

No. 84

**SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC  
COSTS OF A DONOR-LED HOUSING  
PROGRAMME: THE CASE OF  
RASHED-GREATER CAIRO**

**Nadia Taher**  
August 1997

Working Paper No. 84

**SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS  
OF A DONOR-LED HOUSING PROGRAMME:  
THE CASE OF RASHED-GREATER CAIRO**

**Nadia Taher**

August 1997  
(reprint August 1999)

Dr Nadia Taher  
Development Planning Unit  
University College London  
9 Endsleigh Gardens  
London WC1H 0ED, UK

Tel: + 44 207 388 7581 Fax: + 44 207 387 4541  
Email: [n.taher@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.taher@ucl.ac.uk)

# **SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF A DONOR-LED HOUSING PROGRAMME: THE CASE OF RASHED-GREATER CAIRO**

## **CONTENTS**

	<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	
<b>I</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF ARAB RASHED</b>	<b>1</b>
	A. The History of the Area	2
	B. The Political System-Leadership and Community Organisation	7
<b>III</b>	<b>THE ARRIVAL OF THE PROJECT</b>	<b>10</b>
	A. Perception of Squatters by Project Implementors	10
	B. Community Organisation and 'Participation'	11
<b>IV</b>	<b>CONCLUSION: THE AFTERMATH OF THE PROJECT</b>	<b>20</b>
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	
	Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Adult Males and Females by Economic Activity	2
	2: Percentage Distribution of Female and Male Interviewees and their Spouse by Place of Origin	6

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Arab Bureau for Design and Technical Consultations. The role of AB consisted of the design and preparation of contract documents for houses and community facilities.
The	The Executive Agency for Joint Projects (EAJP) Agency
CFE	Credit Foncier Egyptien The Project bank, a nationalised Egyptian Bank specialised in real estate lending.
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation U.S. consultant to the Project to provide technical assistance to the Egyptian Agency for Joint Projects. Its role consisted of advisory services for Community Associations, Housing Cooperatives, the Home Improvement Programme, the Mortgage Loan Programme, evaluation of experimental building Systems and institutional building systems (evaluations, training and financial management and financing). The proportion of U.S. to Egyptian staff is around 70 to 30 percent.
EAJP	Executive Agency for Joint Projects (the Agency for short) The Egyptian agency created to implement the Helwan Project and future Projects of the same nature. All the EAJP staff is Egyptian.
GOE	Government of Egypt, the co-funder of the Helwan Housing Project.
HILP	Home Improvement Loan Programme A loan programme for the home-owners of the upgrading areas.
LDT	Local Development Team The EAJP-CHF team responsible for community development in the Upgrading areas.
MOH	Ministry of Housing
NR	Nathan Report
PCR	Project Completion Report
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF A DONOR-LED HOUSING PROGRAMME: THE CASE OF RASHED-GREATER CAIRO

## I INTRODUCTION

This paper<sup>1</sup> will examine the socio-political and economic impacts of one of the largest USAID housing Projects in Egypt, 'Housing and Community Upgrading For Low Income Egyptians'<sup>2</sup> which was initiated by USAID in 1976. The Project, with a budget of \$160 Million, was co-funded by the Government of Egypt (GOE) and USAID. It was located in Helwan, which is an industrial suburb 30 Km south from the centre of Cairo (see Appendix 1 for maps).

The GOE had been predominantly involved in the construction of public housing or 'conventional housing', which was, according to the thinking of the time, an inefficient housing solution for low income populations. The main approach to low income housing initiatives have been the construction of five story high public housing which often went to middle rather than low income people. The Helwan Project was therefore the first large scale 'non-conventional' housing initiative in greater Cairo. The main goal of the Project was "...to demonstrate the viability of a new approach to housing policy in Egypt for low income families in a manner that allows the GOE to recover a substantial percentage of its investment" (Project Paper, 1978). The main policy changes that USAID was seeking were, among others: a switch in the GOE's emphasis on middle to low-income families; a reduction in subsidies by reducing standards; and encouragement of mobilisation of private savings for investment in housing (Ibid) (see Appendix 2 for full list of objectives).

There were two main components to the Helwan Project: an upgrading and a sites-and-service component. The Project was meant to upgrade seven 'squatter' communities with a population of around 200,000 (Project Completion Report (PCR), 1988, p. 1). The upgrading activities included Home Improvement Loan Programme and 'Community Organisation', the construction of water and sewage networks and community facilities (Ibid, p.8). The Helwan New Community (HNC) which was planned for the sites-and-service component, is located on unoccupied land that was subdivided into 10 neighbourhoods, including 7,200 plots with infrastructure and services for a population of around 100,000 (Ibid). The Project which was meant to be finalised in 1984, was officially finished in 1988. In 1988 some of the components were still under

completion at the time the fieldwork, which was carried out in 1989.

One major deviation from the original plan had occurred in 1987, leading to the building of public housing in five of the ten HNC neighbourhoods (see Appendix 3, table with Project components and actors within the Project).

The Executive Agency for Joint Projects<sup>3</sup> (the Agency) was created specially to carry out the Project as the Government of Egypt implementing agency. The Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) was the American firm hired to give technical advice to the Agency. There were also a number of contracting and constructing firms responsible for the building works.

This paper will be divided into two basic parts. The first part will cover the history and development of Arab Rashed, one of the seven upgrading settlements. This will put the Project into context as well as trace the various dynamics operating in the community prior to the Project. The second part will be a description and analysis of the way in which the Project has impacted on the socio-political and economic conditions of the people of Arab Rashed<sup>4</sup>.

## II DESCRIPTION OF ARAB RASHED

'Arab Rashed' takes its name after the 'Rashed' clan. The reason that 'Rashed' is preceded by 'Arab', is that they consider themselves Arabs in two ways: one, 'Arab' is used to mean Bedouin, or nomads; two, Arab also refers to the fact that they come from the Arab Peninsula and still perceive themselves as more Arabs than Egyptians. While Egyptians are also considered Arabs, their identity as 'Arab' is complicated. To put it simplistically, whenever

The settlement of Arab Rashed lies to the south-west of the city of Helwan and occupies an area of 21ha.

