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" SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW LAND COMMUNITIES "

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The author, Dr. Adli Bishay and Miss De Roo prepared a paper entitled " Planning Phases for New Desert Communities in Egypt : An Integrated Approach " for the Sixth International Rural Sociology Congress held in Manila, Phillipines - December 1984. Anyone interested in the total developmental aspects of desert communities should read the other paper in conjunction with this one.

INTRODUCTION :

Egypt's rapid rates of population growth present a serious handicap to the country's economic and social development. After the last census 1976, there are several estimates for Egypt's population rate of increase, which ranges between 2.5 to 2.7. In 1981, according to the U.S. estimates, Egypt's population rose by 1.3 million or 2.7%. The inhabited area is almost limited to the Nile Valley and represents 2.6% of the total area. Its population is more than 40 million giving an average population density of 1540 per km^2.

Considering the agricultural resources in relation to this serious population problem, one finds that the cultivated area is limited despite all efforts to increase it. While the population doubled in the first half of this century, the cultivated area in Egypt increased by only one-sixth. This population explosion has led to the fragmentation of land ownership; an acute competition to aquire land; disguised unemployment; and low standard of living for the peasant.

The Government of Egypt took several major steps to comply with its serious problem; such as : agrarian reform; national family planning program; industrial expansion which involved rural industrialization; and vertical and horizontal expansion of agriculture. Vertical and horizontal agriculture expansion are considered as the principal measures undertaken in the process of the nation's development.
In Egypt agriculture accounts to 30% of the national income, absorbs about 57% of the labor force and brings in most of Egypt's foreign exchange. (Tadros, p.1) Vertical intensification of agriculture seeks to make full use of existing arable land. Horizontal expansion is sought through land reclamation schemes.

Although the planning and development of new land communities is a relatively recent experience in most of the countries in the Middle East, Egypt is one of the countries, where land reclanation and resettlement projects have been in operation for a number of years.

Two phases in the past 180 years of horizontal expansion can be determined: the first was in the early nineteenth century, and the second was after the 1952 revolution.

Land reclamation in the past has never been a swift and totally satisfactory experience, and the tracts upon which hands were laid in both phases of horizontal expansion were not immediately productive. For therecent phase, that between 1953 and 1970, it is possible to show with some certainty that only 30% of the million feddans to which water had been brought were economically productive even by generous benefit-cost criteria and further a substantial proportionof reclaimed area assessed as an uneconomic resource because of its elevation and the associated costs of raising the irrigation water.

The last ten years wittnessed more emphasis on land reclamation in the desert as the only alternative for horizontal expansion. Private sector is getting more involved in the process of land reclamation.

The main goals of the Government of Egypt behind the land reclamation and resettlement schemes are:

1) To expand agricultural and industrial output, to meet the demand of the increasing population; promote the development of local industries and replace current imports.
2) To provide productive employments for the growing population.
3) To release the population pressure from the densely populated areas.
4) To raise the standards of living of resettled families.
5) To encourage and support the creation on institutional structures to promote community initiative and encourage locally directed growth. Organizations, such as cooperatives, community councils, and women's organizations are considered the main vehicles for the introduction of social change, the development of positive social attitudes, the provision of services, and the growth of community self-help spirit. (El-Abd, p.93)

Land settlement schemes have an important role to play in the process of economic development in the country. They contribute to the national economy through the utilization of new lands. In the near future when the already existing arable land is completely made full use of, the desert land will be the only source for Egypt's development and welfare.

Political decision makers willneed to direct both financial resources and personnel away from urban development into new lands where economic returns

may be low in the short run. However, from the sociological angle, these areas may decide the fate of the nation in the long run.

There has been positive and negative aspects learned from our previous experience with land reclamation and resettlement schemes. Some socio-economic constraints that negatively affect the development of new land communities can be detected. It is the purpose of this paper to spell out these constraints, to be aware of them and to realize their impact on the newly created communities and also to introduce some recommendations to overcome these constraints.

