old, and social care institutions house children from six to 18 years old. Social care institutions *can* also house those over the age of 18 if they are enrolled in higher education or for females if they remain unmarried. While the policy of social care institutions is that girls can stay until they are married, meaning that it is optional for them, some accounts report that sometimes girls are *not allowed* to leave until they are married. The Ministry of Health is responsible for Childhood and Motherhood centres, while MOSS is responsible for shelter nurseries and social care institutions (Gale,2021). Most facilities only house either male or female children; however, those that offer services to both turn to segregated accommodation starting from age 12 (Gibbons, 2007). Children are also often separated according to the reason why they require alternative care. Some facilities, for example, take in mostly abandoned children whose parents are unknown, while others may take in those who were voluntarily relinquished by their families (Abdel Aziz, 2009).

The latest estimate of the number of children living in residential homes was 10,000 in 2019 (Ahram Online, 2021). This number, however, is likely an underestimate since many institutions are not registered under MOSS and are not included in this number. Beyond this, literature indicating the number of children living in institutions across the years has offered different estimates, and each one utilises a different methodology, so it is not possible to understand whether the number of children is growing or declining.

Also, official data is not available on the demographics of the children living in these institutions and the reason they were placed there. A 2018 study conducted in ten

residential institutions in Gharbia governorate indicated that almost two-thirds of the residents had joined the facility when they were under six years old, indicating that children are institutionalised at an early age and that almost half of them had been there from ten to 17 years (Elsakka, 2018). While this cannot be generalised, it gives some indication that many children utilise these institutions for permanent, not temporary, residence.

According to the UN guidelines for Alternative Care for Children, the state is responsible for ensuring that families receive the support they need in order to keep their children. To provide effective support, data collection and research on the reasons for child abandonment or relinquishment should be considered a priority and a necessary first step towards de-institutionalisation. Similar to the case for elderly homes, not all orphanages are registered under MOSS, which means that there is no current, accurate estimate of the number of orphanages in Egypt and the number of children utilising these services. Beyond this, and unlike the case of elderly homes, the data available is unofficial and does not cover all registered institutions. Nevertheless, research that is available indicates that girls may be controlled by orphanages and not allowed to leave and that orphanages are being utilised not as temporary residences as recommended by the UN guidelines for Alternative Care for Children but as long-term ones.

The state of care facilities

Elderly Care Homes

One of the few officially published reports looking at the state of care homes was conducted by the government's accountability office. It was only made accessible in 2016 as it was being discussed in parliament. It assesses the state of care homes in 2014 compared to 2013, utilising the internal regulations for geriatric care homes set by ministerial decision (90/1997) (MOSS,2016).

The main issues that the accountability office identified as the most problematic in care homes in Egypt were problems with the infrastructure of the homes that affected the lives of the residents, the lack of human resources and the lack of resources for everyday living. Some examples given included irregular flooring in some rooms that can lead to falls by the residents, unequipped bathrooms, incomplete furnishing and a lack of compliance with conducting regular checkups on the health of the residents. It also mentioned that some homes were missing essential personnel, specifically social workers, psychologists and overnight supervisors, mentioning that while the 1997 ministerial decision identifies the necessary personnel that should be made available in each home, it does not specify the needed qualifications for each of them. Moreover, some homes were missing facilities such as libraries, dining rooms and isolation rooms for the sick, which homes, according to the 1997 regulations, are obligated to have. The report also pointed to the unequal geographical allocation of homes, as over 50% are located in Cairo, while there are six governorates with no homes. The ministry responded to this, stating that the culture in these governorates would not allow for the elderly to be placed in facilities rather than cared for at home (MOSS, 2016).

Another source on the state of care homes is an article published in 2020. The article summarises the results of an assessment conducted by the Sociological and Criminological Research Center, which is headed by MOSS. It is unclear how frequently these assessments are conducted. While the original study provides detailed data on the condition of each home registered under MOSS, it is not accessible. The article, however, provides a comprehensive summary of the findings. The study assesses the state of the homes according to four main criteria: (1) Environment, infrastructure and whether the homes are well equipped; (2) Comprehensive care; (3) The protection of the rights of the elderly; and (4) Administration (Halim, 2019).

Some of the most important observations noted under the first criteria are as follows: while the homes are located in accessible and safe areas, they lack many services and do not have spaces to host activities for the elderly. More than half of the homes are not well equipped, especially when it comes to their furnishing and to accessibility for the disabled. Approximately 50% of the homes do not follow safety standards, including providing safe transportation from and to the home (Halim, 2019).

The second criterion assessed the care services provided. This includes nutrition, healthcare, psychological care, and social services. The results were especially negative when it came to health care and psychological care. Half of the homes do not have a medical practitioner on board, and 30% do not have a psychologist. Some 75% of them do not offer any programs focused on mental health. The study also finds that 30% of the residents who need a specific nutritional plan are not provided with the nutrition they need. Also, 30% of the homes do not arrange any social activities for the elderly (Halim, 2019).

The third criterion looks at whether the homes have policies that protect the rights of the elderly, systems to deal with residents' complaints, and whether these policies and systems are implemented. Around 50% of the homes did not have these policies to begin with. The fourth criterion is concerned with issues related to the administration of the homes, including accountability and transparency; systems in place that govern who can be admitted into the homes; whether the residents are involved in the governance of the homes; and drafting annual plans and evaluating the state of the homes regularly, among others. Some 60% of the homes were found to lack the bare minimum for effective administration, including having an annual plan, criteria for who can be admitted into the homes, partnerships with institutions and experts, workplace policies, and employee development programs, among others (Halim, 2019).

More generally, the study found that 24 homes (14%) were operating without a license. Most of the homes' capacity is between 20 and 40 residents, while 13% of the homes have a capacity of between six and nine residents. Only four homes had the capacity to host between 100 and 150 residents (Halim, 2019).

Besides these reports, there are a few other sources that provide some information about the state of care homes. Boggatz's book «Growing Old in Egypt,» published in 2011, provides outdated yet important insights. While there is no data available on the personnel working in nursing homes, Boggatz mentions that the majority of organisations that were part of the study complained about the scarcity of people willing to work as caregivers to the elderly, explaining that this scarcity might be the reason why institutions have to resort to untrained workers. These workers receive on-the-job training from other, more skilled nurses through training organised either by the nursing home itself or by external organisations. Through interviews conducted with caregivers, Boggatz concludes that working in elderly homes is an unattractive option for many because of the low salaries, strenuous workload and the taboo associated with the physical care necessary on the job. He also notes that caregivers who provide at-home care services, taking care of the elderly within their own residence is a more attractive choice, and the nurses who take on these jobs tend to have higher qualifications, meaning that while they were not necessarily professionally trained as nurses, they generally have attained higher educational levels than those working in institutions.

In summary, many elderly care homes operating in Egypt are not registered under the Ministry of Social Solidarity, meaning that it is not possible to monitor their adherence to regulations set by the 1997 decree. Those that are registered show weak adherence to the regulations. The first study pointed to major infrastructure issues in the majority of homes and a shortage of personnel. The second study reiterated these findings, also highlighting severe issues with the administration of the homes, most alarmingly that some of them operate without a license altogether, and policies that are meant to protect the rights of the residents do not exist in half of the homes. These findings point to homes being underfunded and subject to a very weak monitoring system that is unable to pick up on basic infrastructural and administrative lack of adherence to the 1997 internal guidelines. Boggatz's book further explains that low-quality jobs and the taboo involved with being a care worker in an elderly home are some of the reasons behind the lack of personnel. The book also highlights that those who work in care homes are sometimes unqualified and do not receive enough training. It differentiates between the calibre of workers who care for the elderly in their own homes versus institutions.

The State of Orphanages

As mentioned, in 2014, a decree was issued to mandate the standards for alternative care, including the release of model regulations for residential institutions. Several studies examined the state of residential institutions over the past 15 years. All of these studies, however, were conducted on a small scale - a maximum of seven institutions per study. Nevertheless, they provide some insight into the state of residential institutions for children without parental care in Egypt. First, it seems there is a common conclusion that despite there being regulations obligating all institutions to register under the Ministry of Social Solidarity and to abide by certain administrative procedures, including those concerned with setting up a board to manage each organisation, many organisations do not abide by these rules. One of these studies confirmed that the state does inspect the institutions regularly. Moreover, participants of one of these studies mentioned that inspections are focused only on administrative and financial aspects while not paying enough attention to the quality of care being delivered (Gale, 2021).

The results concerning the quality of care being provided are mostly negative. While one study found that basic material needs were met, children were suffering emotionally and mentally, with many exhibiting signs of depression and anxiety. They were unable to engage with the outside world. This is a common thread in several other studies. Another study also found that many of the children were suffering from depression and were not involved in any decision-making within the institutions, adding that the services provided by the institution were being framed as favours being granted to them, not that these are their rights. Several of the studies highlighted the lack of qualified personnel within the institutions and underpaid staff, along with a high child-to-social worker ratio. Some of the most concerning results pointed to physical and psychological abuse. One study pointed out that many institutions had already been operating for decades prior to the release of model regulations and had already developed their own standards, which were very poor (Gale, 2021).

In summary, orphanages in Egypt suffer from issues similar to elderly care homes. Not all institutions are registered; internal regulations are not followed by those that are registered; they are under-resourced and poorly monitored; and personnel are unqualified and underpaid. For orphanages, studies highlight specifically the lack of emotional and mental support provided to children, as well as physical and psychological abuse.