---

<sup>3</sup> Will be referred to as the Agency.

<sup>4</sup> This part of the thesis is based on six months of regular visits, observation, discussion and interviews with both 'leaders' and community members. 200 households in the community were selected using cluster sampling. 34% of the interviewees were women and 66% were men. Structured interviews were used (with closed and open-ended questions) and more general discussions were also held with the spouse, if available, as well as with other members of the household. 20 households out of the 200 were also visited regularly over a period of five months for more in-depth interviews and discussions with both women and men. Interviews were also carried out with personnel who were responsible for the planning and implementation of the Upgrading component.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a chapter in my PhD dissertation entitled "Foreign Aid and Power: the Government of Egypt, USAID and Housing in Helwan" (1997), London: LSE.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis, it will be called the Helwan Housing Project, or simply the Helwan Project.

A textile factory on the south and west completely isolates the community along this perimeter, while a cemetery and bus garage form the limits of the development at the northern end and a road and a railway station define its boundaries on the Eastern side. There are two main entrances to the community. The first is the Garage Street, which is a wide paved road<sup>5</sup>, and the second is the Cemetery entrance which is bordered by swamps of both solid and liquid waste.

The physical characteristics of Rashed, are in fact not much different from any other poor neighbourhood in Cairo except that it is perhaps less overcrowded than most. Most of the community streets are unpaved<sup>6</sup>, they are narrow and dusty. The main streets in Rashed are about four to five meters in width with no side walks. These are crossed by narrower alleyways and dead ends. Built-in benches to the outside walls of houses are a common feature. Men often sit there and socialise.

Around 30% of houses are of the old village type construction, made of mud or reinforced concrete mostly built in the 1950s. Those are one to two floor houses, some quite spacious with 4 to 6 large rooms. Some are subdivided into separate rooms with shared bathrooms, and rented out, or occupied by the owner's adult children. Some have had additional floors added on from the early seventies onward. There are also less sturdy and smaller 2 to 3 floor buildings and these constitute about 35% of buildings. These are composed of small apartments on an average between one and two rooms. Again bathrooms are shared in these cases. Around 25% of buildings were built in the late seventies onward. They were built with reinforced concrete, of relatively good quality, and are often between 3 to 4 floors, with small to medium size apartments (two to three rooms). Five to six story buildings still constitute a small minority of around 10% of buildings. Of the last two types of housing, the ground floor is divided into commercial and service shops.

In 1982 the population of Arab Rashed was 16,000 and in 1989 it was estimated to be 25,000. With a population density of 625 per/ha in 1982 and a maximum density of 1400 per/ha, the predicted saturation population is 28,500 persons (Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading for Low Income Egyptians, 1984, p. 16). The Rashed population, is again little differentiated from the majority of the overall urban population. The average household is composed of 5.9 members, the average number of children is 4.2. 72% of households were composed of nuclear families, and 28% were extended families. The survey shows that 92% out of the main adult males<sup>7</sup> and only 12% of the main adult females were economically active (see Table 1 for details).

#### A. THE HISTORY OF THE AREA:

The settlement of Rashed came into existence when a number of families from the Ayaidah tribe settled there in 1944. Later, in the early sixties they were joined by rural migrants first from upper and then from lower Egypt. In the seventies, a number of Caireens<sup>8</sup> also came to settle in Rashed.

1. The origins and characteristics of the first settlers: The settlement of Arab Rashed was named after Rashed Mahmoud El Sane', the elder of Arab aelat (families) who first settled in the area. According to the oral history, these families belonged to the Ayaidah tribe. As one of the Rashed elders explained, the Ayaidah' tribe originally came from north Yemen to Egypt at the time of Amr Ibn Al Ass Islamic conquest. It was one among 72 tribes that came from the Gulf, who had first lived in Sinai and in the Eastern desert as semi-settled bedouins (nomads).

**TABLE 1**

**Percentage distribution of economically active adult males and females by economic activity**

<b>Economic Activity</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Factory workers	46	16
Informal sector - services	16	42
Informal sector - commerce	5	12
Skilled workers in the private sector	20	
Civil servants	7	30
Service staff in government (e.g. guards, cleaners)	6	

<sup>5</sup> The road was paved by the Project.

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the main roads built by the project.

<sup>7</sup> I use the term 'main adult' because this person might or might not be the head of the household - the latter is in my view often elusive and in many cases a meaningless unit of analysis.

<sup>8</sup> From Cairo.

Under the Ottoman empire, Mohamed Aly, as the history is told by the elders of Rashed, wanted to get them to settle and cultivate land. Some of the Arabs accepted the offer and in return for land, they settled in the East delta and acquired Egyptian nationality. Others, the Ayaidah included, refused. In order to keep their tribal political system they moved west. Some of them then settled in Helwan in 1865, in the low lands of Helwan Al Balad and Al Saff<sup>9</sup> in the midst of agricultural land owned by the Pashas. As one of the elders of Rashed described, they got involved in the cultivation of the land as hired labour for the Pashas, who owned large plots of land, Ismael Pasha<sup>10</sup>, for example owned 2000 feddans in Helwan (Rashed Elder, 1988).

Large factories started to be erected in Helwan. The first was the Silk Factory built in 1920. Then there were other major factories such as the Dye Factory in 1927 and the Cement Factory built by the Danish in 1931. Helwan was also a winter resort where Pashas had their 'castles'. Parts of it were modernised when the main roads were paved by the Khedewy<sup>11</sup> in the late 19th century (Rashed Elder, 1988).

