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The Settlement of Residents of Rural Areas in New Communities in the Desert Hinterland of the Nile Valley
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Introduction and research problem:

The state has recently adopted a national project to upgrade Egyptian villages. The project is considered a genuine opportunity to promote development and ensure that it becomes a balanced economic, social, environmental and architectural project. Recent decades witnessed the rise of problems related to the Egyptian village. Among these is using agricultural land for construction purposes and the threat to Egyptian food security. The main problem faced by the Egyptian rural areas is the modest ability of the construction structure to absorb change in the patterns of contemporary life and cope with economic and social changes of the population. Moreover, road networks are insufficient and inefficient and services are poor. The rising problems in the rural areas have had direct impact on the urban areas. Slum areas have come to life and are providing refuge for comers from the rural areas. Despite the deteriorating situation in these areas, their residents prefer to remain there instead of moving to the new communities which still do not meet their social and economic demands.

The establishment of new villages in the desert hinterland of the Nile valley can contribute to the solution of problems of the rural areas and the preservation of agricultural land. However, two requirements must be met. The first is to provide these communities with a new contemporary rural life that copes with socio economic changes in the village community, and second, ensure the participation of all parties in all stages of development. This is the contribution of the current study.
Objectives:

The study identifies requirements of and obstacles to the establishment of new communities in the hinterland desert area of the two marakaz of Al Saff and Al Ayatt, and examines ways of motivating residents of rural areas to move into these communities through available resources. The study is based on field-work in current rural communities to identify the social groups that wish to move to new communities, as well as the factors that motivate people to live there. The study also identifies the role of concerned parties in developing and managing new communities, including the state, local administration, national programs, the local population and civil society organizations.

Methodology:

The study benefits from the authors’ previous experience in the project entitled “preparing construction and guidance plans for the villages of the marakez al Saff and El Ayatt” as well as on other theoretical studies. A sample survey was conducted in old villages and interviews were also carried out with the population in order to determine their needs and priorities and find solution for their problems. Based on the results of the social survey, development plans could be prepared, making use of all local and foreign resources.

The questionnaire was administered in 12 villages in Al Saff and Al Ayatt: Ghamaza, Al Wadi, Al Akwaz, Al Shobak Al Sharki, Al Akhsas in Al Saff, and the villages of Al Balda, Al Matanya, Bernesht, Tahta, Al Nasserya, and Al Katouri in Al Ayatt. These constitute all the villages of the rural local unit in the two marakez. 1200 questionnaires were administered to the population: 100 questionnaires in each village and 60 questionnaires for officials. Socio economic and demographic characteristics were collected from the study sample; the sample of officials represented employees of the local units, villages, marakez of Al Saff and Al Ayatt and the governorate of Giza as well as members of the popular councils, officials in charge of the construction and development of villages, the Social Fund for Development and CDAs.
Findings:

Social characteristics of the population in favor of moving to new communities:
-90% of the males in the sample supported the idea of a new community compared to 84% of the females. The age group 18-30 years and the age group more than 40 years favored the move highly (91% and 89% respectively). The unmarried group was also more supportive (95%). Educated individuals with university degrees were in favor of the idea (96%). Occupations and monthly income did not affect the views of the sample. On the other hand, type of residence had an impact. Support increased among flat residents to reach 93% of the sample.

Characteristics of the population who expressed readiness to move to the desert hinterland:
-Males are more ready than females to move (64%). Findings also indicated that the younger the age group, the higher the ability and readiness to move to a new community. 72% of the respondents were ready to move. Marital status had a large impact on readiness to move. 78% of the unmarried males were ready to go. Findings showed that the higher the educational level, the larger the possibility of moving to the new community. 70% of the individuals with high educational degrees were ready to move, and so were individuals involved in non-agricultural activities (65%). Findings indicated that the higher the average monthly income, the less the readiness to move (31% for individuals whose monthly income is above EP 600). Respondents who own their houses, are less ready to move.

Impact of characteristics of selected villages on opinions of respondents:
-The percentage of respondents who support the establishment of new communities and those who desire to move to villages located 15-20 km away from the desert hinterland reached 95% and 78% of the sample respectively, compared to those who wish to move to the village near the hinterland i.e. located 5-15 km away (86% and 59% respectively).
-The percentage of respondents who support the idea of establishing a new community and those who agree to move in villages with less than 10,000 inhabitants (92% and 72% of the respondents in these villages) are more than individuals who wish to move in the larger-size villages (85% and 52% of the respondents in the villages with more than 10,000).
Opinions of officials:
-89% of the sample agreed on the viability of establishing a new community in the desert hinterland near the markaz.
-Officials believed that the age group 18-30 is more mobile (67%), also unmarried respondents (70%), those who work outside the village (57%), individuals with intermediate education (57%) and civil servants (65%).

Opinions of specialists:
Specialists agreed that moving is the ideal solution for the problem of overpopulation and erosion of agricultural land. Some specialists had reservations about the suggested location. According to them, the most mobile group was the 18-30 group with intermediate educational degrees.