Conclusion

Egypt is a signatory of the most important international agreements concerned with both elderly and child rights. Since 2016, efforts have been amped up to bring national legislation to par with international agreements. What was already in place before 2016 were internal guidelines meant to regulate the work of institutional care facilities for both the elderly and children without parental care. These guidelines have been barely implemented.

A few issues need to be addressed to ensure that the recent stride in improving legislation translates into positive effects on the ground. First is the lack of data collection, research and analysis and their inaccessibility to the public. Efforts to improve care facilities for the elderly and children without parental care should be driven by the needs of those

targeted. This will ensure the optimisation of state efforts and funding. Data collected should be disaggregated by age and gender to ensure specific needs are met. The geographic concentration of residential care facilities should be decided according to the demand of residents in each location.

Efforts should also stem from the understanding that a continuum of care options must be provided for both the elderly and children without parental care. For example, it is important to understand the preferences of the elderly when it comes to residential versus at-home care in order to decide on the appropriate mix of care options. For children without parental care, the first step is to understand the reasons behind relinquishment and abandonment of children and attempt to address them. This will result in a decline in the need for care facilities for children, whether residential or alternative. A differentiation between large institutional care facilities and smaller ones that can offer children a sense of community needs to be made clear in legislation and in national strategies that mention the goal of establishing new residential facilities. Children's needs and preferences should be assessed, and they should be provided with options for both alternative and residential care – given that residential care services can provide for their emotional and psychological needs.

Second, monitoring efforts of residential care services need to be optimised. It is important to ensure that all institutional care facilities are registered under the Ministry of Social Solidarity or the Ministry of Health as specified in national legislation. Inspection of care facilities must be thorough and consistent so that they can be comparable and so that progress can be tracked throughout the years, and results should be accessible to the wider public for the use of researchers and civil society and to keep the state accountable. Moreover, feedback from residents of care facilities themselves should be collected during inspection efforts to ensure that improvements are driven by their needs.

Third, it is clear that institutional care facilities for both the elderly and children without parental care are severely under-resourced. The state needs to provide adequate funding to ensure that the implementation of regulations and guidelines is within the capabilities of institutions.

Fourth, care providers need to be adequately trained and well-paid. This is important not only to ensure the quality of service provided to the elderly and children without parental care but also to contribute to the availability of more and better quality jobs for women and improve the rate of female labour participation in the workforce.

References

Abdel-Aziz, A. H. (2019). Assessment of the Alternative Families System in Egypt. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care, 18*(3).

Almal. ننشر تقرير لجنة «الشيوخ» بشأن قانون حقوق المسنين. Retrieved 22 October from https://almalnews.com/ننشر-تقرير-لجنة-الشيوخ-بشأن-قانون-حق

Bhatt, K. B., Apidechkul, T., Srichan, P., & Bhatt, N. (2020). Depressive symptoms

among orphans and vulnerable adolescents in childcare homes in Nepal: A

cross-sectional study. BMC Psychiatry, 20 (466)

Boggatz, T. (2011). Growing Old in Egypt: The Supply and Demand of Care for Older Persons. American University in Cairo Press.

Committee for Childhood and Motherhood. (2018). Strategic Framework and National Plan for Childhood and Motherhood in the Arab Republic of Egypt (2018-2030)

Egypt's Solidarity Ministry says ‹violations punishable by law discovered' at El-Amin's orphanage - society - Egypt (2022) Ahram Online. Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/2/454830/Egypt/Society/Egypt;s-solidarityministry-says-;violations-punis.aspx (Accessed: March 20, 2023).

El-Taweel, Y. (2022).Older Adults Home Based Care in Cairo: Asset Mapping Towards Community Development [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.

Duffy, M. (2007). Doing the dirty work: Gender, race, and reproductive labour in historical perspective. *Gender & Society 21*(3), 313–336. https://doi. Org/10.1177/0891243207300764

Eltaliawi, A. (2015). Long Term Care: An Egyptian Perspective. *The Egyptian Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology*, 1.

El-Sakka, E. A. R., El-Wahed, M. A. A., Amin, D., Kassem, F. K. & Helal, H. (2018) Quality Of Life Among Children Deprived From Family Care In Residential Institutions In El-Beheira Governorate- Egypt. IOSR Journal of Nursing and Health Science, Vol. 7 (5), pp.16-33

Gale, D. C. (2021). *The National Child Protection System and Alternative Child Care in Egypt*. 76.

Gibbons, J. A. (2007). Sociological and Symbolic Family Processes in the Structure of Orphanages in Egypt. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 33*(1), 199–217.

Halim, N. (2019). Evaluating care homes in Egypt. *The National Social Journal*. Retrieved 22 October 2022 from: https://tinyurl.com/y4k859mr

Hassanin, N., & Yosr Wagih Kotb. (2022). The Journey of Developing, Mandating and Applying the National Quality Standards for Care Homes in Egypt. Retrieved 8 November 2022

Nair, S., Sawant, N., Thippeswamy, H., & Desai, G. (2021). Gender Issues in the Care of Elderly: A Narrative Review. Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 48–52.

National Human Rights Strategy. Arab Republic of Egypt 2021 - 2026. (2021).

Ministry of Health and Population [Egypt], El-Zanaty and Associates [Egypt], and ICF International. 2015. Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014. Cairo, Egypt and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Ministry of Health and Population and ICF International.

Ministry of Social Solidarity. (2018). Retrieved 22 October from https://www.moss.gov.eg/Sites/MOSA/ar-eg/Pages/news-details.aspx?nid=517

Ministry of Social Solidarity. (2022). Retrieved 30 October 2022 from https://www.moss.gov.eg/Sites/MOSA/ar-eg/Pages/elderly-care-institutions.aspx

Ministry of Social Solidarity. (2016). Annual CAPMAS report on monitoring and evaluation of care homes for 2014 in comparison to 2013. Retrieved 18 September 2022, from https://tinyurl.com/3d8bwep4

National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. (2018). *National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood*.

Razavi, S. (2007). *The political and social economy of care in a development context: Conceptual issues*, research questions and policy options. UNRISD Programme on Gender and Development.

Petrowski N., Cappa C., Gross P. (2017) 'Estimating the Number of Children in Formal Alternative Care: Challenges and Results', 70: 388–98

Selwaness, I., & Helmy, I. (2020). The evolution of paid and unpaid care work in Egypt. In UN Women, The role of the care economy in promoting gender equality: Progress of women in the Arab states 2020 (pp.80-113).

Sun, C., Ding, Y., Cui, Y., Zhu, S., Li, X., Chen, S., . . . Yu, Y. (2021). The adaptation of older

adults' transition to residential care facilities and cultural factors: A meta-synthesis. BMC

Geriatrics, 21(1). doi:10.1186/s12877-020-01987-w

Supreme Standing Committee For Human Rights. (2021) National Human Rights Strategy

Van IJzendoorn MH, Palacios J, Sonuga-Barke EJ, Gunnar MR, Vorria P, McCall RB, LeMare L, Bakermans-Kranenburg MJ, Dobrova-Krol NA, Juffer F. Children in Institutional Care: Delayed Development and Resilience. Monogr Soc Res Child Dev. (2011), 76(4):8-30

United Nations. (2002). Political declaration and Madrid international plan of action on ageing. UN. Retrieved 13 November from https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/MIPAA/politicaldeclaration-en.pdf.

United Nations (2009). General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 February 2010. Retrieved 22 October from: https://www.refworld.org/docid/4c3acd162.html [accessed 4 September 2021]

Refugee Women's Access to Housing

Sarah Yousry

Introduction

As a country where refugees and asylum-seekers are able to self-settle, the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt choose to live in urban areas. Indeed, most refugees around the world live in urban areas. While Egypt was initially a country of transit, it is increasingly becoming a destination country for many due to protracted displacement as well as the dwindling numbers of resettlements and repatriations. Urban areas attract refugees and asylum-seekers due to the ability to access livelihood opportunities, health services, education, and support services, as well as the ability to benefit from their social networks in already established urban refugee communities. While much of the research on urban refugees is devoted to their protection and access to essential services such as education and health, there is very little research on urban refugee housing in Egypt, especially concerning women's access. In fact, there is little research on refugee and asylum-seeker women in Egypt in general and very little knowledge of their day-to-day lives and their navigation of the urban environment in Egypt.

As in many other contexts, social networks play a critical role in access to housing. However, there are few protection measures in place when it comes to exploitation in the housing market. At least half of the refugee and asylum-seeker population in Egypt is made up of women, many of whom are heads of households. Refugees, particularly refugee women, are subject to living in areas and in conditions that can make them vulnerable, mainly owing to their inability to secure jobs that provide them with a stable source of income, which can then allow them to access more adequate housing. Using the available literature, this paper will address refugee access to housing in Egypt and their navigation of the urban environment, with a special focus on women where information is available. Since refugees and asylum-seekers are often defined in terms of their legal status, the first section of the paper will outline legal entitlements to housing. The second section will address refugee access to housing in general, and the following section will address access to housing and the urban environment concerning women. Following the conclusion, the paper will provide brief recommendations.