Rashed Mahmoud El Sane', Rashed's head of the clan at the time (1930's), was given the job of head guard for the two main factories. He then started to help other kin to find jobs as guards for the other factories as well as for 'Pasha houses'. This meant that the Ayaidah had a total monopoly over the position of guards in the area. Those who were contemporaries of that time, said they were doing a very good job as guards for factories and palaces. They said they acquired a special status in the area because they were respected by all and known for their dignity.

"The Pashas respected us because we respected ourselves and had treasured our dignity. The 'fellaheen'<sup>12</sup> on the other hand have no pride and accepted to be degraded and were thus treated like slaves" (Rashed Elder, 1988).

The position of guards, according to Rashed clan members, allowed them to have special relationships with the police as well as first hand contact with the Pashas. The old generation tended to romanticise this period saying that these were 'the good old days'. They explained that contrary to what is claimed, the Pashas were very humane and 'once you showed you had dignity they treated you with respect'. These 'good times' as they described them

---

<sup>9</sup> Two villages in Helwan.

<sup>10</sup> The grandfather of the last King of Egypt.

<sup>11</sup> The Ottoman ruler of Egypt.

<sup>12</sup> The Arabs of Rashed call their compatriots who are not of bedouin origin, 'Egyptians' or 'fellaheen'.

ended for them when the 1952 revolution came. The police had a stronger hold after this and they lost their privileged position of keeping law and order. The "children of nobodies started to show muscle on us"<sup>13</sup>, one of the elders exclaimed referring to the policemen.

Up until the 1952 Egyptian revolution the Rashed families retained their tribal political system. Their tribal authority, as one of the Arabs proudly explained, embraced all those belonging to the Ayaidah tribe from Bayad to Sinai, transcending territorial boundaries. Each clan was headed by a Sheikh Fekra. At the time of the King, the Arabs of Rashed explained, they were left free to live their Arab life. They were permitted to escape the 'slavery' that the Egyptians had to endure. They were, for example, not drafted into the army (Rashed Elder, 1988).

"The Arabs were not asked to enrol in the army nor were they mobilised to work in national works such as digging the Suez Canal or the annual work of fighting the floods by putting guereed (reed) on the banks of the Nile and its canals. The Arabs refused to participate in what they considered to be the slavery of the Egyptian peasants. Even the British knew this about us" (Rashed Elder, 1988).

With the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the 'Arabs' were all issued identity cards as Egyptians and the tribal system was formally abolished. Commenting on this one Rashed elder said:

"Nasser did glorious things but he took away from us our rights as Arabs. Although we had to abide by Egyptian rules in terms of having Egyptian identity cards botakat, registering for birth and death certificates and inscribing in the army, we however managed to retain the old system of tribal authority and tradition" (Rashed member, 1988).

As this paper will show, although the Arabs of Rashed have been fully integrated in the wider Egyptian civil society and political system, there is no question that their identity is still very much tied into their Arab-bedouin roots. They still see themselves as Arabs and have great pride in having retained their tribal political system for as long as they could and 'not giving it up' like other Arabs who did in the last century. This and their sense of superiority vis-a-vis the 'Egyptians' has had very important implications in general for the way the community developed over the years, and more specifically for

---

<sup>13</sup> This echoes very much what ex aristocracy would say about this period.

the power relationships between the Arabs and those who settled later in the community.

## 2. The development of Arab Rashed as a community (1944-1978):

A massive flood in 1944 destroyed the huts in the low land of Helwan, including those of the Rashed families' homes in Al Saff. The Arabs explained that they were saved by the Red Crescent<sup>14</sup> which was then under the auspices of Princess Fawzia<sup>15</sup>. They were relocated to the higher lands of what is now the settlement of Arab Rashed (Arab Elder, 1988)<sup>16</sup>.

## 3. Population expansion:

For a few years the only inhabitants of the new area were Rashed families. Helwan, in the meantime, was becoming a fully developed industrial city that attracted workers from all over the country.

The second half of 1950's witnessed a heavy industrial boom, especially in 1957 when large factories such as the Iron and Steel Factory was built. This meant a large number of job opportunities were available. In response, rural migrant from all over the country came to find jobs and settle in Helwan.

The Government, in an attempt to provide housing to these migrants, embarked on building five story public housing units, massaken, in the centre of Helwan. These units however only accommodated a small proportion of workers. The majority were left to find housing for themselves. They settled in the several communities, such as Rashed, around Helwan.

Inhabitants of Rashed explained that the first rural migrants who settled in Rashed came from Upper Egypt (South of Egypt). A number of male workers were recruited to work in the cement factory in Helwan in the middle of the 1950's. They were followed by more of their male relatives and acquaintances who also came to find work in Helwan. They were then followed by people from Lower Egyptian (north of Egypt), mostly recruited for the textile factory in the early 1960's. The third, and most recent group of migrants who settled in Rashed, were those coming from other parts of Cairo. This category, who started coming in the mid 1970's, came to find cheaper housing rather than work. Describing how the migrants first came to settle in Rashed, one of the early migrants from Upper Egypt said:

---

<sup>14</sup> The Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross.

<sup>15</sup> The sister of King Farouk, the last King of Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> One of the Arabs telling the story said he tried to dig out the Red Crescent archives to find the document that describes this incident but could not find them.

"One member of the family would come and send back for brothers, cousins and friends. Then once they are settled, they slowly go to bring back their women and children. My cousin came here in 1962 hiding from a family feud. He found a job then sent back a message informing me there were jobs available, so I followed" (Migrant from Upper Egypt, 1989).

Another migrant explained that the reason some people came to Rashed was that in many places, like for example Fayoum<sup>17</sup>, there were no job opportunities except agriculture.

"When your father is a tenant and does not need lots of hands, the children are sent to school and no longer want to work on the land. This is what happened to me and most of my brothers. At the age of sixteen I came here and worked in a bakery" he said (Interview, 1989).

Another added:

"Most of those who came to work in Helwan were villagers who were in Cairo for their military service and did not want to return to their villages. Their success in settling down and finding jobs in the city encouraged other members of the family to follow them" (Interview, 1989).