1) Inappropriate Approach For Desert Development:

1.1) Inadequate Surveys:

Desert land reclamation and the creation of new communities, although a step in the right direction is a very costly national undertaking. The Government of Egypt in the last thirty years has spent millions of pounds to reclaim about one million acre in the deset and other areas. If this is the case, these large amounts of money should at least be put in the right place to achieve the prosperous future the nation is striving to.

Site selection, which is a fundamental step of any land reclamation and new settlement scheme, must be based according to the area with most potentialities for future development. Adequate surveys are essential in this concern. Many such projects have been slow and even more expensive than usual due to inadequacy in chosing their proper sites.

It is essential to conduct a socio-economic survey to identify the area's physical potentials (natural resources), economic base,such as: agriculture, mining, pasturing, fishing, rural and traditional industries and handicrafts etc. Many land settlement schemes have not shown positive outcomes, because of inadequate surveys undertaken before the planning and the implementation of the projects.
Inadequate surveys undertaken result in the wrong utilization of the natural resources of the area. The future economic base of the new community is thus affected, as the area is not used to its full potentialities.

1.2) Lack of a Land Use Policy:

Actually some of the land community schemes suffered from the lack of a specified land use policy set by the government. There is a lack of land use policy and soil conservation service as an integral part of government development programs. The few scattered activities related to improvements in land use and land degradation control have been on a pilot area basis with short-term programs which have short term outputs. However, government programs have never evolved to continue these programs on a sizable scale.

The lack of a land use policy has encouraged land speculators to withhold land in expectation of selling it for higher prices in the future. Regarding the growth of new land communities, land speculations have shown antidevelopmental and paralyzing effects.

For a completely new land community to evolve in the desert, support from the government is essential. Strong governmental measures must be taken against amy such antidevelopmental behaviour, as land speculation to sustain development of these communities.

1.3) Applying Old Land Techniques to the Desert:

Many land reclamation and resettlement projects have not been as successful as initially foreseen, for the major reason that the desert was not dealt with as a desert, but as part of the Nile Valley.
Settlers tended not to cultivate the desert according to its own potentialities, but rather tried, in vain, to force the Nile Valley agricultural practices into the desert. Conventional agriculture, as it exists in the Nile Valley and the Delta is different in the desert, because of the poor soil, wind erosion, and energy costs.
The type of animal production which satisfies the needs of the area can be different, taking into consideration the availabilty of soil and water for fodder production and global costs of production.

1.4) Lack of Agricultural Extension Programs Designed for the New Lands:

Non-provision of agricultural extension and training programs is one of the major constraints that limit the economic development of the reclaimed areas.
From a socio-economic survey conducted for the settled graduates in South Tahreer a desperate need of the survey population to such agricultural extension and training programs was identified. The survey revealed the different new problems the graduates are confronted with in the new lands, in terms of weed problems and the appropriate chemicals and techniques needed to solve them.

Regarding the agricultural extention programs offered by the government, it has been observed that most government specialists in this field are not familiar or aquainted with the different conditions and treatment of the desert agriculture. The programs they offer are mainly based on the old land practices in the Delta and the Nile Valley.

Research is needed to determine the appropriate kinds of crops; cropping patterns; crop rotations; intercropping systems; fertilzers and microelements needed and the right techniques of applying them.

More research is also essential in appropriate methods of irrigation for sandy soil, application of feasable renewable sources of energy and other ways and means to deal with the desert as a desert.

To diffuse such research findings, a team of agricultural extension agents need to be trained appropriately on the desert development and be specialized in this area.

1.5) Lack of an Integrated Approach:

Previous experience in desert communities in Egypt show that emphasis are more concentrated on the physical, technical and biological aspects of desert development, than on the human, social and economic aspects.
Many new lands communities have shown an inballanced development due to the lack of an integrated approach which takes into consideration all above aspects.