Prior to a discussion of housing and legal entitlements, it is worth reviewing the stock and distribution of refugees living in Egypt. As of February 2023, Egypt hosted 291,578 UNHCR-registered refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria (146,630), Sudan (59,896), South Sudan (25,071), Eritrea (22,947), Ethiopia (16,017), and 51 other countries (21,017) (UNHCR, 2023). The actual volume of the refugee and asylum-seeker population is estimated to be far higher due to the presence of displaced populations who qualify for refugee or asylum-seeker status but, for several reasons, are not UNHCR-registered. There are also thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers who have approached UNHCR and have yet to be processed. The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt are self-settled in urban areas. According to UNHCR, the greatest numbers of refugees reside in Greater Cairo (228,222), with 104,202 in Giza, 101,501 in Cairo, 22,519 in Qalyubia, 24,902 in Alexandria, and 9,525 in Damietta (2023). Refugees in Greater Cairo and Alexandria alone comprise 86.81% of the refugee population in Egypt (UNHCR, 2023). There are very few refugees living in rural areas. In the northern governorates of Marsa Matrouh and Kafr El Sheikh, there are 1,087 and 738 refugees, respectively. In the southern governorates of Aswan, Luxor, and Qena, there are 219, 180, and 102 refugees, respectively. Lastly, there were 107 registered refugees in South Sinai and 24 in North Sinai, as well as six in the New Valley (UNHCR, 2023). Refugee assistance and services are thus concentrated in the urban areas of Greater Cairo and Alexandria. The

influx of Syrian refugees due to the Syrian Civil War doubled the volume of refugees and asylum-seekers living in Egypt (Andrade et al., 2021), which has had an impact on refugee assistance and programming. A number of international organisations distinguish between non-Syrian and Syrian refugees, with much of the programming targeting Syrians (Miranda, 2018). These distinctions between different refugee communities are reflected in outcomes for refugees, as will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Legal Entitlements

Access to housing and the overall urban experience of refugees in Egypt are impacted by the refugees' legal status. The Egyptian government delegates the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process to UNHCR, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1954. The MoU outlines UNHCR's responsibilities, including the RSD process, and the Egyptian government's responsibilities, which are limited to the issuance of residence permits and travel documents (Hetaba et al., 2020). UNHCR Egypt is the largest refugee status determination operation globally (UNHCR Factsheet, 2022). The RSD process is delineated by the different types of legal documents issued: (1) White papers or certificates are proof of an asylum application that is missing identification documents; (2) Yellow cards are for recognised asylum-seekers and are proof of a pending RSD application. They are valid for 18 months and allow the holder to obtain a residence permit; and (3) Blue cards are for recognized refugees who received a positive RSD. They are valid for three years and allow the holder to obtain a residence permit. Refugee and asylum-seeker status is renewable as long as they remain a person of interest to UNHCR. Although Ministerial Decree No. 8180/1996 allows for permits that are renewable every three years, refugees and asylum-seekers only receive 6-month residence permits (Hetaba et al., 2020). Asylum-seekers who receive a negative RSD tend to remain in Egypt by finding other means of obtaining residence permits, with some applying for temporary residence permits either for tourism or education purposes, valid for six months and one year, respectively. Some asylum-seekers who receive a negative RSD remain in Egypt irregularly and are referred to as closed-file refugees (Hetaba et al., 2020).

In part owing to Egypt's MoU with UNHCR and a lack of national asylum legislation, Egypt has responded to crises in the region and the resulting waves of refugees by passing laws regarding their legal entitlements on a case-by-case basis (Hetaba et al., 2020). Therefore, each refugee community has its own profile of legal entitlements (Godziak & Walter, 2012). For example, the arrival of Iraqi refugees in the early 2000s resulted in special conditions that were vastly different from the conditions that refugees from African countries were living in (Godziak & Walter, 2012). The same is true for Sudanese and East African refugees. However, where no such special privileges or exemptions are granted to nationals of the refugee's country of origin, refugees and asylum-seekers are subject to the same laws that govern all foreign nationals' legal entitlements.

Egypt has ratified a number of international conventions that address refugee access to housing. The 1951 Refugee Convention does not explicitly refer to housing but rather includes provisions on freedom of movement and the freedom to choose a residence (Hetaba et al., 2020). Under the 1951 Convention, refugees should be given the same treatment as other non-nationals when it comes to housing. This includes the same rights as they concern rent control policies, landlord-tenant relations, and the construction and purchase

of homes. However, Egypt made a reservation to Article 23 on public relief and assistance, which would include public housing and grant refugees the same rights as nationals in terms of access, and stated it would make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Thus, refugees do not have the right to access public housing in Egypt. Other international conventions that Egypt has ratified elaborate on refugee's right to housing. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights provides for the right to available and adequate housing and prohibits arbitrary or forced evictions. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also prohibits arbitrary evictions and interference with home and family life (Hetaba et al., 2020).

The national legal framework distinguishes between Egyptians and foreign nationals as it concerns access to housing. While the 2014 Constitution grants the right to housing to citizens, the Child Law (Law No. 12 of 1996) extends the right to housing to all children, regardless of nationality. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood administers the Childhood and Motherhood Care Fund, which allocates part of its budget for housing (Hetaba et al., 2020). It is unclear to what extent refugees are able to benefit from this funding. The Egyptian Civil Code and Law No. 136 of 1981 regulate foreign national property ownership and tenancy rights, providing foreign nationals with the same rights as nationals. The Civil Code provides for the right to rescind a contract or reduce rent if government activity decreases property value (Hetaba et al., 2020). All foreign nationals are prohibited from owning farmland and land in border regions, as set out in Ministerial Decree No. 15 of 1963 and Military Order No. 62 of 1940, respectively (Hetaba et al., 2020). Foreign nationals are also prohibited from owning more than two realities for private dwellings, provided that each is less than 400,000 square meters (Hetaba et al., 2020). Thus, refugees, asylum-seekers, and regular migrants can sign leases under the same tenancy laws and with the same requirements as Egyptians. They are entitled to protection from forced eviction and the right to privacy (Hetaba et al., 2020). Refugees, asylum-seekers, and regular migrants have the right to purchase property, but not farmland, borderland, or residential properties (Hetaba et al., 2020). Failed asylum-seekers who remain in Egypt irregularly have fewer housing entitlements than refugees who are registered with UNHCR due to the fact that they do not have valid residence permits. The law allows for leases to be terminated upon expiry of the residence permit, and the Public Prosecutor's office is responsible for carrying out evictions. Refugees and asylum-seekers who have valid residence permits cannot have their leases terminated while they await renewal of their status (Hetaba et al., 2020).

Access to Housing

Academic literature on refugees tends to focus on refugees in campsites, although more than half of refugees globally live in urban areas. In recognition of this, UNHCR drafted an urban refugee policy in 2009 that recognised the need to provide protection to refugees wherever they are located (Ward, 2014) and established the city as a legitimate place of refuge (Godziak & Walter, 2012). The MENA region has some of the largest refugee-hosting states, and the majority of refugees in the region live in urban areas. In Jordan and Turkey, countries with encampment policies, only a small number of refugees live in camps (Norman, 2021). Self-settlement in urban areas allows refugees the ability to access services by NGOs and international agencies. Urban environments allow refugees to live relatively anonymously and participate in social and economic life informally (Norman, 2021).

According to a definition set by both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN-Habitat, adequate housing should meet the following criteria: habitability, security of tenure, affordability, location, availability of services, cultural adequacy and accessibility (OHCHR & UN-Habitat, 2014). This section will focus on habitability, security of tenure, affordability, and location. This is in part due to a lack of data, as well as the significance of obstacles faced by refugees in other criteria for adequate housing. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the following section, the biggest indicator for adequate housing is refugee racial and lingual background. While some of the data is not gender-specific, the following section will address women's access to housing in more depth. An important source of information on access to housing is an assessment conducted by UNHCR in 2018, the Egypt Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees (EVAR), with a survey sample that included forcibly displaced persons from 38 countries and with 45% of households in the evaluation being female-headed (UNHCR, 2020). The EVAR had a number of relevant findings in terms of refugee access to housing, which will be discussed below, in addition to a number of other quantitative and qualitative studies.

When it comes to habitability, many refugees live in crowded conditions owing to their need to share housing with other refugees, most likely from the same community. According to the EVAR, 52% of sampled households were living in a room in a shared apartment, 47% were living in an apartment, and 1% were living in a place that was not suitable for residence, such as a workplace, unfinished shelter, or garage. Less than 1% of evaluated households were homeless. Access to private shelter was split according to country of origin, with the highest percentage of access to private shelter among Iraqi refugees (83%), followed by Syrians (72%), Yemenis (63%), and Sudanese (50%). This stands in stark contrast to refugees who do not speak Arabic, with high percentages of living in shared apartments among Ethiopians (94%), Somalis (91%), Eritreans (87%), and South Sudanese (81%) (UNHCR, 2020). The average living space was also segregated in terms of racial origin, with refugees who do not speak Arabic having the least space (44.1 square meters), followed by other Arabic speakers (62.8 square meters), and Syrians (73.2 square meters) (UNHCR, 2020). Indeed, refugees have reported living in overcrowded apartments with other families, where up to 15 people could be found living in a small, poorly furnished apartment (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Overcrowded apartments can expose refugees and asylum-seekers to serious health issues. In one study, a participant shared that he lived with someone who had tuberculosis, putting him at high risk of infection (Abdel Aziz, 2017).