The pattern of how migrants came to Rashed follows Abu Lughod's description of the way Egyptian migrants settle in cities usually choosing to live in areas of the city that retain basic similarities to the village (Abu Lughod, 1977). Such a pattern was also found to have been predominant in other areas, especially in recently urbanised villages which were integrated into the Cairo metropolis (Taher, 1986).

While the description of the settling-in seems like a natural and smooth process, it was in fact not devoid of conflict. Although the settling in of migrants in Rashed was not resisted by the Arabs, the integration of those migrants into the community was never complete. Discussions with both Arabs and early migrants show that the relationship between Arabs and migrants was based on mutual obligations binding the two parties. The migrants had to abide by the `urf (customs) of the Arab owner in exchange for giwar (rights of protection) the Arab would provide.

---

<sup>17</sup> A village in the north of Egypt.

That was the cornerstone of a patron-client relationship<sup>18</sup> between Arab and migrant. This system of patronage dominated the early years of the development of the Rashed community and has not completely disappeared even today. The migrants kept mostly to their village of origin identity and retained their own system of leadership. The most respected and often wealthier member of the village of origin would be considered kebeer el ela (the elder of the family). His<sup>19</sup> role was mostly restricted to solving disputes among members of the village of origin or to represent them in intra-village disputes.

Underlying all the aspects of Rashed life is the dichotomy that exists between the Arabs and the migrants, who are all 'Egyptians' or 'fellaheen' as the Arabs call them or 'newcomers' as they arrived and settled at a later stage in the area<sup>20</sup>. The latter resented the Arabs for their claim on the settlement and their 'presumed superiority'. When talking about the migrants the Arabs imply that the 'fellaheen' are in Rashed settlement out of their generosity as they 'allowed' them to settle on their land. This however did not seem to be the only reason why they see the migrants as deserving less in the community. The migrants are seen to be these 'fellaheen' who do not hold the same strong traditions and customs that the Arabs hold. They above all, are viewed by the Arabs as 'not having the dignity and self respect' that they the Arabs have. The 'fellaheen' or 'Masreyeen' were also seen to be 'less Muslim' than the 'Arabs'. As one of the Arabs put it: "They are Muslimeen seif (Muslim of the sword) not like us 'Muslimeen ressalaa' (Muslims of message)"<sup>21</sup> (Arab elder, 1989). The Arabs in Rashed take this as a very important fact which, as they explained, was the reason why an Arab man can marry a 'fellaha' (peasant woman) while an Arab woman is not allowed to marry a 'fellah' (peasant man)<sup>22</sup>.

While all migrants or 'newcomers' are considered as inferior by the Arabs, there is a noticeable hierarchy among the former. Those from upper Egypt are more accepted than those from lower Egypt while the Caireens come at the bottom of the ladder. Those from Fayoum [lower Egypt] hold a special status because of their tribal origins. The fact that this preference corresponds with the order of the migrant's arrival to Rashed, is probably not reason enough for the hierarchy. The Upper Egyptians are seen by the Arabs as having more characteristics in common with themselves than the others. Also because many settled in the fifties, they were able to acquire large plots of land which made some of them landlords, thus with high status.

The 'newcomers', on the other hand, also have their dislikes for the Arabs of Rashed. The biggest complaint they have about them is that 'they think they own the place' and that they stick together and only look out for their own interests rather than the those of the community in general. They were also often described as 'grabbers', 'opportunists', 'greedy' and even 'dishonest'. Some were also described as 'lazy' and 'large' consumers of drugs. They are criticised for having too many wives and too many children. Some added that the Arabs were 'backward people' and one proof of that is that it took them a long time to realise the importance of education and that only this last generation of parents are sending their children to school. When discussing the Rashed community with the 'newcomers', many expressed their dislike for the community especially those who came from Cairo in the late eighties (see table 2 on origins of Rashed community members in my sample).

---

<sup>18</sup> Patron-client as it is used here means "...a bond of personal obligation being used by the patron to subordinate the client to his/her will. For the client, to enjoy the protection and material resources controlled by the powerful, has to return loyally the benefits received" (Chubb, p.6).

<sup>19</sup> Kebeer el ela is a status only given to men in this society.

<sup>20</sup> 'Newcomers' is a term used to describe those who have settled in urban Egypt in an area previously occupied by a distinguishable social group, for example an old village that was incorporated in the city. They are often considered as 'newcomers' even if they had been in the community for decades. All that matters is that they came after the original inhabitants (see Taher, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> This refers to the belief that the Arabs from the Gulf became Muslims because they believed in the religion while the others, like the Egyptians, became Muslims as a result of losing the war at the time of the Arab conquest. This means they became Muslims out of fear not out of conviction.

<sup>22</sup> This seems to follow the same rule that governs marriage with non Moslems. In Islam men are allowed to marry non Muslim women while women are not allowed to marry non Muslim men.

**TABLE 2**

**Percentage distribution of female and male interviewees and their spouse by place of origin**

Place of Origin	Women	Men
Upper Egypt	52	55
Lower Egypt	20	20
Arab Rashed	18	15
Cairo	8	10

4. Housing:

When the Arabs first settled in the area, they felt, for the first time, secure enough to build permanent houses. Omar (1988) explains that there were two major factors that contributed to this security. One is that they were allocated this land by a legitimate institution headed by the Princess. Second the fact that the new location was on high land, meant they felt sheltered from natural disasters. They thus built solid houses on large areas of around 1500 and 2000 square meters. They used random stones and cement dust for their walls and dried straw covered with a layer of cement dust and mixed mud for their roofs. They were thus transformed from Arab kheich (Arabs in tents) to Arab heit (Arabs in walls) (Omar, 1988, p.36).

