

Socio Economic Levels and Development Awareness in Egypt

Summary of Research

**Supervision and Editing
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Introduction:

This is a commissioned study on the socio economic levels and their awareness about development in Egypt. The sources of data were surveys undertaken totally or partially by the Social Research Center. Researchers re-organized and re-analyzed the raw data of these surveys in order to address the theoretical and methodological requirements of the current study.

Analyzing already existing field data to fulfill the goals of another study was an exiting new experience for the researchers , but also a difficult task. Even though the data was derived from relatively large surveys, larger than the usual national samples, it did not address all aspects of the topic under study, since of the surveys had specified objectives, tools and methodologies.

The team-work accepted the challenge which entailed a great deal of self education. Because of the difficulty of re-analysis according to new interpretations and variables, the study took longer than expected and large efforts were exerted to verify the data, but to reiterate, it was a generally rich experience and extremely useful for the researchers. It also indicated potentials for replication, towards the accumulation of knowledge about various issues of relevance to the Egyptian society.

The current study seeks to answer the following question: Why, despite the large official efforts to achieve specific developmental objectives, these efforts failed to realize their declared outcome and make an impact on the life of Egyptians? Can we attribute the failure, regardless whether it is total or partial, to the characteristics of the developmental policies both general and sectoral? Is it related to the philosophy, contents and mechanisms of the designed policy? Are they problems of implementation or of awareness, interaction and responsiveness of beneficiaries?

In order to answer these questions, the researchers provided a definition for the concept of awareness and other related procedural definitions. Awareness is defined as an outcome of the interaction between people's knowledge, their normative and common values, and actual practices, all determined by their socio economic positions or their socio economic levels. Ibn Khaldun stated that people's values and practices are not free but are conditioned by their position in life. This has been reiterated by critical and radical thinkers in social sciences particularly sociology.

The current report includes, in addition to the introduction, a number of chapters. The first chapter deals with theoretical and methodological considerations that inform the study. Chapter two focuses on macro analysis of the developmental policies, general and sectoral, which were declared and enforced in the last three decades of the 20th century. The objective of the analysis is to uncover macro changes associated with these polices, forming the structural context for the different socio economic levels, and determining the movement of their members in terms of trends, values and practices. The following chapters deals with micro analysis of the different dimensions of awareness. Based on responses to questions of the surveys, we attempted to analyze dimensions of

developmental awareness, fulfillment of basic needs and participation on the level of the family and the local community of the respondents.

This study does not repeat the findings of previous studies. In the context of the current work, the researchers would like to emphasize the following:

1. Studies on socio economic levels in Egypt, particularly in the last decade of the 20th century are limited compared to the study of the same topic in the two previous decades.

2. Unprecedented changes occurred on the various socio economic levels since the beginning of the economic reform policy through privatization, the adoption of capitalist orientations and the liberation of the market.

3. With regard to socio-economic levels, particularly the middle level, the current study has either developed further previous studies on the topic, or indicated limits to the generalization of their findings.

The supervisor/ editor is grateful to the intellectual and financial support extended by the SRC to the study team, represented by its director Dr. Hoda Rashad and Ms. Sohair Mehanna.

The research team exerted great efforts to reformulate the statistical tables and field data, and spent much time on analysis and interpretation. The following researchers participated in the study:

1. Mr. Hussein Kishk, Center for Sociological and Criminological Research drafted chapter two on “General and Sectoral Policies and the Change in the Opportunities of Economic Positions”
2. Dr. Mohamed Naguib Ibrahim, Faculty of Arts, Benha University, drafted chapter 3 on “Fulfilling Basic Needs: Opportunities and Challenges”
3. Dr. Mahmoud Zaki Gaber, Faculty of Arts, Helwan University drafted Chapter 4 on “Awareness of Education: Roles and Equal Opportunities”
4. Dr. Ahmed El Hagrassy, Faculty of Arts, Benha University drafted chapter 5 on “Public Health Awareness and Reproductive Health”
5. Dr. Ali Farghaly, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University drafted Chapter 6 on “Social Participation from the Family to the Local Community”
6. Mr. Ahmed Okasha prepared the analysis and statistics

Dr. Abdel Basset Abdel Mo'ty supervised the research process, prepared the work plan, and drafted Chapter One and the conclusion. He also edited and revised the whole report.

We hope this product will respond to a scientific need in the Egyptian libraries on the situation of the people and their development awareness: image and reality, and individual and social action.

Abdel Basset Abdel Mo'ty-Cairo, June 2003

Study Findings

I. General Conclusions:

In light of the questions raised in Chapter One the following conclusions can be reached:

There is a clear discrepancy in opportunities to fulfill basic needs. The size and types of challenges also differ from one socio economic level to the other. One of the main factors that affect the fulfillment of basic needs is: relations of ownership and work relations. For example, in the family planning survey, unemployed individuals were more present in the low socio economic level. Their jobs ranged between production and services; they were also vendors and had modest professions in the informal sector. Illiterates individuals and those who could only read and write formed the bulk of this level. Naturally, this composition reflected on the opportunities to fulfill basic needs.

The low socio economic position adds new burdens to individuals who occupy it. They are obliged to exert major efforts in order to fulfill some basic needs: fetching water, disposing garbage, sanitation, and walking long distances to access public transportation

1. Proportion of unemployed individuals is high in the low socio economic level compared to the middle and upper levels.

2. Opportunities to educate children are less – both in quality and quantity - in the low socio economic level compared to the two other levels.

3. Boys' and girls' surveys indicated high proportions of pupils who drop out of schools before completing the secondary stage. The percentage was higher in the rural areas compared to the urban areas, reaching the highest level of 21.3% among males in the rural areas compared to 16.2% in the urban areas. Figures were also high among females in rural areas reaching 14.4% compared to 10.6% in urban areas.

Dropping out of school reached its highest level among the low socio economic groups in the rural and urban areas (21.6% and 32.9% respectively), followed by the middle levels, and was absent among high socio economic groups.

4. Proportion of individuals with low levels of education was higher among low socio economic groups compared to the other two levels (reading and writing, primary certificate, and less than secondary general or vocational educational). Females suffer low levels of education and are sometimes totally deprived of education, compared to males of the same level. Data on enrollment rates show high rates for the total sample of boys and girls, with some disparities favoring urban areas compared to rural areas (97.5% compared to 91.9% respectively). Proportions were higher among the upper socio economic groups compared to the other two socio- economic levels

Proportions of individuals who never went to school in the rural areas reached their highest level among high socio economic groups (12%), followed by the low socio economic groups (9%) and finally the middle level groups (7.2%)

Data from the youth survey indicated that rates of girls' enrollment are still lower than those of boys, particularly at higher levels of education. Those who never went to school in the rural areas constituted 18.1% compared to 4.1% in the urban areas.