Refugees and asylum-seekers lack the security of tenure and face challenges in attempting to maintain it. Landlords and brokers utilise several strategies for evicting refugees and asylum-seekers or often will use the threat of eviction to coerce them into complying with their demands. Some require two months' rent as insurance; however, a number of refugees reported never receiving their insurance deposit when they were evicted. One refugee said that he was evicted two days after moving in and never received the deposit (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Participants in a study on closed-file refugees reported they were often evicted for sudden reasons and persistent increases in rent. Grounds for eviction can include unreasonable demands by landlords, including that they enter refugees' apartments without their knowledge or consent with their own key. Lastly, arbitrary rules and restrictions on visitors of the opposite sex can be used as evidence of noncompliance and lead to eviction (Abdel Aziz, 2017).

There is a more serious lack of security of tenure for closed-file refugees. Landlords and brokers often require residence permits, which only blue and yellow card holders receive, in order to lease a property. If refugees are able to find an apartment to rent without a residence permit, they rent with no contract to safeguard their rights as tenants, which leaves them vulnerable to eviction without notice (Abdel Aziz, 2017). According to the EVAR, only 37% of the sample had a valid residence permit, with the highest percentage of those with valid residence among Yemenis (62%), Syrians (46%), and Iraqis (44%) (UNHCR, 2020). Possession of residence permits was lower among non-Arabic speaking refugees, including Somalis (30%), Ethiopians (29%), Eritreans (22%), and South Sudanese (21%). The fact that Arabic-speaking refugees are more able to access permits is attributable to the acquisition of education residence permits by Syrians, Iraqis, and Yemenis, which are obtained using their passports. All other nationalities reported having a valid residence through their UNHCR cards (UNHCR, 2020). Meanwhile, only 9% of household members reported that they had a valid passport, while 62% reported they had an invalid passport and 30% had no passport. Valid passports were most common among Sudanese (12%), Syrian (11%), and South Sudanese (8%) refugees. The majority of those with valid passports also had valid UNHCR cards (98%) (UNHCR, 2020). Therefore, the ability of refugees and asylum-seekers to regularise their stay in Egypt is critical to their ability to achieve security of tenure.

Affordability has proven to be an issue for the majority of refugees. According to the EVAR, which was conducted in 2018, the average cost of rent for sampled households was EGP 1,343.6 per month, with the highest rent being EGP 7,500 per month and the lowest recorded rent being EGP 200 per month. The highest rental costs were among Iraqi refugees (EGP 2,573/month), Somalis (EGP 1,833/month), Eritreans (EGP 1,673/month), Yemenis (EGP 1,673/month), and Ethiopians (EGP 1,638/month), followed by South Sudanese, Syrians, and Sudanese. Considering that the average per capita income from work is EGP 2,386.9 per month, this leaves the average refugee with less than 1,000 EGP to spend on the remainder of their expenses. Rent varied according to the types of housing, with furnished rentals being more expensive than unfurnished rentals. As expected, Giza and Cairo had the highest average rental costs in the country (UNHCR, 2020). In general, rent prices are inflated for all foreign nationals in comparison to Egyptians. Foreign national tenants are seen as an opportunity for landlords to charge inflated prices, in part because many housing units are subject to the old rental law, and Egyptians subject to this law pay very little in rent, whereas foreign nationals would not be subject to the law (Norman, 2017). The misconception that refugees are well off and thus able to pay inflated prices is well documented and especially harmful when it comes to essential expenditures like rent. There is a belief that refugees and asylum-seekers are paid in dollars, have access to funds and assistance from international organisations, and can afford to pay high rent prices (Abdel Aziz, 2017; Ayoub, 2017).

Refugees resort to several coping strategies to be able to afford to pay rent. They often live with other refugees to maximize their resources to pay rent and increase their financial security and security of tenure (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Others borrow money from family and friends in Cairo or abroad. Many reported cutting down on food and drink because rent takes higher priority in terms of household expenditure (Abdel Aziz, 2017). According to the EVAR, sampled households resorted to several different coping mechanisms to meet their needs, most of which were manifested in food: relying on less preferred food (87.5%), reducing essential non-food expenditure (68.4%), reducing the number of meals eaten

per day (68.1%), limiting food portion size at mealtime (67.7%), borrowing money to cover basic needs (48.1%), borrowing food or relied on help from relative(s), friend(s) (44.5%), buying food on credit or borrowing money to purchase food (43.5%), restricting consumption by adults in order for younger children to eat (38.2%), and accepting high risk, illegal, exploitative temporary jobs by adults (35.8%) (UNHCR, 2020).

Refugees with contracts experienced yearly increases in rent, while those without contracts complained about monthly increases in rent (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Some refugees reported that they were charged more for electricity and water bills than their neighbours (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Affordability is also a challenge because refugees have to take into account intermediary fees, which are usually equivalent to one month of rent (Abdel Aziz, 2017). As mentioned above, this is in addition to two months' insurance required by the landlord. The affordability of housing has the potential to impact the security of tenure. Landlords will sometimes arbitrarily increase rent to evict or coerce refugees to leave (Abdel Aziz, 2017). When one of the tenants in a shared apartment is unable to pay rent, others are left with no choice but to cover them or risk eviction (Abdel Aziz, 2017). For these reasons, the urban refugee population is highly mobile, with 95% of the participants in a study reporting having moved at least once since their arrival (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Other common reasons for moving include problems with neighbours or landlords.

Refugees' primary concern when searching for housing is location and living in an area where their community has a presence. The reason for refugee communities being concentrated in certain areas in Cairo is due to a bias in the market. Housing brokers will mostly show refugees and migrants apartments in areas where others of the same nationality reside (Norman, 2021). While refugees will tend to live in areas where their own communities are well-established, they may also share areas with other migrant groups. In Hay El Asher, there are migrants from Nigeria, as well as other West African countries, China (mostly students studying at Al-Azhar University), Malaysia, Indonesia, and other Central Asian countries. Refugees will also further subdivide, such as Christian Eritreans or Ethiopian Oromos, separating from Amharas (Miranda, 2018). Living among members of their community helps them become «invisible» in the larger migrant population, where they will not call attention to themselves and risk deportation (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Refugees also take into consideration the rent, safety, and proximity to service providers. However, due to affordability, many refugees will reside in areas that are less safe than the middle-class and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods of Cairo (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Very few lucky refugees are able to live in the place of their work (Abdel Aziz, 2017).

NGOs attempt to fill immediate gaps in access to housing. Caritas assists unaccompanied youth up to 15 years old with emergency housing (Hetaba et al., 2020). The Psychosocial Training Institute (PSTIC) also has an emergency housing assistance program in which assistance takes the form of financial planning, housing grants, providing employment opportunities, and mediating to solve issues between landlords and refugees (Hetaba et al., 2020). While the UNHCR multipurpose cash assistance covers a significant portion of rental costs, access to adequate housing remains the most unmet need among refugees (UNHCR, 2020). However, UNHCR's offices are located in 6th October City, meaning refugees must navigate Cairo traffic if they want to receive any of their services (Miranda, 2018). Refugees aim to arrive early in the morning or late at night and sleep in front of the building to secure a place in line. UNHCR has since moved many of

its services to phone; however, waiting times are over 30 minutes long (Miranda, 2018). The provision of remote services increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Refugee Women: Housing and the Urban Environment

There is very little literature on refugee and asylum-seeking women, in particular. Rather, women are mentioned separately in studies on refugee communities as a whole, neglecting the particular experiences of refugee women (Ayoub, 2017). According to UNHCR, 35.9% of refugee households in Egypt were female-headed households (UNHCR, 2018). The actual number is likely higher, at least partially because households might be man-headed in principle, but women take on the brunt of economic and social responsibility. There is likewise a dearth of literature on refugee women's access to housing. The following sections will aim to not only paint a picture of refugee women's access to housing from available literature but also their experience of navigating the urban environment.

In terms of adequate housing, refugee women face particular challenges in the intersecting issues of location and affordability beyond the issues highlighted previously that are common among the refugee community at large. As previously mentioned, many refugees are unable to afford to live in neighbourhoods that are safe. This includes safety inside and outside of the home, as refugee women have reported verbal, physical, and sexual harassment where they live. Refugee women have mentioned that it is crucial for them to live with a male relative in order to bypass sexual harassment by landlords and neighbours. This is of particular concern to the Somali community, which has the highest rate of single women. One Sudanese woman reported having to go back to live with her abusive husband to protect herself from the landlords visiting her in her home (Abdel Aziz, 2017). In fact, as a result of economic insecurity and gender norms, early marriage has been reported among Syrian refugees. Other forms of gender-based violence are also common (Elnakib et al., 2021). Eritrean and Somali refugee women reported incidents where the landlord's son stormed into the apartment to verbally and sexually harass them inside their homes (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Refugees have also had to share housing with other refugees in order to make their rent more affordable (Godziak & Walter, 2012; Abdel Aziz, 2017). Sharing their home with strangers is a difficult reality for refugee women, especially mothers. Their homes lack privacy, and they are unable to leave their children, especially female adolescents, alone in an apartment shared with men (Abdel Aziz, 2017). Some women reported locking their children inside their homes when they left for work (Abdel Aziz, 2017).