The integrated approach should cover (a) Technological aspects including agricultural technology, irrigation, water management, agro-industries, renewable energy technologies, materials science and engineering; (b) Biological aspects including appropriate droughtresistant varieties, cropping systems, and livestock, and (c) Community aspects including infrastructure, socio-economics, management, aestetics and desert agriculture. (A.U.C.-Desert Development Center Approach).
Hence the planning and implementation of land settlement schemes needs an interdisciplinary approach through the well-coordinated efforts of soil scientists, irrigation engineers, surveyors, agronomists, economists, sociologists and other concerned disciplines.

In the course of the development of land reclamation and resettlement schemes it has become increasingly clear that whereas the physical aspects are amenable to administrative controls, such controls cannot be maintained without consideration of the human factors that underlie the settlers' social and economic behaviour. Inherent in the process of settlement are social and economic dislocation,disruption of institutions, and the need for adaptation of individuals and groups to the new environmental conditions and reorganization of human activities into new forms and structures. When these factors are not given sufficient attention the settlers may abondon the house built for them or they may leave altogether; productivity may decline and tension may result in social problems. (Wen , p.34)
A good example of ignoring the human aspect can be seen in New Nubia, where the

settlers disliked their new compact houses, that lacked the privacy and space they were used to have and previously enjoyed. (El-Abd, p.111)

The ultimate goal of a land reclamation and resettlement scheme is to develop and build new land communities. Hence the human factor plays a major and the most significant role in the success of such projects.
If the resettlement projects are to develop into new land communities, they must be treated and respected as such.

A community, as defined by Gerald Wen, is generally regarded as a closely knit social unit possessing certain shared values and common interests that set connunity ideals and goals and at the same time govern the behaviour of the members of the community. A community also possesses an inner structure and institutional arrangements through which conflicts are settled, collective behaviouris organized, and the human and physical resources are mobilized for the survival of the community and the achievement of its goal. (Wen,p. 34) This definition highlights the importance of the settler as the factor for achieving the future progress of a new community from within.

- Settlers' Participation:

Many new land community schemes have not realized the importance of the settler's participation in developing his own society and have not benefited from the positive outcomes of such participations.
Settlers' participation should start from the initial phase, the planning phase, if the project is to succeed. Envolving the users (the settlers) in this early stage ensures the processing of all following phases in the right track.

Settlers'participation, which might be regarded as one of the important factors affecting the development of new communities, is not so easy to be achieved. It requires a lot of motivation and effort from the settlers' part.

To get the settlers into organizing themselves and participating in the development of their community, they must first of all have a sense of belonging to their place and their society. This sense of belonging is related to the settler's degree of adjustment. The latter, in tern, is determined by the availability of land tenureship together with the provision of the minimum requirements of services and infrastructure. Unfortunately both elements are lacking in most mew communities. Those two elements are also considered as major incentives to attract people to migrate and develop new communities.

1.6) Lack of Incentives:

To attract people to the new communities, an incentive svstem is indispensible. Before leaving his home village of city, man, be it a farmer, a worker, a custodian etc., makes precise and maybe long calculations on whether the new place will make him better off, provide him with more services etc. Therefore these incentives must be provided .
Also administrators need to be considered in this respect. To attract administrators, a number of incentives are needed, such as : sufficient transport; availability of housing and amenities in mew communities; higher pay scales; better health and educational services.

2) Attitude of the Government towards New Communities:

2.1) Multiplicity of uncoordinated government bodies:

The new lands conditions are entirely different from the valley. However, the obstacles of multiplicity, bureaucracy and inconsistancy of the government management policies, which are followed in the valley, have the same implications in new lands. After successive changes in the government bodies and the responsibilities towards the new lands over the last two decades, it has reached acurrent situation which also lacks uncoordination, The three ministries which have significant role in the new lands are: the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Land Reclamation and New Communities and the Ministry of Local Government; in addition to other ministries of services , such as: health,education,etc. The negative impact of this inconsistant management stems from the lack of the integrated community development in the new lands. More or less the current policy is a matter of discrete actions rather than a development program.