In 1956, Law 344 was issued forbidding construction without a licence. In response, the inhabitants of Rashed sought to obtain licenses. They were denied the licenses and announced as illegal occupants of Government land. The land that they occupied was given the status of hekr<sup>23</sup>, i.e Government owned leased land. In response they registered the land they already occupied as hekr land. This meant they had to pay rent to the Government as well as taxes, which they have been doing since then. They also registered larger plots of land to ensure that they had legitimate rights to them (Ibid, p.79). The new system did not change their view that the land is rightfully theirs. They nevertheless decided to go along with the Government and pay rent. This was their way to play the Government's game in order to be left alone until the time would come when they could prove their claim to the land. Meanwhile, they subdivided and sold land to the 'newcomers'.

In the period between 1944-1956, land in these areas had no market value. It was only when the first rural migrants came to Rashed that land started to be seen as a commodity owned by the Arabs. The 'fellaheen' were seen by the Arabs as having no claim on the land. Therefore they had to buy the land from the 'legitimate' owners, the Arabs. The first

<sup>23</sup> This is land owned by the State and leased on a long term basis to the occupants of the land. Squatters may in some cases be granted this status (Regulation of Land Title, 1989, p.1). The conditions that govern 'hekr' land means that the land has to be already occupied. So if a house is pulled down, the land is no longer in-lease and the tenant cannot add units on the house horizontally either.

arrivals were thus sold pieces of land of around 500 square meters. Some Arab interviewees said that the price that the migrants were charged was symbolic; others claimed that the land was given to them for nothing. This was denied by some of those who acquired land at the time.

"They came [the migrants-newcomers] here and we allowed them to build their houses on our land. Most of the Arabs did not charge for this land. I personally have around me, on my land, five houses that I did not charge for", one Arab said (Interview, 1988).

By the 1960's a clearer commodification of housing was established. The increased demand for housing over the years, as well as the increased profit from their monopoly on land, led the Arabs to build one to two-roomed houses and sell them to 'newcomers' instead of selling just the land. These houses were paid for in instalments over a number of years.

Most houses in Rashed were incrementally built by adding more rooms over time. In the late sixties red brick started to be used for construction, and roofs were replaced. Thus rooms and even floors were added, and they were consolidated over the years. Unlike the misconception that squatters build shacks or potentially collapsible houses, a number of engineers from the Agency and CHF confirmed what some of Rashed inhabitants said about the solidity of their houses. One American CHF consultant said:

"Egyptians, when they build for themselves, build well. Housing in squatter areas in Cairo might not be aesthetically nice but it is always strong and permanent. When the foundation of the Rashed Cooperative building were checked, there was so much iron and cement that the building could easily take another three floors. People in the squatter areas build conservatively even wastefully" (Interview, CHF Consultant, 1988).

In the early seventies the Rashed settlement started expanding by building on the fringes. Because of the increased demand and increased value of land, the Arabs reduced the sizes of plots from 500 to 200 or

150 square meters. While houses up to this point were mostly of village type style<sup>24</sup>, one to two floors apartment buildings started to be erected, similar to those in other low income urban building in Egyptian cities.

The construction of houses as well as the additional units were done by local contractors. They were usually paid for in instalments. This was a system that helped home owners, even among the poor, to improve and expand their houses. The local contractors were usually second generation Arabs. This meant that the Arabs had monopoly not only over land but over construction as well. Until the late seventies the majority of houses in Rashed were one floor houses, some had a second floor while very few were three floor houses. One of the early migrants who is the kebeer el ela of Bani Sweif in Upper Egypt, said that he was the first to build a three story house in Rashed and people called it the 'tower of Rayess Mostafa'<sup>25</sup> (Interview, Upper Egyptian Migrant, 1989). Migrants often boast that they were the ones who brought about change and 'civilisation' to the area. It is their way of challenging what they see as the alleged superiority of the Arabs. Because they came at a later stage than the Arabs, they were the first to abandon the rural style of housing design and materials and started using more modern material and building in the style prevalent in urban Cairo at the time.

The rental system was introduced when not only relatives but baladyyat (people from village of origin) came to live in Rashed with migrant owners. In these cases some had to pay for their rooms. This was frowned upon by Arabs who found renting out rooms in one's house degrading, and another reason to despise the 'fellaheen' who have 'no respect for customs or privacy'<sup>26</sup>. Later Arabs also started renting out rooms, but as they claim, only in houses they owned and did not live in. The introduction of the rental system in Rashed meant that the Arabs were losing their tight grip on the housing market. They still had control over land and construction, but no longer absolute control over who settles in the community, where and under what conditions. They were also slowly losing the patron-client relationship that they were so careful to preserve. This, rather than their desire to protect customs and privacy could perhaps be the real reason for their harsh criticism of migrant home owners renting out rooms.

<sup>24</sup> These were typically one floor houses, made of mud brick and with straw roofs, with rooms surrounding a courtyard.

<sup>25</sup> 'Rayess' is a term of respect.

<sup>26</sup> Privacy here refers mostly to the segregation of women. The 'Arabs' here saw themselves as more respectful of this tradition than the 'Egyptians' or 'fellaheen'.

Although it was the migrants who introduced the rental system, it was eventually the Arabs who made the most of it. While migrants tended to rent out rooms in their houses, the Arabs started constructing apartments of different sizes to rent out. In no time they were making a business out of renting out housing units for those who could not afford to buy land or houses. By the mid-seventies land was getting scarcer and prices of both land and construction material went up. This meant that demand for renting accommodation increased drastically. As will be shown below, the rental business underwent a real boom when the Home Improvement Loan Programme was introduced in 1981 and rent went up.

According to estimates of those who work in the construction business and other informed inhabitants in Rashed, the price of one meter sq of land was LE1 in 1958-59, LE1,5 in 1968-69, LE17 in 1978-79 and LE90 in 1988-89. Rental accommodations for one room and shared toilet was around LE6 in 1978-79 and LE20 in 1988-89. Rent for two rooms and shared or private toilet was around LE20 to LE25 in 1978-79 and LE40 to LE45 in 1988-89.

In this survey, out of the sample of 200 households, 61% of the interviewees owned their homes, while 39% were tenants. 44% of the latter paid an average of LE15 in rent, 29% paid LE25 and, 21% paid LE35 and 6% paid LE45.