Data on adolescents indicated that the percentage of all Egyptian children aged 6 who are enrolled at schools, does not exceed 41%. The percentage rises to 85% among children aged 7 years, and 90% among the age group 8-11 years. It declines after the age of 11 years, coinciding with the end of the first stage of basic education. The most affected groups were girls of the middle and lower socio economic levels, and females in Upper Egypt. The conclusion here is that the socio economic position of families remarkably affects the enrollment of children in schools. Related to this is the low proportion of females compared to males.¹

Data of the adolescence and fertility surveys indicated that the financial condition of the family is the main reason behind non enrollment in schools in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. The adolescents survey indicated that non enrollment was higher among females (8.2%) than males (1.5%) and in the fertility survey the figures were 5% against 9% in the urban areas. Rates reached their highest level among the low socio economic groups in the rural areas (12.1%) compared to 5.6% in the rural areas. The effect of the financial condition of the families was invisible among the high socio economic levels.

Some scholars attempted to establish a link between the impact of structural adjustment measures and education. A study pointed to the high rates of children outside the basic education stage, accounting for 10% of the total number of children in the age of basic education. Drop-outs in the rural areas amounted to 45.6% including 32.6% of children of modest workers and small landowners, characterized by their poor conditions. Requiring additional school fees in government schools (EP 40 per child) in primary education, has also increased expenditure on education and resulted in the inability of some families to educate their children.²

5. Comparing the housing situation and characteristics among the three socio- economic levels, the following conclusions are reached:

- a. Housing of the low socio economic groups level has less number of units and is more dense
- b. Building materials are susceptible to climatic changes such as rain and heat
- c. Houses suffer lack of potable water and sanitation. Women are more responsible than other members of the family for fetching water and carrying it into the house
- d. The majority of members of the low socio-economic level families suffer from problems related to garbage disposal, which also represents a financial burden on the

¹ Barbara Ibrahim el al. *Adolescence and Social Change: The Transition to Adulthood*, p.92

² Mahmoud Gaber, "Agricultural Laborers and Poor Peasants" in *Social Classes and the Future of Egypt*, Abdel Basset Abdel Mo'ty (editor), pp. 261-262

families, particularly women. Nonetheless, villagers of different socio economic levels, particularly the lowest, recycle garbage for different purposes to use as livestock or fertilizers.

6. Data on food patterns and expenditure indicates that the food intake of low socio economic groups is witnessing decline in terms of the variety of items and presence of nutritional elements necessary for building the body and protecting it against disease. Meals of the low socio-economic groups are dominated by carbohydrates and take up more than two thirds of the income of the family. On the other hand, food items tend to diversify as we move up to higher socio economic levels, reaching the highest variety among the highest socio economic levels where luxurious consumption of food is demonstrated.

Several studies confirm the deterioration of food intake among poor families in the rural areas, particularly their needs of meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products –all body building items – compared to the share of the higher socio-economic groups of the same items.³

7. More children from the low socio economic groups work for others in return for wages compared to the other two groups. Some children – though limited in their number – combine work -particularly seasonal work- with education. Children from the two other levels mostly work for their families especially if their fathers own agricultural land, projects, workshops etc.. , i.e. children of poor socio economic groups work out of need and under conditions characterized by lack of family supervision and care. This results in a situation where the rights of the children are abused and their physical and psychological growth is obstructed.

8. Health awareness:

a) With regard to health awareness, particularly reproductive health, mothers are clearly the main source of knowledge about puberty. They offer mostly unscientific information, accounting for less than 10% in both rural and urban areas. Proportions were lower among the low socio economic groups compared to the other two groups. Knowledge about puberty conveyed by female friends, is usually inaccurate and incomplete.

b) Low level socio- economic groups demonstrate the highest desire for children, particularly male children, despite the general trend towards lower number of children. This implies strong correlation between poverty (low socio economic levels) and reproductive behavior. Low socio economic groups, particularly in the rural areas, still prefer male children and more than half the sample in the rural and urban areas still prefer male children.

c) With regard to satisfaction with health of children, data indicated semi equal numbers in the responses of the study sample: 54.4% of the rural women and 43.3% of the urban

³ Mahmoud Gaber, "Some basic needs for agricultural laborers in Egyptian rural areas", Paper presented at Conference on :Egyptian Village: Reality and the Future, National Council for Sociological and Criminological Research, Cairo, 1996, p. 53

women reported that the health of their children is better than their own health; 54.7% of the urban sample and 41.9% of the rural sample does not believe the opposite is true.

Low and middle socio- economic levels were opposed to this argument and were most unhappy about the health of their children. This can be interpreted in light of the distribution of health services in the rural and urban areas and the disparities in the available opportunities for different socio economic groups.

d) With regard to patterns of medical treatment, data indicated that the proportion of individuals who approve of the statement that traditional medicine is better than specialized medical treatment is higher than those who disapprove: 67.8% in the rural area and 73.7% in the urban areas. Disapproval of this statement was higher among the high and middle socio economic groups compared to the lower group. Approval of the statement was highest among the low socio economic groups in the rural areas, again reflecting the role of economic conditions and the level of awareness in determining this preference.

9. Education awareness:

a) It is interesting that almost all socio economic levels in the rural and urban areas are aware of the importance of education, with higher proportions among the high socio economic levels, followed by the middle then the low socio-economic groups.

b) With regard to the relationship between education and achievement of desired social status, data indicated that the samples of the two surveys on adolescents and fertility realize the importance of education in achieving social status: 34.4% among males in the urban areas compared to 18.7% in the rural areas. Rates reached 13.9% among females in the urban areas and 7.6% in the rural areas. On the other hand, the fertility survey indicated 32.1% among females in the urban areas and 31% in the rural areas. In all cases, responses favoring education were higher among the high socio economic groups compared to the two other groups and higher among the middle level in the urban areas compared to the low level groups.

c) In regard to the relationship between education and work opportunities, 37.2% in the rural areas and 26.5% in the urban areas reported that education does not offer real work opportunities, meaning that two thirds in the urban areas and three fourths in the rural areas still believe that education enhances work opportunities. Slightly less than half the sample in the low economic groups in the rural areas i.e. 43.5%, and 33.5% in the urban areas said that it does not help generate work opportunities. These figures may find their interpretation in that education does not enable low socio economic groups to positively respond to the requirements of the market, in addition to the fact that they also lack social capital (network of relations, knowledge and connections).

d) With regard to the relationship between education and better income opportunities, proportions were low among all levels in the rural and urban areas and among males and females, with very few exceptions.

e) Proportions reflecting the relationship between education and marriage were lower than before, implying that education has become less effective in achieving social and material ambitions.

10. Data on the participation of women in public life pointed out that their role is limited to participation in family matters: one third in the rural areas and half the sample in the urban areas. The limited role of women correlated with the decline in socio economic levels.

Participation of women in the political, economic and social arena is still low. For example, women represent 10% only of members of professional syndicates and 2.3% of members of the parliament. (National Planning Institute, Human Development Report – Egypt, 2003).

11. Facing decline in the levels of income, families in the low socio-economic groups and some groups of the middle economic levels took the following measures: 1) taking additional jobs, thus reducing the time spent with members of the family, particularly children risking a more limited role in the upbringing and socialization of children; and 2) sending children to work to contribute to family income. Sometimes children combine work with education, are deprived of the opportunity to enhance their capacities, and forego their rights as children. They are also exposed to serious physical and psychological hazards at work.