Gender-based violence is a critical issue for refugee women, and many face sexual harassment on the street and at work, where they are also accused of stealing and are imprisoned in their employer's homes. Rape has especially dire effects, as one Sudanese man pointed out that men will often leave their wives if they are raped (Miranda, 2018). African refugee women reported being referred to as prostitutes on the street, where they were demanded to perform «indecent» acts (Miranda, 2018). Racial and sexual harassment are pervasive issues, even if they are not aimed at women. Mothers were afraid for their children socialising outside of the house because it is unsafe, and they could face racially motivated harassment (Godziak & Walter, 2012). In general, restrictions on physical mobility are common and are seen to ensure safety (Elnakib et al., 2021).

Some refugees can afford to live in middle

and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods, which tend to be safer. For example, many Iraqi refugees were well-off in Iraq before they came to Egypt and ended up settling in 6th of October, Rehab, Heliopolis or other middle-class neighbourhoods. They prioritised living in quiet neighbourhoods, away from areas that have too many foreigners (Godziak & Walter, 2012). Iraqi women indicated that proximity to their children's school was important. However, this also meant they were far from UNHCR and other NGO services. In one instance, an Iraqi refugee woman prioritised location over furnishing the apartment and having enough food. The situation rapidly changed for Iraqi refugees as many were starting to deplete their savings (Godziak & Walter, 2012). One woman mentioned she did not want to apply for refugee status because that meant she could not return to Baghdad to collect rent from her tenants, which was an important source of income for her in Egypt (Godziak & Walter, 2012).

Many African refugees choose to live near churches, where they are also able to access services and community support (Godziak & Walter, 2012). In fact, churches in Cairo serve as important gathering points for refugee and migrant women, especially those searching for work. All Saints Cathedral in Zamalek was managing an employment program for domestic work employment and a training office (Ahmed, 2010). The church facilitates improved employee-employer relationships and influences hiring practices (Ahmed, 2010). The church also serves as a place where refugee women can seek emotional support. It is mostly frequented by Southern Sudanese refugees (Ahmed, 2010).

Employment and housing issues are closely interlinked, and access to the labour market can help facilitate refugees' access to adequate housing. Access to work has direct implications on adequate housing for the entire household. Refugees who cannot find work will be unable to afford rent payments, causing issues between brokers, landlords, and refugees, which could lead to eviction or worse (Hetaba et al., 2020). Yellow and blue cardholders can apply to obtain work permits; however, Egyptian law does not make special provisions for refugees. Rather, refugees are subject to the same laws as other non-nationals in terms of being legally permitted to work in Egypt (ILO, 2022). Refugees have a hard time accessing this right due to the stringent laws governing foreigners' access to work in Egypt, including requirements such as non-competition with Egyptian workers, a quota for foreign workers, and the scarcity of formal employment opportunities in the labour market in general (ILO, 2022; Hetaba et al., 2020). The process and cost of obtaining a permit to work in the formal labour market make it out of reach for many refugees and their potential employers. The vast majority of refugees work in the informal sector, which leaves them at risk of exploitation, abuse, and harassment, whether in the form of low pay, long work hours, or having their pay or documents withheld. This is especially common among refugee women who work as domestic workers (Hetaba et al., 2020).

Work is a critical aspect of the refugee woman's experience of the urban environment, as it also directly affects their ability to access adequate housing. The majority of refugee women are employed as domestic workers. Livelihoods are framed as a protection issue by UNHCR's urban policies, both the 1997 and 2009 versions (Godziak & Walter, 2012). Domestic work is a «loophole» because it is not considered labour under domestic law (Godziak & Walter, 2012). Decree 700 of 2006 Article 11 states that it is prohibited for foreigners to request a work permit for domestic occupations such as nanny, cook, or maid, which must be obtained from the central administration of the Ministry of Labour in cases of humanitarian and social

circumstances (Jureidini, 2009). The majority of domestic workers are women, although some men also work as domestic workers (Jureidini, 2009). Refugee women from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea are likely to work as domestic workers. For many, this is the only type of employment available and is an important source of income. Domestic workers are exposed to all types of abuse, verbal and physical assault, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, and having their documents withheld (Godziak & Walter, 2012). There is high demand among middle and upper-middle-class families for female domestic workers (Godziak & Walter, 2012), and domestic work takes place along wage differentials. The most in-demand are Asian domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, introduced to the Egyptian market by return migrants from the Gulf who regard Asian domestic workers as a class signifier, preferred for their ability to speak English and perceived professionalism (Ahmed, 2010). In terms of work, refugee domestic workers can possess certain qualities that employers need, for example, wanting to hire Christian and Muslim domestic workers simultaneously to have the whole week covered since they would take different days off (Ahmed, 2010). Employers have been apprehensive, for example, of Somali domestic workers who wear the niqab (Ahmed, 2010). Oftentimes, refugee women also have to overcome cultural barriers to work. However, some communities are starting to take a different approach to women working. In fact, some refugee populations, particularly Syrians, reported being influenced by Egyptian society, and women have since started working outside of the home (Elnakib et al., 2021). Some Syrian women reported that the real reason husbands do not want them to work, especially in a mixed-gender workplace, is because of jealousy (Elnakib et al., 2021). Single mothers, in particular, struggle to work and care for their children as there are no childcare options available (Miranda, 2018). However, domestic work is a crucial source of income for refugee women who often have no other choice (Jureidini, 2009). For women who are unable to work, some are able to rely on members of their own community, proving the importance of social networks. One newly arrived Eritrean woman was able to quickly find housing in a community when a Somali refugee spotted her being harassed by a taxi driver (Miranda, 2018). For women who work as domestic workers, especially Ethiopian, Somali, and Sudanese women, proximity to their employers' households is important in considering their housing (Godziak & Walter, 2012). Regardless of whether they are heads of household or are single members of their households, refugee women of all backgrounds require support in the urban environment in Egypt.

Conclusion

Refugees' access to housing and the urban environment in Egypt is challenging. They cannot access adequate housing, partially due to the inflated rent prices for foreign nationals in the housing market. Another significant challenge for refugees is their inability to access work that generates an adequate income to support their household, thus giving them access to more adequate housing conditions. Refugee women, in particular, face protection issues both in terms of their place of residence and in their place of employment. Seeing that Egypt is increasingly becoming a country of destination, the future requires long-term planning with the aim of assisting refugees and asylum-seekers to access stable, adequate housing and enable them to lead dignified lives.

Recommendations

- Conducting a field assessment of refugee and asylum seekers' access to housing, with particular attention to refugee and asylum-seeking women and heads of household, including mapping areas where refugees and asylum seekers live and work with the purpose of collecting information on rental market pricing and trends;
- Aligning housing assistance provided by international agencies and organisations with current rental pricing and trends;
- Establishing mechanisms for short- and long-term housing assistance, with accommodations made for different vulnerabilities, including new arrivals, sexual and gender-based violence, female-headed households, households with persons with disabilities, etc.;
- Housing assistance and programming should be gender sensitive; short-term housing assistance and support should have women-only options and accommodations for childcare to allow women with children to access the labour market;
- Establishing safe housing networks among brokers and landlords who are aware of the special legal status of refugees to enable them to find safe and affordable housing facilitated by international organisations and community-based organisations;
- Enhancing social cohesion by raising awareness in areas where refugees live and work regarding their status;
- Supporting members of the community, host community and refugees alike, with capacity building and training to enhance opportunities for economic resilience;
- Supporting the establishment and capacity building of safe spaces in areas where refugees and asylum seekers live and work alongside the host community; and
- Improving refugee and asylum seekers' ability to regularise their stay, especially closed-file refugees, in order to reduce vulnerabilities and facilitate their ability to access adequate housing.

References

Ahmed, A. 2010. 'I need work!': The Multiple Roles of the Church, Ranking and Religious Piety Among Domestic Workers in Egypt. Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 11:3-4, pp. 362-377.

Andrade, M., Sato, L., Hammad, M. 2021. Improving social protection for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt: An overview of international practices. Research Report No. 57. Brasília and Cairo: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Ayoub, M. 2017. Gender, social class, and exile: The case of Syrian women in Cairo. In J. Freedman, Z. Kivilcim, & N. Baklacıoğlu (Eds.), A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis (pp. 77-104). Routledge.

El-Abed, O. 2009. Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948. Institute for Palestinian Studies, Washington DC, and the International Development Research Center, Ottawa.

Elnakib, S., Abou Hussein, S., Hafez, S., Elsallab, M., Hunerson, K., Metzler, J., & Courtland Robinson., W. 2021. Drivers and consequences of child marriage in a context of protracted displacement: a qualitative study among Syrian refugees in Egypt. BMC Public Health, 21:1 674.

E. Gozdiak & A. Walter, Urban Refugees in Cairo, Research Paper published through the Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Washington, DC, 2012,

Hetaba, A., McNally, C. and Habersky, E. 2020. Refugee Entitlements in Egypt, 14. Cairo Studies on Migration and Refugees. American University in Cairo.

ILO. 2022. Review of national policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and practice in Egypt: A baseline study on the access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---ddg_p/documents/publication/wcms_861695.pdf Accessed March 20, 2023

Jureidini, R. 2009. Irregular Workers in Egypt: Migrant and refugee domestic workers. International Journal on Multicultural Societies, 11: 1, p. 75-90.

Miranda, P. 2018. Getting by on the Margins: Sudanese and Somali Refugees, A case report of Refugees in Towns, Cairo, Egypt. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

Norman, K. 2017. Ambivalence as Policy: Consequences for Refugees in Egypt, Égypte/Monde arabe, Troisičme série, 15. Retrieved from http://journals.openedition.org/ema/3663. Accessed March 28, 2022.