## B. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM-LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATION:

How did a settlement like Rashed, which is considered by the authorities as an illegal settlement, manage to organise itself and form a fully functioning community with both an internal organisation and link with the wider society? This section will deal with the political and organisational process Rashed went through and the role that different leadership and social groups played in this development.

As shown above, when the community was still in its early stages of development, the tribal political system was the predominant system. The Arabs also succeeded in building a link with the wider society through their position as guards. Their success in creating networks with people in authority, like the police and district level employees, meant that such relationships were not completely severed even with the political changes that occurred after the 1952 Revolution. When the migrants settled in, they also had to abide by the rules of the Arabs both because of the existence of a clearly established internal political system and the monopoly of the Arabs over land. The internal affairs of the ae'lat as well as of the mahaliat were dealt with vertically following the tribal system in the case of the Arabs and the kebeer el `ela the case of the migrants. However when it came to community level issues it

cut across `ethnic'<sup>27</sup> lines and that was when patron-client relationships prevailed. The position of power that the Arabs held, however, still did not translate into their being seen as leaders by the migrants.

Since most of the links to the authorities were through the Pashas and factory owners, after the 1952 Revolution, the Rashed communities' links with the authorities weakened for a while until they found another way to establish new contacts and networks. New community organisations developed in the 1960's which provided the community with new opportunities. The first of such organisations was the Youth Club which developed out of the efforts of a group of young people of both Arab and migrant origin. It was a new forum for decision making as well as a new link to the outside world that allowed for a younger leadership to develop away from that of the elders of the community.

In 1968 a group of young men got together and formed a group who built their own headquarters for a youth club<sup>28</sup>. The idea came when a group of young men who played soccer in sahat cha'byia<sup>29</sup> wanted to have their club and their own space in the community. They approached the appropriate local channels, the elders of Rashed, to help them get permission from the Helwan District office. The elders rejected the idea and refused to help on the grounds that they saw no good coming from it (Omar, 1988, p.44). So the young men approached the District Office directly and got permission to use a vacant area used as a sewage dump. They then collected money from the community, filled in the sewage basins and erected the building which they named Rashed Youth Club. As those were times under the Nasser Regime, when such youth activities were encouraged, the District's Director attended the opening ceremony and declared the club a legitimate institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth (Ibid, p.46). The elders of Rashed did not welcome this whole venture as it was the first time that such a communal activity took place without their involvement nor even their approval. This was the first challenge to their patronage position both as Arabs and as elders.

The youth club was not just a place for entertainment and for playing soccer. It was also a place where young men met and discussed community matters. It also provided a forum for the first time for both Arab

<sup>27</sup> Ethnic as used here is seen in the broader sense of the word, meaning that people felt they belonged to a certain group different from another.

<sup>28</sup> Youth Clubs started to be erected in cities and villages of Egypt in the early 1960's as part of a scheme providing all young people, not only those belonging to high income families, with a chance to enjoy sports and other recreational activities. These clubs are supported and supervised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The attention and support given to these clubs in the sixties has faded greatly over the years.

<sup>29</sup> They are similar to Youth clubs only they are just open fields mostly used for soccer.

and migrant men to come together. It was however soon realised that since the club was linked to the Ministry of Youth (a non political institution), it was not allowed to organise politically and therefore had very little power. The club members felt they needed to be more active in a political institution in order to get their voice heard. They encouraged Rashed community members to run for the Itehad El Araby El Ishteraki (Arab Socialist Union)<sup>30</sup> elections representing Helwan El Balad<sup>31</sup>. They consequently organised meetings and campaigned for candidates. Nine inhabitants of Rashed, mostly Arabs, won the elections and joined the Itehad El Ishteraki as representatives of Helwan El Balad.

This second major venture organised again by the youth of Rashed was done this time in a way to include the elders. This meant the latter did not feel left out and thus gave all the support that was needed. The elders also saw this as a new opportunity to regain some of their position with the authorities (Rashed elder, 1989). The Club provided a headquarters for the Rashed National Assembly members. Very importantly, members of the Itehad El Ishteraki, because of their position, were able to make contacts with Government officials in key Government institutions.

One of the most important results that came out of being part of the Itehad El Ishteraki was to get electricity and water installed in the community. Up to 1969 the community of Rashed had no infrastructure connections. In the case of most squatter areas in Cairo, infrastructure is a rare commodity. The government maintained now as it did then, that it had no obligation to extend infrastructure to what it considers are `illegal settlements' and finds it convenient to ignore the existence of such settlements. This however does not mean that `squatters' do not have their own means to get such services. Their ability to do so depends greatly on their resourcefulness and ability to organise and establish contact with the right people. The Rashed settlement was able to get a limited piped water system installed and electricity in 1969. Up to that point water was fetched from public taps close by, a small canal at some distance from Rashed or from the neighbouring factories<sup>32</sup>. The system of sewage disposal was that of septic tanks which were periodically evacuated using evacuation cars. This system was still in use in Rashed up to my last visit to the community in 1990.

<sup>30</sup> El Etehad El Eshteraki (the Arab Socialist Union) was the Government party. It developed from the National Party which replaced all parties in 1957. The bases for the Arab Socialist Union was units in schools, factories, villages and city districts (Hopwood, 1982, p.91).

<sup>31</sup> A Helwan district.

<sup>32</sup> In fact even after the Project had introduced a wider and improved water network, 22% of households in my sample still had no water connections in their houses.

A limited piped water system was installed. In addition to three public taps, water connections were built only into those houses whose owners could afford to pay for them. Those who were around at the time explained that water and electricity connections were installed through peoples' own efforts. For example in the case of the electricity, the community members did the digging, bought the cables, then hired professionals to install the wires. Commenting on this point, one of Rashed interviewees said:

"It was through our own efforts and no thanks to the Government that we were able to turn this settlement into a fully functioning community. We got water and electricity with the help of Salem Tamaa [a Youth Club leader at the time]".