A special government authority should be responsible of the planning and management of these communities. This government authority should have an overall responsibility for the implementation of all economic and social programs and services. This special administrative structure will implement the design for new communities within the local , regional and national level. (El Hamamsy,p.3)

2.2) Unclear Government Goals for New Lands:

The government does not clearly point out the specific goals behind each resettlement schemes. The four goals given in the introductory part of this paper are but general goals and maybe only give the explanation why the government decided to embark upon such schemes. However, the government does not explicitly clarify the specific goals behind each resettlement scheme on its own. Any resettlement project is different from any other. Each project needs a different plan depending upon differences in situations, conditions, natural and human resources available. Regarding the clarity of the social goals of a project, there are several questions to be asked. What kind of social pattern is the government aiming at? What are the social institutions the government wants to develop? What is the official view of the human potential, and to what extent will the people participate in the development of their community. (Jansson,p.4)

It is also important to identify the desert community planning goals not only on the national level, but also on the local level (settler's goals). The discrepency between national and settler's goals need to be identified, compromised to institutionalize conflict if any between the two goals. Some basic goals are social, others are economic. Unfortunately,one sometimes needs to sacrifice the economic goals in order to achieve social ones and vise versa.

2.3) Planning for New Lands are Highly Centralized:

National development plans are primarily formulated on the central level. Programes and policies for new communities are formulated and implemented as though all communities are homogenious. Solutions for the multiplicity of development problems require plans to be formulated at local and regional levels through a coordinated effort of all disciplines . Regional plans can then be aggregated and merged as national plan.

2.4) Insufficient Allocation of Budget to Local Community management:

Government officials on the local level are always assigned and given responsibility for program implementation, but seldom is provision made for these officials to have enough budget. Local governments are weak and totally

dependant on the national government for both funding and project implementation. Moreover, centralization and insufficient delegation of budget control to local officials made their hands tied by financial bureaucracy. They have to write to headquarters and wait several weeks to obtain permission to make even relatively small expenditures at local level. These routine procedures are obviously major impediments to dynamic development. Given this funding situation, it is not surprising that management and administration in new communities is very weak. Technical and professional staff do not see local government employment as an attratctive opportunity and would much rather be assigned in a central government ministry in a big city.

Delegation of authority and budget control could be made to responsible top officials on site. Development would occur at a faster rate and new lands would become more productive.

2.5) Non-availability of Marketing and Credit Facilities:

Marketing of agricultural products in Egypt is a common problem,which is even severer in the new lands. New lands suffer from poor infrastructure, less marketing services and facilities. Furthermore, the economic development of these lands implies to follow non-traditional crop patterns, such as horticulture, medicimal plants and fodder-cattle-dairy processing agro industries. These agricultural enterprises on new lands produce perishable goods which focus the marketing problems on new lands rather than on old lands.

The agricultural enterprises in new lands suffer much from non-availability of credits either because of their unsecure financial situations or because of the current conditions of providing loans. This increases the burden on those enterprisers to develop the productivity and to choose the best alternative uses of their scarce resources.

It is recommended to manage new lands agriculture as one of the most needy sectors for subsidy. Currently subsidies are offered extensively to less needy sectors, such as the broilers and the feedlots.

2.6) Unclear and Inconsistant price policies:

Price policy in Egypt affects all farmers, especially those in newly

reclaimed lands, because their situation and future is insecure and thus they are more sensitive to these regulations.

Prices are subject to violent fluctuatuins which have adverse effects on agricultural production, farmer's income, consumers, and the branches of industry utilizing agricultural raw materials.

Agricultural price policy in Egypt is a piece meal policy, a product-by-product policy. where the price of each commodity tends to be set individually without taking into consideration prices of other agricultural commodities. the intersectoral terms of trade, and the general price level.(Nassar) Different aspects of agricultural price policy are the responsibility of different ministries among which the most important are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Supply and International Trade, the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Planning,Foreign Trade and Economic Corporation, which have little communication with each other and also have markedly different objectives and control different policy instruments.

Policy coordination should be achieved through the functioning of interministerial committees.

Prices should cover the cost of production and allow for a profit margin and it should even be concerned with accomplishing income objectives rather than influencing the direction of the development of agricultural production. It must consider the supply side and the demand side in order to be conductive to efficiency in resource allocation and production.

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