Type of new community:
-A high percentage of the population agreed to move to a new village in the desert hinterland if they have the chance (65%). Males had preference for the new village (65%); the age group 30-40 (68%), illiterates (71%), and agricultural workers (75%).
-29% of the females agreed on the idea of forming new communities, the age group 18-30 years, the unmarried (30%) and females with university degree (32%).
-70% of the sample of officials said that the best location to move to is the new village in the desert hinterland. Administrators and civil servants had almost identical responses to those given by officials. Members of the popular councils totally excluded the idea of moving to a new city and 8% spoke about the limited possibility of moving to a village with a desert extension.
-Specialists had different opinions. Some suggested villages within the same markaz, that have a desert extension possibility, while others said villages should be new in the desert hinterland or the neighboring new cities.

Reasons for refusing to move:
-Reasons presented by those who did not wish to move revolved around social factors such as family cohesion and rooted-ness in one place, followed by ownership of agricultural land and work and school commitment.
-Specialists said they believe the ambiguity and lack of sufficient and accurate information on the new communities were among the reasons for refusal. They also mentioned insecure work prospects, and the confusion between new cities and urban groupings in the wide sense of the term, particularly those that have agricultural development potentials.

-Officials believe ownership issues are among the main reasons for refusing to move in addition to reasons related to services in the new cities.

**Push factors in the old villages:**

-80% said that among the problems they face in their original villages are economic hardships on the individual and public level particularly income, unemployment, and the absence of construction land within the village, which leads to construction on agricultural land. 60% to 80% mentioned other reasons related to the construction environment, and services in the village that result from poor resources of the local administration both administratively and financially, the centralization of decision making, neglect of the rural sector, low share of villages in the allocation of resources and budgets, weak transportation and pollution.

-Officials agreed that problems related to work, income, utilities, services, housing and the environment can all motivate the people to move out.

**Motivating factors:**

-70% of the population said that factors related to services, utilities, housing, work opportunities and the availability of reclamation land are motivating factors. 94% mentioned the polluted environment; 40% to 70% pointed to the specifications of the new community such as the small size, the availability of construction land and other characteristics such as non-congestion and link to the main village.

-70% of the officials said the motivating factors are related to the basic needs of services, work opportunities and housing. 50% to 70% pinpointed the advantages of the new community such as its closeness to work and to agricultural land, as motivating factors.

-Specialists believe that among the main motivating factors is to find economic activities that generate income and work opportunities; ownership of agricultural land within a legal framework and with repayment conditions that are appropriate to the abilities of the population; provide the infrastructure services and present the model of the services compound that was implemented in the 60s; and social homogeneity, transparency and clarity about the project’s future plans.
The majority of officials categorically refused funds from external agencies. Some of them said foreign agencies could offer financial support and technical expertise particularly with the establishment of large developmental projects.

**Recommendations:**

- The local administration of the governorate must help provide the required financial resources to establish new communities and provide them with the amenities, infrastructure and services. Construction land must be made available at appropriate prices, and procedures facilitated for the implementation of the new community, the establishment of appropriate economic houses and the organization of workshops and seminars to raise awareness among officials about the importance of the projects.

- Local administration can help implement activities and find solutions for problems of red tape, bureaucracy, poor resources and modest financial and technical personnel. They can also help expedite the implementation of infra-structural projects, provide services and suggest new locations for the new communities, allocating special plots of land for citizens and providing the required financial resources.

- Local administration can help raise consciousness among the young people about the importance of moving to new places (use mosques and churches as well as NGOs for awareness raising seminars); organize the use of available resources; implementation and follow up on site (through providing labor and equipment), provide transportation to new communities, and activate the role of local leaders.

- National programs can contribute to the preparation of the necessary studies for the establishment of new villages, solve problems and challenges and present appropriate solutions. Government can raise awareness about the importance of the project, coordinate with the governorate, link the existing villages to the new community, offer the required technical skills, provide financial resources for moving out in coordination with the Social Fund in order to avoid the duplication of efforts.
- NGOs can raise awareness of citizens about the importance of moving and participating in the development of new communities, participating in new development projects such as land reclamation and hand crafts, raising awareness and motivating the move to the new communities through the review of successful experience.

- The private investment sector can contribute to the reclamation of appropriate land and providing equipment and irrigation tools; it can also facilitate young people’s ownership of reclaimed land, the establishment of new productive projects to provide work opportunities and directing young people towards new enforceable enterprises.

- The local community comprising youth, women, businessmen can play several roles: they can raise people’ awareness about the importance of moving to new communities and the importance of developing new communities through small enterprises; provide financial resources in the form of loans to young people, set up residential buildings and motivate young people by providing the necessary expertise.
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The Egyptian Partnership in Development Research Program aims to inform development policies and strategies by linking those who conduct research with those who can utilize its findings to promote development in local communities. It promotes a research agenda which is responsive to the needs and priorities of local communities. The program is characterized by a multi-disciplinary, demand-driven, and participatory approach. The program began in Egypt in 1999. The program is directed by an Advisory Board of prominent members who are concerned with development issues.

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