However, the Itehad El Eshteraki was abolished nation wide in 1975- it was seen as representing too much of Nasser's ideology. Some of its functions were taken over by another institution the Majlis El Mahali (Local Council). Only two members of Rashed were elected for this council in the late seventies<sup>33</sup>.

One of these two was Salem Tamaa, a young Arab man who really shone in the community during this period of the late sixties and seventies. He worked in the Helwan District Office, where due to his having been a member of both the Itehad el Ishteraki and later the Majlis El Mahali plus his charismatic qualities, he established good contacts in the District. Although stories told about him might have been exaggerated by the fact that he died at the young age of 32, there is no question that he was an active and a born leader who did a lot of good for the community. His was a name community members, both Arab and migrants, mentioned often when issues around leadership were raised during this research. People said things like "...since Salem died there is no one who really cares for this community".

When the Itehad el Eshteraki was abolished, Salem Tamaa was one of a small group of young people who thought of the idea to create a new organisation in Rashed which would be equipped to provide social services to the community. Services, as a member of this new organisation said, "...that was Government duty to provide to us, but never did". The youth club was not seen by this group of young people as being the right forum for such a task. The majority of the members of this new group that initiated and built the new organisation were Arabs.

An unused piece of land, close to the entrance of the Community, was chosen as the place to erect the

new building for the Community Development Cooperative. The Cooperative was to operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Some of the present Cooperative committee members explained that a committee of thirty of them was formed to gather donations which went towards the building of the Cooperative. There were many volunteers, they worked in 24 hour shifts, got the builders in the community to work for a reduced wage and those who had no skills just helped with the digging, carrying etc. "Sometimes we worked during the night as it was summer, and we all enjoyed it tremendously. It gave us such a sense of achievement", one Cooperative members explained (Interview, 1988).

The Cooperative was ready for operation in 1977. It had a nursery, offered adult education classes for women and men and sewing classes for women. It also provided a meeting place where men gathered in the evenings for entertainment purposes and to discuss community issues. Most saw the Cooperative as their new link to the formal institutions outside the community.

Unlike the Club, the Cooperative was not seen as a challenge to the Arab's position in the community. Since the founder of the Cooperative, Salem Tamaa, was an Arab, and since he managed to include the elders in the creation of the new institution, he gained the support of his kinsmen. Although the newly developed younger generation's leadership was given some level of autonomy from the elders, the alliance between the two was never broken. This alliance, and support of the Arabs for the Cooperative was the reason the Cooperative is often seen by the community of Rashed as an Arab institution. While there is a strong Arab presence in it, the Cooperative is in fact in no way predominantly Arab. For example five out of the nine members of the Cooperative committee are migrants, all originally from Upper Egypt. All committee members are home-owners and four out of the nine are contractors. Therefore the Cooperative committee members represent a relatively privileged stratum of the community. This might justify why, while in fact not all Arab, they are viewed as being exclusively so.

Competition between the Club and the Cooperative started when the latter offered to get both institutions together under the same management. However, because funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Cooperative was more generous than that given by the Ministry of Youth to the Club, this was seen to be a threat to the latter. As members of the Youth Club explained, they feared that the Cooperative would try to monopolise them and that they would be annexed to them, like a take over (Omar, 1988, pp. 52-56). The competition and bad feelings between the Club and the Cooperative was complicated by the way in which members of the former were perceived to be the majority migrants while those of the latter predominantly Arab. As a result the two

<sup>31</sup> The Majlis El Mahali at the time this study was done (1989) had ten members from Hewlan El Balad, none of them from Rashed.

institutions worked parallel rather than together and each decided to consider the other as irrelevant though an irritant. Discussions around the relationship between the two organisations showed that Cooperative members were dismissive of the Club members, the latter were resentful of the Cooperative. This relationship, as will be discussed later, became openly hostile after the Upgrading Project started.

### III THE ARRIVAL OF THE PROJECT

As the last section of this paper shows, Rashed in 1981 was a functioning community with established internal organisations with links to government institutions. It also had solid if not aesthetically pleasant housing, a market, mosques, clinics and pharmacies. As is the case in the majority of squatter areas and even some formal low income areas of Cairo, it lacked a comprehensive water, sewage and garbage disposal systems. It also had no schools. Children had to walk between 30 and 40 minutes to the nearest school.

#### A. PERCEPTION OF SQUATTERS BY PROJECT IMPLEMENTORS:

The GOE utility agencies that had to give permissions for upgrading activities, created various obstacles because they were basically against the idea of the Project. The Government position was that 'squatter' settlements are illegal. While they could not eradicate them because it was politically impossible to do so, they chose to ignore them. They believed that upgrading such settlements would give them a green light to expand and spread. In fact, informal settlements are spreading at a rate of 400 hectares a year in Greater Cairo (EQI, 1986, p.1).

Now the question is, how did those who were responsible for the implementation of the Helwan project view 'squatter' areas? Obviously the way 'squatters' were seen influenced the way the project progressed especially in the sphere of community organisation and participation. Interviews with the Agency, showed that most maintained stereotypical ideas about squatter populations. 'Squatter' areas were often perceived to be inhabited by a homogenous group of people, rural migrants, who live in shacks that were on the verge of collapse, and surrounded by 'filth and disease'. Opinions about them and whether or not they needed help, were derived from sentiments which were and continued to be at best paternalistic and at worse contemptuous. The Agency employees went through intensive training organised by CHF around new approaches to housing solutions. They were thus supposedly sensitized to seeing 'squatter' areas as a 'fait accompli', and to dealing with them instead of ignoring them or wishing to bulldoze them.

Despite that, most still had ambivalent feelings about 'squatters'.

As one senior Agency engineer puts it:

"Squatters have always been punished by the Government by refusing to provide them with water and sewage. I agree that it is dangerous to encourage such cancerous expansions. However this project is helping them have a better life, they are Egyptians after all!" (Interview, the Agency, 1988).