12. Young people and adolescents face major problems in their attempt to find work, generate income and form families. This is particularly pronounced among low income families and tends to decline with the rise in socio economic level. It is also a major developmental challenge; for at the time when our society suffers the impact of early marriage on fertility and birth rates, we are also facing on the other extreme the problem of delay in the age of marriage and non availability of options for the young people. This explains, in part, why young people adopt deviant health, sexual and psychological behaviors such as drug addiction, fundamentalism and alienation. In addition, the socio economic discrepancies and gaps in the ability to achieve ambitions tend to increase with the decline in socio economic levels. Many members of the low socio- economic groups are unhappy with their lives; some would have liked to pursue higher education in order to enjoy better work opportunities and more prominent social position, but their actual available resources do not allow them to do that.

II. Middle socio- economic level: Reality and awareness:

Socio- economic positions are defined as social spaces occupied by groups in society, who share common characteristics as a result of their objective presence i.e. relations of ownership of capitalist assets, patterns of work and revenues, and work relations. These are characteristics that affect people's control over capabilities and sources of power, which allow them to partially or totally fulfill their basic needs of education, housing, food and medical treatment. They also determine for the people opportunities for participation in their community. Thus, given the general cultural framework in the

community, an examination of the situation of the middle socio economic level, their opportunities for communal participation and their awareness, indicates the following:

1. Basic Needs: Fulfillment and expenditure:

- a) High rates of individuals who work on full time basis, particularly in the rural areas, are observed. More than one third of the sample reported that children in this socio economic level combine work with school. Wage earning for this socio economic level has now become a main source of income for half the sample. The main reason behind the prevalence of child labor within this level is to help generate income for families. This is more pronounced in the rural areas compared to the urban areas, particularly among the petit bourgeoisie.
- b) With regard to housing, ownership of housing unit is more prevalent among the middle level families in the rural areas, while house rent is more prevalent in the urban areas. With regard to type of housing, independent houses prevail in the rural areas while apartments are the norm in the urban areas. The prevalence of independent housing units in the rural areas is not a reflection of high quality or effectiveness, but rather indicate the role of superstructures (inheritance) in determining housing characteristics for middle level individuals in the rural areas.
- c) Three fourths of the sample are satisfied with their houses. This satisfaction is mostly associated with house ownership and reflects the importance and value attached to property more than the actual efficiency of the facilities.
- d) The number of rooms in the house reflects degree of appropriateness for the conditions of the middle level groups. One third of the sample lives in less than three rooms and the second third in four rooms or more. The proportion of families benefiting from safe water pipes has increased in comparison to other sources of water. Their proportion exceeds more than three fourths of the sample in the rural and urban areas.
- e) A large proportion of the houses both in the rural and urban areas are equipped with toilets. Modern toilets prevail in the urban areas, while other patterns of toilets are found in the rural areas. The majority of houses have kitchens (almost 100%).
- f) With regard to ownership of house appliances, the proportion of families that own telephones accounts for two thirds of the sample in the three surveys. Proportions rise for ownership of television sets and washing machines, showing similar figures in both the rural and urban areas with the latter enjoying more advantages with regard to some appliances.
- g) More than half the sample in the rural areas and one fourth in the urban areas did not receive any education and one third of the sample in the rural and urban areas stopped at the preparatory stage. A small percentage, not exceeding one fourth of the sample, has pursued high education. This situation possibly reflects the low educational level of husbands in the study sample.

h) Close to one fourth of the sample spend less than EP 50 on additional school fees. The percentage of those who spend EP 50 to 100 is remarkably less. With regard to expenditure on private tutoring, those who spend less than EP 50 constitute close to half the sample in the rural areas and one fourth of the sample in the urban areas. In the urban areas, the proportion of those who spend more than EP 50 rises to close than one third of the sample.

i) The sample tended to cut down on general expenditures in order to ensure covering education fees (close to one fourth of the sample). Figures are similar in urban and rural areas. Borrowing money to cover education fees was more common in the urban areas. There seems to be an agreement among middle level groups on the need to secure money for education and any reduction in income should not affect the education of children. This belief was expressed by half the sample.

j) Large proportions of the middle socio economic level in the urban areas receive medical treatment in private hospitals and clinics, while proportions of individuals who attend government hospitals were equal in both rural and urban areas. Close to two thirds of the sample, particularly employees, reported they had medical insurance cards, with higher proportions in the urban areas.

k) High proportions of women followed up their pregnancy and delivery in private hospitals and clinics. Figures were higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. Proportions of women who dealt with the midwife (daya) were also high, particularly among families in the rural areas (for economic and cultural reasons).

L) Two thirds of the sample –equally in urban and rural areas - spend EP 400 to EP 600 of their total monthly expenditures on food. Rates of expenditure on food tend to rise relatively among the middle level, to form half the general expenditures of families.

m) More than one fourth of the sample reported unemployment and the need for money as the two major problems facing young people among the middle level groups at marriage. The sample said that young people were unable to find appropriate solutions for their problems, thus the suggestion to travel abroad and the involvement of the government in finding solutions to the problem. This was reported by more than half the sample in the rural areas and more than three fourths in the urban areas.

2. Trends and values:

Study findings indicated change in trends and values of the middle level groups. Although changes are limited, they reflect responsiveness to the successive socio economic changes witnessed by the Egyptian society since the mid seventies of the last century. Values and practices of the middle level may be examined through the following areas:

a) Education, values and trends:

Study findings indicated a large gap in the values, trends and practices of families in the middle socio economic level as follows:

-Findings indicated the importance of education for both males and females of the middle level group, without discrimination between males and females. However, with regard to the relationship between education and social status, findings indicated that middle level females in the fertility survey were more aware than males of the importance of education as a channel to acquire social status.

-There is no link between education and employment. Less than half the sample in the rural areas and one third of the sample in the urban areas reported that education helps find a job. The proportion declines among females reaching only half the proportion of males.

-The link between education and income is absent. The proportion of respondents who reported that education helps provide an appropriate income declined to one fourth in the rural areas and to less than one fourth in the urban areas. The percentage is slightly higher among females, but does not reach half the sample.

-On the role of parents' education in raising the children, close to half the female sample asserted the role of parents' education in providing better educational opportunities for the children. The percentage declines to less than one fourth among males. Proportions are high among females possibly because raising children falls more within their responsibilities, particularly in early childhood.

-Findings pointed to the higher level of school enrollment among the middle level sample in the urban areas compared to rural areas. Despite the generally low rates of school drop outs, there is a clear gender gap with girls dropping out of schools more than males and in the rural areas more than the urban areas.

-Customs and traditions play a critical role in determining the educational ambitions of young people in the middle level. The proportions of individuals who mentioned the importance of customs and traditions were close to half the sample in the rural and urban areas.

B. Trends of health and ill-health

-In the middle socio economic level, fatalism prevails among females, with a large percentage affirming that health and ill health are from God.