Norman, K. 2021. Urbanization, informal governance and refugee

integration in Egypt, Globalizations, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2021.1907510

UNDP, ILO, and WFP. 2017. Jobs make the difference: Expanding economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

UNHCR. 2018. UNHCR Egypt at a Glance. Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/11/UNHCR-Egypt-at-a-Glance-NOV-S.pdf Accessed March 20, 2022.

UNHCR. 2020. Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees in Egypt. Cairo: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2020/09/EVAR18.pdf. Accessed March 3, 2022.

UNHCR. 2023. Monthly Statistical Report. UNHCR, Egypt. Retrieved from https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4491 Accessed March 26, 2023.

Ward, P. 2014. Refugee Cities: Reflections on the Development and Impact of UNHCR Urban Refugee Policy in the Middle East. Refugee Survey Quarterly, 33:1, pp. 77–93.**

Conscious Walking: Infrastructures of Gendered Lives in Cairo

Omnia Khalil

Introduction

Moving between places is usually a functional act. People move from their shelters to the streets, inside their housing units, using transportation to go to other places. Global cities are places where movement becomes a constant challenge for residents due to the intensity of populations and the working day hours that hinder mobility. They are foundational in understanding capitalistic relationships that materialise in constructions and social reproductive relationships (Sassen, 2013; Norton & Katz, 2017). This globality is combined with many particularities of environmental contexts around the world. This paper uses movement to refer to the walking actions in the city that relate to the human body scale. It looks at the gendered movement and decisions people make to design their movement and how it varies from one geography to another.

A lack of walking infrastructure arose with the rise of automated machines of motion. The modes of production made place-making favour the fastest ways of moving, and walking is the slowest motion mode. In 1905, there were 110 motorised vehicles in Cairo, while in 2016, the licensed vehicles in Cairo reached 3.5 million. The population was 400,000, then became 21 million. Whether the populace uses vehicles or not, they have to walk. If people belong to social classes that cannot afford privately owned vehicles, then they use a minimum of three walking infrastructures. First, in the case of apartment buildings, they walk from their apartment door to the circulation stairs or elevators. Second, they walk from their own housing unit up to the entrance of the building, which is the basic architecture design level of residential buildings and housing units. Third, they use the walking infrastructure on an urban design level that speaks to the walking distance from the building entrance to the vehicles, whether public or private. This paper studies the three levels of walking, which include criteria for gendered decisions. This paper is based on fieldwork that was conducted in Cairo over eight years (2012-2020). The writer uses her own experience with the city and the neighbourhood. The object of analysis in this paper is the architectural and urban designs produced in Cairo, which continuously affect the decisions of gendered subjects.

Gender-based violence forces people to make choices about their pathways to ensure the safety of their own bodies. Women and gendered bodies are the most vulnerable in terms of gender-based violence (Merry, 2008). Since the designers are not ensuring the safety of gendered subjects within many walking distances, this paper analyses designs of neighbourhoods and residential buildings where gendered vulnerable groups have to make choices of how to avoid violence. The paper examines the walking infrastructure on both architectural and urban design levels and how gendered subjects make decisions about their walking pathways to ensure safety for their everyday errands and functional movements between places. The paper excludes the residents of gated communities and compounds; the researcher will only analyse the urban fabrics of neighbourhoods and communities inside the boundaries at the core of Cairo and Giza. The paper will analyse neighbourhoods where the population belongs to the middle, middle-upper, and lower social classes in central Greater Cairo, i.e., Mohandseen, Doki, Haram, Bulaq, Downtown, Garden City, and Mounira. This choice of places has two logics: one is about the urban setting that has to do with the urban fabric, while the second has to do with the social class of residents in each chosen place in this paper.

Conscious Walking in the City

Movement is a constitutive element between humans and places, as movement is the basic activity that forms a relationship with places (Lefebvre, 1974). Movement is one act inhabited by everyone to get to move from one point to another. These movements take from the domestic private sphere to the semi-public to the public sphere. This paper only analyses the semi-public and the public places. The researcher is not entering apartments or housing units to study how it goes inside. The movement is something related to walking as a body movement. Architectural and urban designs are both related to the human body, size, and acts. The sensorium of body movement is influenced by both external factors of design in the built environment and internal decision-making processes related to our subjectivity as human bodies. These internal and external factors are both cognitive and not cognitive, meaning there are manifestations of relational geographies that are atmospheric to environmental and political contexts (Pile, 2009; Stewart, 2011). Some of these manifestations can translate into the material built environment, and sometimes, they do not.

In other words, conscious walking comes from the social construction of risk assessment that is part of our mental maps of reality in comprehending the geographies we live in. From childhood, people learn where material safe geographies are by instruction from caregivers and the societal norms of safety. Additionally, personal experience adds to these mental maps of our own realities, whether the individual experiences intersect with the collective ones. Shilpa Phadke explains how women negotiate risk and danger to create a space for themselves in public. Women's decisions depend on how both the state and communities allow them to be in public in goal-oriented and functional ways (2005). This says that the design of public spaces in Mumbai and Cairo, which are similar cities in population and compositions within the global south, can be designed to include and/or exclude women and their presence. This paper extends the understanding of public space to define the role of urban planners and urban designers as architects in designing buildings. Gendered subjects, women and others, negotiate the risk and danger within subjectivity depending on histories of abuse and violence in semi-public and public places. In other words, the gender-based violence which women are exposed to pushes them to try to find strategies to negotiate with their surrounding geographies.

The potential physical and psychological forms of violence constitute our subjectivities and our decisions regarding negotiating risks. The decision-making process inside our minds turns fears and anxieties into strategies and calculations (Phadke, 2005), which makes our movement conscious in many ways. The forming of cities along histories produced layers of understanding of communities and how walking is part of many conscious decisions in everyday life.

Walter Benjamin analysed the nineteenth century and its changes in capitalist relations and new construction materials. He started analysing the shift to a new form of capitalism associated with the afterlives of the French Revolution and how this reshaped Paris in the nineteenth century. While Benjamin wrote his convolutes in the 20th century, he critically observed and understood the changes in the city and the movement of the people. The flaneur, the person who loiters the city, the arcades, the streets, and the alleys with no purpose, is a product of capitalistic manifestations of shopping (Benjamin, 1935). Loitering is an architectural, urban manifestation of shaping places of the city. Benjamin put together the politics, the arts, the poetry, exhibitions,

construction materials, and the residents of the city in order to unpack political and economic transformations.

Cairo has been urbanised through different sequential regimes that have shaped its eastern parts, from Fustat in 641 to Fatimid Cairo in 909. A major shift in understanding planning came with the European urban designs and transitions in the form of capitalism in the world in the 19th century. Hausmann shifted Paris in the 19th century to help Napoleon turn it into a surveilled city, preventing the possibility of new revolutions and movements. The urban planning criteria and design qualities formed by Hausmann for Paris were transferred to Cairo by Ismail Pasha to make it what he called «East-Paris.» These multiple layers of urbanisation formed the urban and social layers of Cairo (Abu Lughod, 1971). This made a significant difference between the neighbourhood urbanity in Cairo and the division between famous districts that followed Islamic planning, i.e., Gamlaiya, parts of Sayeda-Zeinab, and Old Cairo. Another form of planning emerged for the European ones, which produced Downtown, Heliopolis, and Garden City. Parallelly, urban planning and architectural design have been growing with capitalism in the 20th century with concrete, glass, and metal constructions. These new criteria of urban planning as a science reflect districts of Mohandseen and Dokki, as well as the new satellite settlements, i.e., the 6th of October, the 10th of Ramadan and more. The gendered experiences within these different urban fabrics and compositions are not the same.

The experiences and qualities of these neighbourhoods are separated in terms of the material formation of the streets. The modern historical making of these neighbourhoods and their social classes influenced the quality of life according to the municipalities and how much the ruling regimes invested in them. These facts of urban planning and the historical compositionality of urban planning must affect the experience of loitering in the city. Loitering is not an act that seems doable. Across classes, in the Cairene context, where can one afford to loiter? From a localised, middle-class understanding, who can loiter and where? Only some middle-class and lower-middle-class men can hang out and loiter around some kiosks. Loitering is an act of privilege when it comes to gendered subjects. The assumption that women can be in the public sphere is doubtable due to gender-based violence. The majority of Egyptian women, especially in the Cairene context, have been sexually harassed, assaulted or both and are subjected to constant physical and psychological violence. Loitering as an act, then, becomes a middle-class male privilege that depends on the performativity of the men by way of the context.

Subjectivity and Respectability

The formation of subjectivity comes from a long history of being a Cairo citizen. In this section, the writer analyses the subjectivity and notion of respectability that make conscious decisions about walking and calculations of risk and safety. For women, it is always about respectability (Phadke, 2007). The forming and forcing of respectability became an essential dilemma within Egyptian society. Women need to prove that they are not sex workers and to avoid any performance that may get them labelled as prostitutes according to social norms. The respected woman was formed in the recent history of Cairo as a middle-class, veiled, married mother, which is an imagined forced status on who the authentic Egyptian mother is. This excludes non-Muslim women, as they do not wear the typical veils to cover their hair. The performativity of manners related to voice, tone, language, walking style, addressing people, and clothing are factors

that make external others make decisions of whether to respect this woman or not.