-The study sample rejects discrimination in health care on the basis of gender. Close to 100% said they did not discriminate between males and females. However, there is inconsistency between this trend and associated values on one hand, and actual practices on the other. Half the sample, particularly in the rural areas, indicated that they give priority to males compared to females in medical treatment, despite the policies that assert equality in gender rights.

-Findings asserted the retreating role of mothers as the main source of knowledge about puberty and adulthood among girls in the rural areas. On the other hand, the role played by mothers is still strong in the urban areas due to higher levels of education among

urban mothers. The proportion of girls who believe that girl friends are their source of knowledge about puberty is high, possibly because of cultural values that define and limit the relationship between girls and their parents.

-With regard to gender, one third of the study sample in the rural and urban areas reported that the sex of the physician does not make any difference to them. One third preferred female doctors due to strong customs and traditions in the rural areas, which have been asserted by previous studies and research in the area of health services.

- Three fourths of the male sample disapproved of the exclusive right of women to take the decision of timing of pregnancy, with higher figures in the rural compared to the urban areas. Again, this is related to the status of the woman in the family and the values that prevail among males.

-Mothers in law rank first in influencing the desired number of children, with the rural areas more assertive in this connection than urban areas. Mothers come second, again with higher proportion in the rural areas compared to the urban areas

-On the most important reason behind practicing family planning, the majority of the sample in the rural and urban areas reported the negative effect of repeated pregnancies on the health of women as the main reason (close to 100%), followed by high related expenses, mostly reported by the sample in rural areas, and finally the limited house space (reported by three fourths of the sample in the rural and urban areas).

-With regard to the preferred number and sex of children, between one fourth and one third of the sample in the urban and rural areas asserted the importance of male children.

3. Social and political participation:

Participation is defined as expressing opinion and taking positions, with practices (as expressions of main trends and values governing social consciousness), being the more concrete demonstration of participation. Interestingly, findings of the current study reflect a relative separation between values and trends of the sample, particularly in the middle level, and their practices. Within this framework, the following observations can be made:

a) Family Participation (family interaction):

With regard to the participation wives in family matters, a large percentage asserted the wives take decisions in matters that concern them, with higher proportions in the urban compared to rural areas.

On the discussions between married couples about the desired number of children, while more than half the sample of women reported they do not discuss these matters with their husbands, one third of the sample said they are keen on discussing them and that husbands indeed discuss these issues with them.

-More than half the sample of women in rural and urban areas reported the ability of women to take decisions related to the interests of their children

-A large percentage, exceeding three fourths of the sample talked about the role of children in achieving the dreams of mothers.

-Findings indicated that mothers are most trusted by children and they discuss their problems with them. This may be attributed to the authority of the father that does not allow the opportunity for dialogue.

-Families appreciate more the opinions of male children compared to female children, again indicating the hegemony of the male perspective on the awareness of this socio economic level.

-Most middle level families in the rural and urban areas allow their children the opportunity to discuss their problems with their friends. It is interesting to note that rural families are more assertive of this trend compared to urban families.

-With regard to leadership traits among children, a significant percentage of the rural and urban sample is not concerned with the issue of leadership. However, in urban areas the proportion of individuals who have leadership tendencies is higher than those who do not have them.

-Findings indicated a high percentage of females who reported feeling lonely compared to males, accounting for more than half the sample, and more in rural than urban areas.

-With regard to husbands' consideration of women's rights, a high proportion indicated that husbands treat their wives with care (close to 100%). However, only half the sample in the rural areas and one third in the urban areas reported that husbands accompany their wives to the doctor (as an indicator of care).

-With regard to the right of wives to travel by themselves, the majority of the sample indicated that they never traveled unaccompanied, with equal numbers in both rural and urban areas.

-On marital satisfaction, findings indicated higher rates of satisfaction among females in rural areas compared to urban areas. Close to half the sample of women reported that sometimes they enjoy their life, again more in the rural areas compared to urban areas. More than half the sample of women said the presence of the husband and male children is a source of protection for them and their families, with rural families more assertive than urban families in this regard.

b. Political participation:

Findings indicated modest levels of political and social participation among the middle level sample, with limited opportunities for participation in non governmental organizations, and low levels of registration in election lists. Individuals who do not participate in elections account for more than 90%. Women in the study sample reported

that politics should be left for men, with rural areas more assertive in this regard than urban areas.

Political participation is one of the main indicators pointing to the large gap in values and trends among the middle level group, and their social and political practices. Ironically, the middle socio economic level has historically been regarded as the leader of society on whose shoulders falls the responsibility of social and economic development.

In general, values of the middle socio economic level groups are guided by modern trends, particularly with regard to health and education. On the other hand, there is a clear contradiction between values and practices with regard to gender, political and social participation on the level of the family and the local community.

III. Low socio-economic level: Reality and awareness

1. Basic needs: Fulfillment and expenditure

- a) Approximately half the sample in the rural areas and less than one third in the urban areas have children who work for wages.
- b) Owning a house is the most prevalent pattern of housing particularly in the rural areas. Individuals most dissatisfied with the size of the house come from urban areas, as they live in slums areas far from the cities. In the rural areas, these houses usually consist of one room made of mud bricks, with poor utilities, as indicated below.
- c) Houses made up of mud bricks constitute 37.5% in the rural areas compared to 6.9% in the urban areas.
- d) Individuals who live in one room in the rural areas constitute 5.5%; those who live in two rooms constitute 18.7%; those with three rooms are 27.5%; those with four 26.4% and those with five rooms are 10.2%. In the urban areas the percentages were as follows: 41.4% for three rooms, 24% for four rooms; and 19.3% for two rooms
- e) Houses without bathrooms accounted for 15.5% in the rural areas and 8.1% in the urban areas. Houses with a 'ditch' in the rural areas accounted for 21.6% and 4.3% in the urban areas and houses without a kitchen in the rural areas accounted for more than half the sample i.e. 60%.
- f) Illiteracy among husbands reached 42.3% in the rural areas and 23.1% in the urban areas. One fourth of the sample in the urban areas had a primary school degree and much less than one fourth had high education (12.5%).
- g) One fourth of the sample (22.7%) in the rural areas and slightly more than one fourth (26.2%) in the urban areas spend less than EP 50 on additional school fees. The

percentage of those who spend EP 50 to EP 100 declines to 1.3% in the rural areas and 2.6% in the urban areas.

More than half the sample in the rural areas i.e. 60.5% and 54.7% in the urban areas does not spend money on private lessons. Those who spend less than EP 50 account for much less than half the sample -36.7% in the rural areas and more than one fourth in the urban areas (29.4%)

h) Cutting down on basic expenses was the method most used in order to cover the expenditure of education, accounting for one fourth in the rural areas (24.4%) and more than one fourth in the urban areas (31.2%). This was followed by selling property, and participating in saving clubs (*gam'iya*) (9.5% in the rural areas and 2.6% in the urban areas), followed by children's work: 3.2% in the rural areas and 2.6% in the urban areas.

i) Respondents who had medical cases accounted for one fourth of the sample (23.4%) in the rural areas and more than one fourth of the sample in the urban areas (27.1%).

j) More than half the sample in the rural areas (58.9%) and 65.2% in the urban areas spend less than EP 400 per month

k) Among the main problems youth face as they prepare for marriage are unemployment and the need for money (26.6%). Around one fourth of the sample suggested additional work and wife work as a solution to this problem.

2.Values and Trends:

a) Slightly less than half the sample reported that education does not offer a real opportunity for work (43.3% in the rural areas compared to 33% in the urban areas)

b) Those who reported that education helps generate an appropriate income accounted for 21.8% in the rural areas and 22.4% in the urban areas.

c) Parents who reported that education has a role in raising children accounted for one third in the rural areas i.e. 33.9% and 41.3% in the urban areas.

d) Rates of school enrollment in the rural and urban areas were close to 100%: 91% in the rural areas and 97.4% in the urban areas.

e) The proportion of those who never went to school, particularly among females, is less than one fourth 22.1% in the rural areas compared to 8.9% in the urban areas.

3. Trends of health and ill health

a) Fatalist attitudes with regard to health and ill-health prevail. Approximately 100% in the rural and urban areas said that health is from God.

b) The proportions of those who follow traditional beliefs to protect themselves from disease accounted for 83% in the urban areas and 72.7% in the rural areas.

- c) One fourth of the sample i.e. 24% believe that popular medicine is better than modern medicine.
- d) The proportion of those who do not approve of gender discrimination in soliciting medical care accounts for 94.9%. However, there is inconsistency between this trend and actual practice. Half the sample gave more priority to males compared to females, in receiving treatment, despite the multitude of policies that advocate gender equality.
- e) Only 6.6% in the rural areas and 7.2% in the urban areas reported that mothers are the source of information and knowledge about puberty among girls
- f) One third of the sample (30.3%) in the rural areas and about one half of the sample in the urban areas (44%) said the sex of the physician did not make any difference to them. Those who preferred a female doctor accounted for 39.9% in the rural areas and 32.5% in the urban areas.
- g) The whole sample (100%) agreed on the importance of family planning for the following reasons:
- negative impact of frequent pregnancies on health of mother (91.5% in the rural areas compared to 91.9% in the urban areas)
 - High expenses (90.1% in the rural areas compared to 86.2% in the urban areas)
 - Limited housing space (76.5% in the rural areas compared to 79.4% in the urban areas)
 - More than half the sample reported the difficulty of combining work with children (56.8% in the rural areas compared to 57% in the urban areas)
 - Those who preferred to have more than one male child accounted for 10.1% in the rural areas and 5% in the urban areas.

4. Particiaption

a) Discussions between married couples

- Findings in both rural and urban areas indicated that 60.3% of the wives do not discuss many matters with their husbands.
- Among all socio economic levels, women do not discuss with their husbands the desired number of children. Figures in low and high socio economic levels show similarities.
- Mothers take decisions related to their children regardless of whether or not they conform with the husbands' points of view (87%)
- Women in the sample do not visit their families without the permission of their husbands both in rural and urban areas.

B) Dialogue between children and parents

- The proportion of children who do not share with their parents problems between girls and boys is remarkably high.

-Proportion of children who share with their parents their school/academic problems only is higher in the rural areas compared to urban areas.

-Families accept the opinions of male children (58.7%)

-About 49.4% of the families in rural areas allow their children to see their friends.

-About 36.4% of the families in rural areas allow their children to exchange visits with their friends.

-Low socio economic groups come first in forbidding their children to meet with their friends.

-Low and middle socio economic groups are similar in that they talk about their problems with their friends.

-Low socio economic groups come second in expressing different opinions with friends.

-Low socio economic groups in the rural areas rank last in saving part of their income

-Low socio economic groups in the urban areas are the least concerned about leadership

-In rural and urban areas those who reported feeling lonely sometimes account for 51.6% and 44.9% respectively.

2.Trends and values of marital satisfaction

a) Findings indicated that women in the low socio economic groups of the rural areas rank last with regard to enjoying life and were most assertive about feeling unhappy. A large percentage asserted that an unhappy family life does not help achieve women's hopes and aspirations, particularly in the urban areas.

b) Findings indicated a high proportion of women in rural areas who believe in the importance of the presence of husband and male children in the life of the family. They reported that women who do not have children, cannot achieve what they want in life.

3.Interactions within the family:

-Husbands are the source of money for buying clothes for wives in the rural and urban areas.

-Wives contribute to house expenses if they have excess money or own property.

-Teaching a female child self reliance is the best asset a mother leaves for her daughter

-Rural women do not visit children's schools and more than half the sample of women leaves this task to the husbands. On the other hand, about half the sample of urban women visit their children's schools without husbands' permission.

-More mothers in the urban areas compared to the rural areas take sick children to the doctor without waiting for husband to do that.

-Men and women are equal in terms of the number of times they accompany their children to the doctor, accounting for 18.5% in the rural areas.

-Mothers buy medications for sick children in the rural and urban areas (43%)

-Forbidding children from excessive eating of sweets is a general trend among women in rural and urban areas.

-Findings indicated that 94% of the men care for their wives in the rural areas. Men do not usually accompany their wives to the physician except for ante-natal visits (67.4% and 52.7% in the rural and urban areas respectively)

4. Women's participation in the local community

-Findings indicated a low level of actual membership in NGOs (0.2% in the rural areas and 28% in the urban areas)

-Registration in elections lists is very modest (5% in rural areas and 3,4% in urban areas).

-Voting in the People's Assembly 1995 elections indicate lack of participation in elections (96.2% and 97.4% in rural and urban areas respectively did not participate)

-Women believe in the need to contribute to the enhancement of quality of life in their community (71.3% in the rural areas and 86% in the urban areas)

-A general trend prevails to leave politics for men (87.6% and 74.4% in rural and urban areas respectively).

IV. High socio economic level: Reality and Awareness

1. Basic needs: Fulfillment and expenditure

a) 56% of the children in the rural areas and more than one fourth in the urban areas (27.4%) work for wages

b) More than one fourth of the sample believes that their house is large (26.7% in rural areas compared to 2.9% in urban areas)

c) The proportion of cement and salt built houses account for three fourths of the sample. (80% in the rural areas and 97.2% in the urban areas)

d) Houses with four or five rooms accounted each for 20% in the rural areas, and 41.7% and 19.4% respectively in the urban areas.

e) Houses with modern bathrooms accounted for approximately 47.8% in the rural areas and 75.3% in the urban areas. Those supplied with a kitchen constituted 65.5% in the rural areas and 84.1% in the urban areas.

2.Values and trends:

a) Close to half the sample spends EP 100 and above on education: 47.7% in the urban areas compared to 12.5% in the rural areas.

b) Proportion of those who cut down on basic needs in order to cover educational expenditures accounted for 25% in the rural areas and 13.1% in the urban areas.

c) The proportion of individuals suffering from medical cases declined to 13.3% in the rural areas and 13.9% in the urban areas. Monthly expenditure of families on health was 8% and the individual share of family expenditure on health services annually was 0.033%.

d) The proportion of families that spend less than EP 600 on food is 75% in the rural areas and those who spend more than EP 600 account for 66.9% in the urban areas.

e) 29.3% in the urban areas and 12.5% in the rural areas reported that education helps provide an appropriate income.

f) 73.1% in the urban areas and 62.5% in the rural areas reported that education has a role in raising children.