Respectability here is a false perception of others' bodies and subjectivities in societies. It is a manufacturing process (Phadke, 2007) based on the understanding of social norms and values, which forms the mental maps of reality in our minds. The mental map of reality includes our own perception and that of others of respectability; despite accepting it as part of the culture, it is essential for understanding gender-based violence within the urban environment. The doorperson (bawwab) became one significant person; their role in security and managing buildings became a real threat to the residents of the buildings. The other residents, who are neighbours in the building, become another vital social construction of the respectability and the lifestyle of one's life. In the South Asian context, the respected people are middle-class, upper-caste, Hindu persons, while the un-respected are lower-class, unemployed, sometimes migrant, sometimes Muslim, and mostly street walker women and dancers who are always ashamed and unsafe in public spaces (Phadke, 2013). The intersectionality of religion, caste, and class is essential to understanding the South Asian context; Phadke explains how reputation and respectability notions about women are key to how their unfriendly bodies can coexist in public places.

Gender-based violence happens to women - even those deemed ‹authentic.' The receptibility of society to women comes with a package of risk calculations in which women have to perform in their own apartment building, which is mode one and two, and also in the street, or mode three. There are criteria for existence and being and for how far others decide from a woman's performance whether she is a respected woman or not. Women make a conscious decision of performativity to their own subjectivity in places; however, the majority expressed that it is only a matter of performance in order to force the respect of others.

Having a gender physical appearance that is non-conforming and not associated with manhood and womanhood can subject individuals to physical violence or verbal harassment. Non-binary appearance in Cairo streets means at least being verbally harassed with constant loud calling, «You man. You woman.» Being trans in Cairo imposes many struggles of being in the city, whether when it comes to renting apartments or living in neighbourhoods. How safe would trans people be to able to make a safe gender transformation that takes years of their own lives? The possibility of being visibly non-binary usually is not an option.

Walking and Designs

The calculation of risks comes from social constructions since childhood of what danger is and how to avoid it as well as the individual experience of gender-based violence that redefines risks in our decision processes. Having pepper spray/gel, wearing headphones, changing routes while walking, having a soft weapon, or staying home are techniques by many gendered and nonconforming subjects in order to survive living in Cairo and commute between different neighbourhoods. The commute comes as a heaving package and an everyday struggle of calculating the risk and negotiating it. Cairo, generally in an urban sense, is not walking friendly; the sidewalk almost does not exist in many neighbourhoods, which adds manoeuvring with cars, bicycles, and motorcycles to the process of walking in the streets.

The flaneur, a subject who moves through the city, is not an absolute category of a being. Instead, they are a person who is a composite

of multi-layers of class, gender, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and more. The female flaneur does not qualify for the same freedom as her male counterpart (Cherif, 2019; Dreyer & McDowall, 2012). The layers are inseparable, meeting the intersectionality understanding offered by Crenshaw (1989). Based on interviews and the gender layer, men take more various paths than women, while being transgender and/or having a non-conforming physical gendered appearance would restrict one's path walking in the city and decide how, when and where they walk.

Cairo was, and still is, a challenging city in terms of the movement, particularly when it comes to walking as a choice of moving. Every day, sexual harassment, assaults, and verbal and physical assaults threaten women's lives and movement in the city. Women have to design their walks and choose where to walk in order to be somehow safe.

This paper lays out three basic typologies of walking in the context of the Greater Cairo region, the capital of Egypt. The first is walking the streets, specifically from the mode of transportation to the building entrance. This first mode has to do with the urban design of the blocks and the streets surrounding the buildings. The second mode is walking from the building entrance to the circulation inside the building, that is, elevators and stairs. This second mode has to do with the responsibility of the architects who designed the building. The third mode is from the circulation zone to the housing unit door. This last mode, as well as the second, has to do with the architectural design of the building. For the three modes, I use the number of buildings in Cairo where I have lived and worked from the time I was born until I turned 36. This comprises several neighbourhoods, namely Haram, Mokattam 1, Mokattam 2, Maadi, Mohandseen, Madinet Nasr, Downtown1, Downtown 2, Mounira, Abdeen, Dokki, Al-Daher (Table 1).

Modes of Walking and Designs

The Greater Cairo region has layers of history going back to the ancient Egyptians. Additionally, its urbanisation took many layers of self-built and self-designed neighbourhoods and buildings. The historicisation of each neighbourhood within the districts of Cairo took place when Cairo was first divided by Mohamed Ali into eighth or ninth parts, each called (tomn), which in English means eighth part. The administrative boundaries are socially delusional; this has to do with the differentiation between the social understanding of geography, which is different from the political-administrative boundaries that have to do with police stations and their own work and matters to elections. i.e., Cairenes would refer to Al-Kasr Elini Street as a street, while it is a clear division between Garden City and Mounira. Garden City is part of Hay Gharb, which includes Garden City, Zamalek, and Downtown, all administrated by Kasr Elneel police station, while Mounira is part of Hay al-Sayida Zeinab, which is administrated by the Sayeda Zeinab police station located in the Sayeda Zeinab Square.

Designing cities and neighbourhoods includes many levels of work. It is logical planning when it comes to satellite cities, i.e., New Cairo, including the fifth settlement, as it has a recent history manifested through the urban planning criteria. All the satellite cities in Egypt, with their four generations, were designed according to worldwide modern disciplines of urban planning and architectural. There are planners whose names are known and whose work has fallen within the Egyptian Republic's political regimes and their planning policies for the last 50 years. They are architects and architectural firms who are obviously responsible for the second level of design, which is the urban design of the neighbourhoods, as well as the buildings' designs. Then come the interior designers who work on housing units, banks, and restaurants, among others.

The neighbourhoods I refer to in this paper are all part of the larger context of a certain urban scale of districts. My units of analysis here would be the everyday and walking together. Reda starts her day by walking in her apartment. Then she has to go to work, so their journey would start from the apartment door to the stairs. The architectural design factors that would ensure their safety would be: First, what is the time of the day? Moreover, how crowded is this floor? Second, how many families live on the same floor? Third, is the space in front of the apartment well-lit or not? How long do they walk from the door to the flight of the stairs? Is there a corridor or not? Is this common space well-lit or not?

In terms of circulation inside the building, the fourth aspect would be the question of whether they can directly see the start of the stairs' flight or if it is not visible. Fifth, how long would they wait for an elevator?

In terms of the power relation of the social class of the self and the neighbours, they can depend on the tenure status, whether Reda is renting (new rent, old rent, furnished rent) or owns the apartment. Do any of the neighbours work at state security institutions (police or army) or not? Is it an office or residential unit? And what kind of similar or different purposes are other apartments in the same building serving? Is the building located in a highly securitised neighbourhood or not?

As for social factors concerned with respectability, reputation, and representation, they would be: Is she Muslim or Christian or other? What is their cultural capital in terms of being a professional, a working-class person, or a precarious labourer? Do they live alone or with flatmates? What is their economic capital, and how wealthy do they look? What is their way of speaking in terms of language? Is it all Arabic? Which Arabic? Colloquial? This decides whether the person is from Cairo or Upper or Lower Egypt. Do they speak English or mix French in their language?

If Reda is a woman, another set of questions should be asked: Is she veiled or not? What is the degree of her beauty and sexual attractiveness according to social standards? Is she married or not? Does she have children or not?

If Reda is a non-conforming gender looking, a man with a soft appearance, a tomboy woman, or a trans (gender and/or sex), this would add a spectrum of unsafety factors. Do the neighbours and/or the bawwab know about their sexuality? How much is the bawwab connected to the state security apparatus?

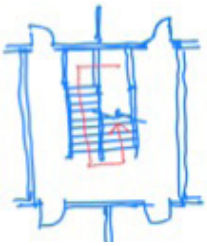
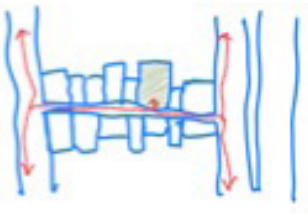
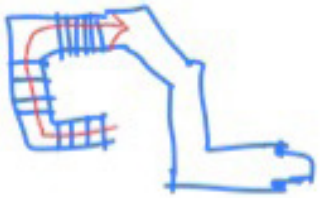
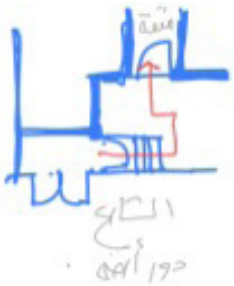
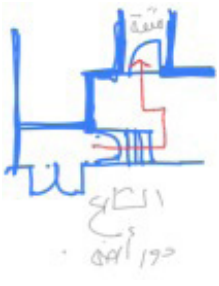
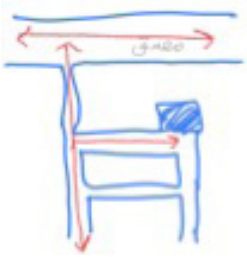
The power relations and the social factors in some of the questions above would vary from one neighbourhood to another and from one building to another, and their changes depend on long-term political and social processes and the Egyptian laws that define crime, and their enforcement structures, including the complaint procedures. Moreover, since the 2011 revolution and the 2013 coup, Cairenes have witnessed many changes in terms of geopolitical conditions in many neighbourhoods. The yearly calendar of anniversaries related to 2011 and onward are highly securitised periods of time that implicate surveillance and many security checkpoints.