3.Trends of Health and Ill Health:

a) Respondents who disapproved of discrimination between males and females in obtaining medical treatment accounted for 100% in the rural areas and 98.1% in the urban areas.

b) The proportion of respondents who disapproved of gender discrimination in food rose to more than three quarters of the sample (87% in the rural areas and 82% in the urban areas)

c) Respondents who approved of family planning constituted 100% as follows:

- Impact on health of women: 100% in the rural areas and 95.2% in the urban areas
- High expenses: 100% in the rural areas and 76.2% in the urban areas
- Limited space: 100% in the rural areas and 95.2% in the urban areas.
- Difficulty in combining work with children: 66.7% in the rural areas and 57.7% in the urban areas.

4. Participation

a) Dialogue between married couple

- Women who participate in family matters account for 100% in the rural areas and 92.1% in the urban areas.
- Women do not discuss with their husbands the desired number of children
- About 22.5% of the sample in the urban areas reported that women cannot take decisions related to the interest of children without their husbands' opinions.
- Sampled women do not visit their families without permission of their husbands in the rural and urban areas.
- This socio-economic level included the highest proportion of respondents who discuss problems with their peers (33% in the urban areas and 23.2% in the rural areas)
- Families accept the opinions of male children in the rural and urban areas (56% and 67.7% respectively)
- This socio economic group included the largest proportion of families that allow their children to meet with their friends (32% in the rural areas and 22.6% in the urban areas)
- This socio economic level comes third in allowing children to meet with their friends.
- This socio economic level comes first in discussing problems with friends in the rural areas.
- This socio economic level comes third in openly expressing opinions among friends in cases of difference in views.
- This socio economic level comes first with regard to individuals who receive wages in full both in the rural and urban areas.
- Respondents representing this socio economic level in the urban areas were most assertive about their disinterest in leadership matters.
- The proportion of respondents who reported never feeling lonely is higher in urban areas compared to rural areas (37.2% and 35% respectively).

5.Trends and values of marital satisfaction

- A high proportion of respondents particularly in urban areas reported that they enjoy a happy married life. Findings also revealed a high proportion of respondents - particularly in the urban areas - who reported that unhappy family life does not help in achieving women's hopes and ambitions
- Findings revealed a high proportion of women who reported that the presence of husbands and male children is important to the life of the family. Women who do not have children cannot achieve what they want of life

6. Interactions within the family:

-Husbands are the source of money for the purchase of clothes for wife and children in the rural and urban areas.

-Findings indicated that wives contribute to the expenditures of the family if there is a surplus in their monthly allowance or if they have money of their own

- Findings indicated that teaching daughters self reliance is the best asset a mother can leave for her female child

-In the rural areas, 39% of the wives do not visit their children's schools leaving this task for the husbands. On the other hand, 56% of the wives in the urban areas do not consult the visits to their children's schools with their husbands

-In both rural and urban areas, wives accompany their sick children to the doctor without consulting their husbands.

-In the rural areas, 52% of the women accompany their children to the doctor.

-In the rural areas 73% of the women buy medications for sick children while in the urban areas 47% of the husbands buy the medicine. Proportions of husbands and wives who buy medications for children in the urban and rural areas are similar (approximately 43% and 46%).

- 95.7% of the husbands care for their wives. Generally, husbands do not accompany their wives to physicians except during pregnancy follow up visits.

7. Participation of women on the community level:

-Findings indicated low levels of membership in NGOs: 4.7% in the rural areas compared to 12.4% in the urban areas.

-The proportion of non registration in general elections lists accounts for 17.4% in the rural areas and 12.4% in the urban areas.

-Voting in the 1995 People's Assembly elections amounted to 17.4% in the rural areas compared to 4.5% in the urban areas.

-The contribution of women to the improvement of quality of life in the community accounted for 78.4% in the rural areas compared to 92.1% in the urban areas.

-Findings pointed to an increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that politics should be left to men (73.9% in the rural areas and 56.2% in the urban areas).

V. Towards an interpretation of the Findings:

An examination of the state's political and economic orientations as they reflect on the overall economic and social policies (including education, health, housing, food, employment, participation, etc.), reveals that they are clearly biased against the rural areas and the lower socio economic groups, particularly women in rural areas. An evaluation of these policies require that we go beyond official discourse, which has often reiterated the importance of the social component in development, the need to remedy the side effects of economic reform measures, and pay attention to limited income people. Such an evaluation must take into account the reality of these people, revealed by findings of the current study as well as others as follows:

- a) The Egyptian society is heading towards social polarization in terms of incomes, fulfillment of basic needs, availability of opportunities, and daily challenges facing various socio-economic levels. On one hand, some consumption patterns are close to subsistence levels, as indicated in cases of extreme poverty. In Egyptian urban communities, one now observes two types of markets for basic commodities: one for the poor and low income groups and another for people with higher socio economic means (exemplified in small grocery shops in poor and popular areas or villages, and super markets like Metro, in Cairo suburbs). There are people who eat meat once every month or two or on occasions and feasts, and others who store meat and eat a variety of it. There are fruits and vegetable markets for the poor and others for the rich. There is education for the poor, basically government-provided education and vocational training, and education for the rich represented in experimental government and private language schools. In higher education, there are top faculties and newly expanding private universities cater for the upper middle classes and students whose families work in the Gulf countries or in investment or foreign companies. There is medical treatment for the poor in government hospitals and health units which suffer shortage of facilities and resources on the technical and administrative levels. These employ nurses and other staff who themselves suffer low incomes and inflation of prices, and their personal frustration often reflects in how they deal with the patients and the public. In addition to government health institutions, low income groups also receive medical treatment offered by NGOs and some places of worship. Citizens who have no access to these places, solicit the advice of pharmacists or traditional healers. On other hand, upper middle classes have more choices for medical treatment in terms of variety, accuracy, specialization and efficiency of providers. This is demonstrated by the increase in number of investment hospitals which attract special Egyptian expertise and can also afford to bring in foreign expertise.
- b) Large discrepancies between rural and urban areas are evident. Opportunities for housing, education, employment, protection from diseases and medical treatment in rural areas are less in quantity and quality compared to urban areas. The persistence of such gaps, despite some improvements in the rural areas of Upper and Lower Egypt, impedes sustainable development in the rural areas. These conclusions are in line with the findings of the Egypt Human Development Report of 2003.⁴

⁴ National Planning Institute, Human Development Report, Cairo, 2003, p. 25.

Most of the recent studies on poverty, and human development reports agree on the rising number of poor in Egypt, measured by: income evaluated by the dollar or other purchasing power, or the poverty of capabilities. An Egyptian study concluded that the poor in Egypt constituted between 43.3% to 43.6% of the total population in the rural areas in the year 1974/75 and accounted for between 43.3% and 46.4% in 1990/91.⁵

Data from the Household Budget Survey pointed to an increase in the proportion of poor in the rural areas of Egypt from 16.1% in 1981/82 to 23.3% in 1995/96. In the urban areas, the proportion rose from 18.2% to 22.5% in the same years. On the national level, the figures were 22.9% in 1995/96; the proportion of the extreme poor was 7.7% in the urban areas, 7.1% in the rural areas and 7.4% on the national level.⁶

- c) Efforts are exerted on the legislative and institutional fronts to narrow the gender gap nationally. However, one can say that these are only beginnings which concentrate mainly in big cities and have not found their ways to rural, popular and slum areas. Education and work opportunities offered to Egyptian women are still limited in quantity and quality as indicated by the Egypt Human Development Report, and the UNDP Arab Human Development Report of 2002. The reports revealed that huge efforts were exerted but mostly directed towards the international community and for international consumption. The area of gender in Egypt is clearly in need of radical economic, social, cultural and legislative action. Moreover, despite the availability of large opportunities for the middle and upper socio economic levels, prevailing values impede the full participation of women on the community level both politically and economically.
- d) Development policies, both public and sectoral, seem distant and detached from each other. They follow parallel paths that lack integration and interaction within a comprehensive development vision. This study demonstrated that policies of economic growth and resulting investment projects seek expertise and skills that the educational system has failed to produce both in terms of quality and quantity. Both economic growth and education policies seem to target unrelated objectives that do not respond to each other's needs. The same conclusions apply to education which produces outputs that cannot cope with the accelerated changes in the Egyptian labor market and go as well for the relationship between education and health.

In summary, the end result has been a waste of developmental time and opportunities as follows:

⁵ Ibrahim El Essawi, "Human Development in Egypt: Observations on the Egyptian Report – 1994", *Egyptian Journal for Development and Planning*, Vol. 3, issue no. 1, June 1995, pp.5-55

⁶ National Planning Institute, Human Development Report, Cairo, 1996, p. 35

-Projects are redundantly implemented without coordination between inputs and outputs and the general objectives. Major examples in this connection are the projects sponsored by Nasser's Bank, the Productive Family, the Social Fund, and other safety net projects. The same can be said about the education and employment policies that do not match in terms of their guiding philosophy and objectives as well as the mechanisms they adopt to achieve their goals. Such lack of coordination has resulted in rampant unemployment among the educated groups which will only worsen if the situation continues as it is.

-There are conflicts and sometimes contradictions between government institutions which, theoretically, share the same goals. Different government departments are in charge of youth employment projects, while other government agencies are concerned with vocational training. In general, however, none of them has well defined roles or tasks and the situation is characterized by a genuine absence of partnerships.

-Redundancy and absence of diversity in terms of programs and projects has resulted in a decline in the opportunities of financial support and has consequently limited the projects' effectiveness in eliciting the desired developmental change. For example, some areas of expenditure by the Social Fund on youth employment are limited to micro credit enterprises that do not result in any genuine kind of accumulation of production. It has not occurred to any person or agency to mobilize these projects through extensive funding that would involve more young people and make their projects more competitive and attractive on the local market.

-School curricula do not adequately address reproductive health both on the level of knowledge and information and in the formation of positive values and trends. Moreover, despite all observations and pleas, the education system still carries within the contents of its curricula elements that foster the gender gap. So far, education has not been able to change the values, ideas and attitudes related to the low status of women compared to men.

-Developmental policies both general and sectoral, still treat the needs of people as problems, and so talk about the problems of housing, education, employment and the health problem. Thus, these needs are seen as burden on the state, which it seeks to rid itself of whenever appropriate, and so the state withdraws its support to new graduates of universities and middle institutes, decreases subsidies on food commodities, and gradually retreats from free education through offering private education. Continuing to pursue such measures will represent a violation of individuals' basic human rights. Individuals should be viewed as the end of the development process and not merely means towards that end. Articulating individual human rights in accordance with principles of equal opportunities to fulfill their basic needs, may in fact result in a policy change, as well as a change in the goals, mechanisms, evaluation, funding and follow up. For example, instead of focusing our efforts on obtaining grants and passively receive services, a new understanding of human rights should be adopted that is based on the empowerment of the people and the expansion of opportunities offered to them.

-Most countries of the world design and target development policies that have achievable goals; they seek to empower people from a developmental perspective. For example, social policies in other countries focus on issues of production and employment, and providing citizens with work opportunities that can generate sufficient revenues to allow them to participate in planning and funding their safety nets.⁷ On the other hand, Egypt seems to be moving along a large spectrum of objectives where main goals are confused with secondary goals. Naturally, the end result is failure along the whole spectrum of objectives. From the perspective of comprehensive development, any achievements are considered partial accomplishments, and positive achievements are not recognized amid all the shortcomings, obstacles and challenges.

-Linked to the above is the centralization of decision making at the expense of grass-root participation in accordance with principles of good governance. These include participation in defining objectives and priorities, outlining means of achieving goals through recognition and understanding of realities on the community level, including human and material resources, as well as cultural, economic, tribal and family obstacles.

In Egypt, centrally planned goals and plans do not recognize the specificities of local communities, particularly their potentials and priorities. There are clearly large discrepancies between Upper and Lower Egypt on one hand, and the capital on the other in terms of developmental opportunities: both institutional and material.

-The Egyptian state has taken measures to liberate the economy; it raised the slogan of democracy and pluralism and has also retreated from performing some of its main tasks in support of disadvantaged groups in society. Despite all the above, the state still does not adopt full measures towards political liberalization of the civil society: political parties, professional syndicates, NGOs. This takes place at a time when many other developing countries that have achieved tangible goals by integrating civil society as an original partner in development; they activated human capital, encouraged voluntary activities and filled the vacuum that resulted from the retreat of the state from some basic traditional roles.

VI. Middle level groups and sustainable development: The challenges

Middle level groups are present in all government institutions and productive and service agencies. They are also represented in small traditional petit bourgeois activities and are themselves the small business men who run their own business and do not employ a large number of workers in order to accumulate capital. They are also members of civil society organizations, political parties, syndicates, NGOs and are distributed geographically in the Egyptian rural and urban areas. Thus, members of this group are essential in planning programs and projects. They implement public and sectoral policies and follow up their implementation. Thus, any gaps or contradictions in their position pose serious challenges to the sustainability of development.

⁷ UN Social Policies in Norway, Policy Makers Meeting on Social Policies in the ESCWA Region, Cairo, 10-12 December 2002.

Challenge 1: This group is torn between its institutional tasks and duties on one hand, and concern with the fulfillment of daily needs on the other. Some newly observed patterns of behavior among this level are as follows:

- Teachers are concerned with private lessons instead of exerting efforts in their educational institutions
- Physicians in government institutions are more concerned with activities in their private agencies.
- Most individuals seem to be occupied with second professions whether or not these are directly related to their field of expertise or education. Many government employees work as taxi drivers.
- Concern with other trades or professions at the end of the official working day affects work regularity and commitment to working hours

Challenge 2: Limited opportunities to enhance individual capacities, skills and knowledge. Even if such opportunities are available, there is no time to utilize them.