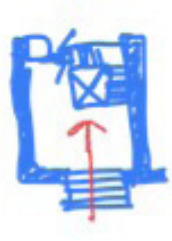
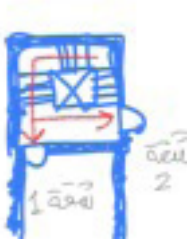
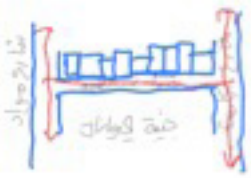
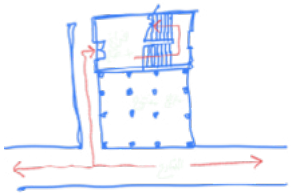
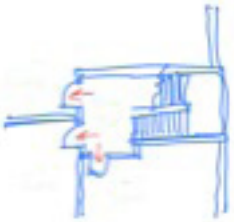
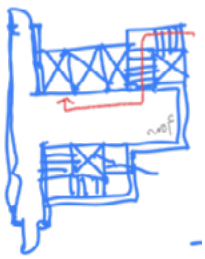
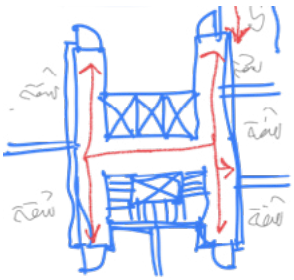
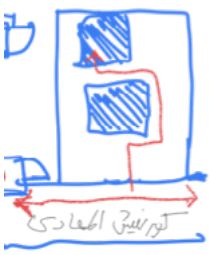
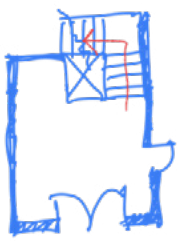
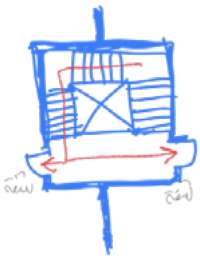
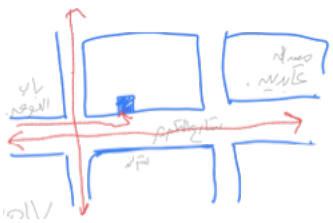
In the two modes of building design, the paper argues that architectural design can ensure some safety measures that would depend on both the design and the building's management: a) place design, circulation, and zoning, and b) lighting. The design of circulation and zoning can become a policy and part of the Unified Building Code. Visibility while walking is an essential factor in embodiment and gendered subjects' feeling safe. The more bent entrances and lack of

visibility of where we head towards, the more alarming the places are. The more corners that hinder the visible locations, the more we get suspicious of who might be hiding there, with more possibilities of assaults and harassment. Visibility is an essential factor that, according to the design and to the building's codes, has to be a rule, whether in terms of clean, simple spaces that ensure visibility or in terms of windows that ensure natural lighting during the day.

Artificial lighting is a factor that depends not only on the design of buildings but, more importantly, on their management. Building management would vary depending on whether the building is managed by one owner, with a committee, or otherwise. The third mode concerning the movement from transportation to the building entrance is about the public space and the design of the street. This has to do with urban designers and planners and the legal obligation to follow the same Unified Building Code section on detailed planning, which is the responsibility of the General Organisation for Physical Planning. All the above is not separated from the power relations and social factors that have to do with the above-listed questions.

The design codes are not the final destination, as it is challenged with land prices, especially in a mega-city like Cairo. The neoliberal political economy of construction constituted a maximum efficiency to lands in the architects' designs. Additionally, the continuous corruption is structural in the local municipalities. The table below shows how the visibility of circulation and the lighting in the three modes of walking can vary.

Neighbourhood	First Mode, Building Entrances to Circulation Zone	Second Mode, Circulation Zone to Units door	Third Mode, transportation to building entrance
Haram			
Circulation and Lighting	Zero visibility while entering the building, and the narrow space in front of the stairs has no natural lighting.	Two apartments are well connected to the vertical circulation and two are not.	The street is narrow and residential, which makes it always calm and dark at night.
Mohandseen			
Circulation Lightings	The entrance was not directy visible to the circulation stairs and it was dark coming from the street to the main entrance.	The whole floor was for the office, so it was comfortable and direct entering the office once finishing flying the stairs.	The streets are residential and commercial, which is a good crowd. The residence of the Minister of Interior made expectional surrviallnce days.
Dokki			
Circulation Lightings	Private entrance, only leads to the apartment, though anyone can use it. The visibility is very good.	Private entrance that only leads to the apartment, though anyone can use it. The visibility is very good.	Residential spot off the crudeness of Mosadak street, totally dark during the night.

Giza			
Circulation Lightings	The visibility between the entrance and the circulation is direct both ways.	Both apartments had the same qualities in terms of direct circulation to their door.	Residential street off two main crowded streets. At night it was dark and not busy.
Mokattam			
Circulation Lightings	The building entrance is not direct to the street which was not safe. Though the entrance is directly related to and visible from the building entrance.	The three apartments on each floor have a direct connection to the circulation.	Residential streets that are normally busy but not crowded, and the lighting at night is okay.
Maadi			
Circulation Lightings	The circulation is completely indirect, and no visibility while entering the building to the elevator circulation.	None of the apartments has visibility to the circulation zone.	The circulation between the main street to the building was contracted as Cornish is busy and usually high speed.
DownTown			

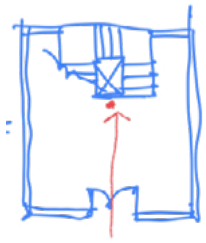
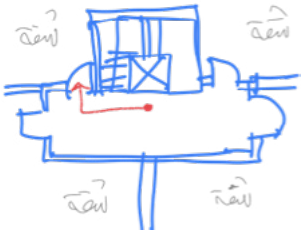
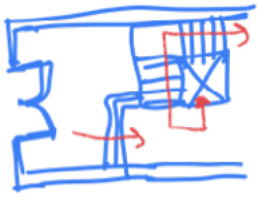
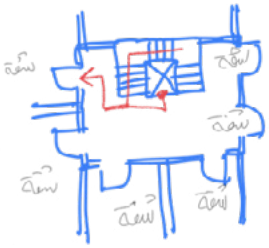
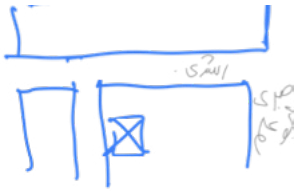
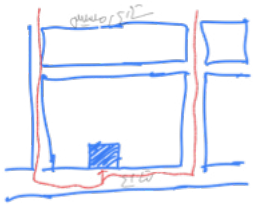
Circulation Lightings	The stairs and elevator were directly connected to the main entrance building.	The stairs and the elevation are both directly related and visible to the apartment doors.	The building entrances located on a main street were good and crowded enough on most days and nights.
Mounira,			
Circulation Lightings	Direct connection between the entrance to the stairs and the elevator.	Two apartments are directly visible to the vertical circulation, while the other two are not directly in connection.	
Abdeen			
Circulation Lightings	The entrance is not directly related to the stairs and the elevator, though the visibility is good.	Four apartments are well connected and have a direct visible connection to the vertical circulation, while two are not.	A quiet residential street that is off a busy street, it is usually not well-lit during the night, but quite busy which makes a balance.
Al-Daher			
Circulation Lightings	The stairs are directly connected to the main entrance building, though the natural lighting is not good.	The stairs are directly related and visible to two apartments.	The building entrance was located on a main street which was good and crowded enough on most days and nights.

Table – Analysis of the three walking modes

References

Abu-Lughod. (2018). Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious. Princeton University Press.

Cherif, Reem. "Women and Housing 2: Residents Not Detainees." Built Environment Observatory مرصد العمران, February 4, 2022. https://marsadomran.info/en/policy_analysis/2021/12/2305/.

Cherif, Reem. "Women and Housing I: Why Women and Housing?" Built Environment Observatory مرصد العمران, February 7, 2022. https://marsadomran.info/en/policy_analysis/2021/11/2284/.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. «Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,» University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.

Elfriede Dreyer & Estelle McDowall (2012) Imagining the flâneur as a woman, Communicatio, 38:1, 30-44.

Lefebvre, H. (1974). The Production of Space. Blackwell (translated from French).

Merry. (2009). Gender violence : a cultural perspective. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Norton, Jack, and Cindi Katz (2017) «Social reproduction.» *The International Encyclopedia of Geography*: 1-11.

Peake, & Rieker, M. (2013). Rethinking feminist interventions into the urban. Routledge.

Phadke, Khan, S., & Ranade, S. (2011). Why loiter? : women and risk on Mumbai streets. Penguin Books.

Phadke. (2005). You Can Be Lonely in a Crowd: The Production of Safety in Mumbai. Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 12(1), 41–62.

Phadke. (2007). Dangerous Liaisons: Women and Men: Risk and Reputation in Mumbai. Economic and Political Weekly, 42(17), 1510–1518.

Phadke. (2013). Unfriendly Bodies, Hostile Cities: Reflections on Loitering and Gendered Public Space. Economic and Political Weekly, 48(39), 50–59.

Pile. (2010). Emotions and affect in recent human geography. Transactions - Institute of British Geographers (1965), 35(1), 5–20.

Sassen. (2013). The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo. Princeton University Press.

Stewart. (2011). Atmospheric Attunements. Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space, 29(3), 445–453.

Walter Benjamin. (1935-1938). Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century.

مدينة ". المدينة التي لا يتسكع فيها النساء" .شريف ريم, January 26, 2020. https://www.medinaportal.com/flaneur_streets/.