Challenge 3: Absence of political participation, either because people do not believe in its fruits and outcomes, or because they would rather make use of the time to carry out other lucrative activities.

Challenge 4: Some people tend to deal with the public in an inhuman manner. In addition, red tape, bureaucracy and nepotism exacerbate problems

Challenge 5: Using one's public position and influence to carry out illegal activities. This applies to government agencies and civil society organizations. Cases of corruption, abuse of authority and bribery have shown that at least one of the accomplices always belonged to middle level groups. These incidents are detrimental to the interests of people and to the national economy.

Challenge 6: Absence of initiatives to develop and enhance work because of family concerns, physical and mental exhaustion, and low interest in developing skills and capacities.

Challenge 7: Segments of the upper and lower level groups imitate the behaviors and values of the middle level groups, for example in marriage, raising children and attitude towards political participation. These are trends and values that impede development.

Challenge 8: Many new and innovative ideas are attacked because of misconception on the part of the middle level groups and their poor awareness level, or because they are believed to be detrimental to particular interests.

Challenge 9: The inability to fulfill basic needs, the dual consciousness, and the absence of effective institutions to offer social, psychological and economic safety drives some people back to their family or tribal solidarity for refuge and protection. This trend is more pronounced in the rural areas compared to urban areas, and in Upper Egypt

compared to Lower Egypt, as indicated by the recent elections of localities and the People's Assembly.

Challenge 10: Findings of the current study pointed to low level of awareness on the part of middle level groups and contradictions on the level of practice – particularly political participation. The question now is how can members of this group (some of whom like artists, literary men and women were not sampled in this study) participate in enhancing development awareness if they themselves do not have the ability to do so? Many members of this middle level group traveled to oil rich countries, and championed ideas, behaviors, and positions towards women and society in the name of Islam, which they transmitted to the younger generations, making use of prevailing illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

The challenges posed by the situation of the middle level groups and their patterns of awareness are numerous; they impede the production of each other and obstruct development with regard to: Lack of knowledge, weak political participation, the prevalence of anti development ideas and weak economic achievement

These are some of the challenges and risks that require a strategic vision to improve the situation and awareness of the middle level groups.

VII. Recommendations: Alternative Policies to Empower Middle Levels:

Several analytic studies on the structure of the Egyptian society agree that one of the main reasons behind the failure in formulating general developmental and sectoral policies is the limited awareness and participation of the middle level groups, particularly in developmental projects. This is related to changes that occurred in the last two decades of the 20th century as follows:

1. Limited number of members of the middle level groups are represented in the government and public sector
2. Significant numbers of the middle level groups are represented in the large and medium private sector or are self employed, using their savings from work abroad or length of service payments – early retirement, inheritance or small loans.
3. The downward social mobility of some segments of this group due to the increase in cost of living, and the increase in costs of services and commodities, that were not accompanied by a parallel increase in wages, in addition to the privatization of some services and the expansion of investments in areas that are beyond the financial ability of middle level state employees.
4. Relative retreat of the state from the areas of employment and provision of services. This is attributed to the decline in the state's share of economic surplus, a large portion of which went to the private sector, and the decline in remittances of Egyptians abroad, much of which went to the private sector and on general consumption.

5. Large numbers of the middle level groups abstain from political participation due to the relative decline in opportunities offered by political parties and professional associations. This abstention is also partly related to the realization that political participation has no returns and no tangible results.

Egypt needs alternative policy orientations characterized by both: increasing partnerships and rich opportunities for participation.

1.Role of state institutions in empowering middle level groups

a) Review legislative policies relevant to the following areas:

-Develop the democratic process to allow exchange of power and provide conditions for competitiveness to enhance the political game and push forward the development process.

-Lift restrictions on the formation of political parties.

-Reconsider the elections law and form new constituencies on new bases and criteria that allow reasonable and balanced proportional distribution of candidates and electors in the different constituencies. Election lists should also be reviewed to verify those who have the right to vote and run for elections to ensure the soundness and transparency of the election process.

-Lift administrative and legal restrictions on civil society organizations, NGOs and professional associations that impede their active participation. Leadership of these organizations should be renewed and membership encouraged. Changes should also cover include legislation relevant to voting, running for elections, exchange of power and new ethical guidelines to control mal- practices.

-Reconsider university regulation policies so that senior positions would be filled by elections and not by appointment. Adopting the latter system has restricted participation and limited the effectiveness of higher academic institutions, which have historically played the role of intellectual, scientific and cultural laboratories for the preparation of leaders in different domains.

-Review regulations and rules for selecting individuals to occupy leading positions according to open criteria. This would enhance transparency about applicable rules and criteria of selection.

-Monitor the application of labor laws, insurance, and pensions in the government sector and the business and private sector.

-Review tax laws so they would reflect with real incomes, on one hand, and prices on the other.

b) Commitment to employment of graduates

New university graduates are the backbone of the middle socio economic level groups; they are capable of reinvigorating this group and infusing new blood into it. Efforts should therefore be exerted by the state institutions, private sector and civil society organizations to help employ these graduates. If this objective is achieved, even gradually, the new employees can participate in funding the services offered to them.

Following are some recommendations in this regard:

- Focusing on open education, training and rehabilitation in order to enhance skills and expertise in the labor market
- Enlarging the base of small ownership through a system of loans, offered without red tape and administrative and financial restrictions. Collective loans should be given to young people in order to encourage them to form companies and launch projects that can compete with local and foreign ventures.
- Monitoring prices of basic services and commodities and protecting the consumer from the monopoly of producers and distributors of goods and services
- Enhancing the quality of basic services, particularly health and education, and promoting the services offered by professional associations.

2. Role of private sector in empowering the middle socio economic levels:

- a) Adhering to labor laws, insurance laws, professional associations, and work conditions (work locations, transportation, services of professional safety and protection etc..)
- b) Promoting projects undertaken by young graduates by buying their products and coordinating their work
- c) Enhancing the role of professional associations that are relevant to the activities of businessmen
- d) Encouraging scientific research and developing areas related to the activities of businessmen

3. Role of organizations of middle level groups

- a) Focusing on training and continued education for members of professional syndicates particularly young members
- b) Developing services offered to members of professional associations and extending them to their families
- c) Establishing productive cooperative projects to provide work opportunities for new graduates and members of professional associations.
- d) Providing legal support for members of professional associations in their disputes with employers
- e) Enhancing democratic management and exchange of power and encouraging young people to participate in the elections of their professional associations.
- f) Enhancing transparency and accountability in the syndicates' administrative and financial activities
- g) Supporting candidates in the elections of professional syndicates both on the local and parliamentary levels
- h) Providing financial support to the projects sponsored by professional associations, for example establishing consultation bureaus affiliated to the associations and organizing exhibitions for products of members

i) Convening regular meetings and organizing dialogues with employers in the government, business sector, private sector and members of professional associations