Another Agency interviewee argued:

"Squatters are all over Cairo, there is nothing we can do to stop that. We therefore can help them live a better life. This Project, for example, changed the lives of the people in the upgraded areas from the life of animals to that of semi humans" (Interview, the Agency, 1988).

An Agency interviewee said:

"The upgrading is the only way to guarantee that those who live in squatter areas live a better life. The problem did occur already and the only way to salvage it is by giving the people proper facilities. It was proved that people move faster than the Government. Upgrading is forbidden in fear that it will encourage expansion. In fact expansion is going very fast anyway and nothing can curb that. The squatter areas are everywhere, they are filthy and a cancerous growth. The fact that very little is done to deal with this problem just shows how few people around care about this country" (Interview, 1989).

Another senior staff member while acknowledging that the idea of Upgrading is good in principle, did not always see upgrading as a good solution as it depends on the location of the squatter area. Some of the areas that were upgraded in this project, he explained, are in close proximity to the Nile. Such locations should be kept for luxurious neighbourhoods. These areas should have been pulled down and luxury flats and tourist hotels built on them, he added:

"The inhabitants of the squatter areas could have been transferred to one of the new cities. A similar thing happened in an area called El Mohamady were there were huts and so on and the whole area was wiped out and a garden is replacing it. The

people were transferred to Al Salam City<sup>34</sup>. It was the perfect solution and the best way to clean the area. The same should happen in a neighbourhood like Boulac<sup>35</sup>. It should be wiped out and another Zamalek should be created" (Interview, 1989).

If after the ten year experience to the Helwan Project, a senior Agency employee still believes in bulldozing and displacing people to remote areas, one wonders what the implication of that is on future housing policy in Egypt.

There were various reasons given for why 'squatter' areas need upgrading. An ex-senior Agency employee explained that Cairo's 'civilised' areas are composed of about 4 million people, the remaining 6 or 7 million are 'squatter' settlements. The latter who have no services, he explained, blame it on the Government which is seen as the enemy.

"This results in *intifada* (uprising) because these people are envious of those who are privileged in society. People in Zamalek<sup>36</sup> pay 5pts for the meter of water while it costs squatter people five pounds. They are excused if they burn down Cairo. So to provide them with service is not just out of social awareness but mostly for 'our' own security. I live in Mohandeseen<sup>37</sup> and we are surrounded by hungry people, those living in Meet Okba<sup>38</sup>. There are increasing numbers of robberies. Those people living on the fringes come in for work, they see how the wealthy live and they wonder why they do not get a piece of the pie. I sat with Brown [director of AID] and explained all that to him", he added (Interview, the Agency, 1989).

When it comes to USAID staff, although upgrading was originally the idea of their organisation, the tendency of some was to think that upgrading was a compromise. When they spoke about upgrading, the question was whether in fact this was a viable solution or whether it was just a patch up job. One USAID official who was involved in the Project at its beginnings said:

<sup>34</sup> One of the five New Cities built in the desert.

<sup>35</sup> This is a well established old low income neighbourhood with an estimated population of half a million.

<sup>36</sup> An upper income group neighbourhood which is used by all Egyptians as the example of wealth especially in the context of social injustice.

<sup>37</sup> Another higher income neighbourhood.

<sup>38</sup> A low income community located in the middle of Madinet El Mohandeseen.

"AID officials who planned this Project were not housing people but rather infrastructure experts. They had doubts that upgrading would work. They only did it because it was fashionable at the time" (Interview, the Agency, 1988).

A CHF consultant confirmed this view by saying that it was the Urban rather than the Housing department that dealt with the Project. So they knew nothing about housing, only infrastructure.

CHF consultants, as it seems, were the only ones who knew about Upgrading Projects and Community Organisation. However their approach to both, as this paper will show, tended to be conservative and limited to getting the job done efficiently.

One of the most interesting points raised in the discussion around why squatter areas should be upgraded, is the view shared by both the Agency and USAID that 'squatter' areas if neglected further will turn into areas of political unrest and revolution. Squatters and slums are identified by USAID as 'the phenomenon of urban marginality' which is seen as potentially threatening 'hot beds of revolution'. This view led USAID to get involved in extensive urban aid Programmes in Third World countries (Mayo, 1986 in Moser, 1989, p.91). Quite prominent in the minds of both Americans and Egyptians involved in the project, especially those at policy level, was that the project served to appease and pacify potentially dangerous elements in society,. To have better access and thus more control over squatter communities was a motivation that quite a few officials from both sides had.

These were some of the ideas and attitudes that coloured the project process in the upgrading areas. The mismatch of the preconceived ideas and stereotypes held by the employees and the community 'representatives' about each other was one of the important elements that influenced the interaction between the two sides. The other mismatch came out of the different interests that project staff and community representatives had in the project. The former was trying to get a job done with as little difficulty as possible. Their lack of respect for the communities, their rights and collective wisdom meant that they overlooked their real needs and interests. The communities, as the next section will demonstrate further, had little involvement in the process, with the exception of those who were identified as the leaders. The latter's interests, in the case of Rashed for example, was to get the best out of the project for their own interests, especially as regards gaining more legitimacy as leaders and consequently more power in the community.

## B. COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND 'PARTICIPATION':

Community organisation and participation became important components of the 70's and 80's housing projects. It became one of the preconditions included in international funders' 'packages'. Community participation, in particular, is at the centre of debate in the housing and development literature raising several issues among which are its viability, exploitative potential and promise to communities for more access to power. While the first two issues are not of particular relevance to this study, the power issue is. The existing power relationships in Rashed prior to the introduction of the Upgrading project were discussed in the last section. This section will discuss the way in which this was shaped over the ten years of the project.

Community organisation was one of the upgrading objectives cited in the original Project Paper. CHF in its capacity as the only organisation involved in the Helwan Project that had any expertise in upgrading, was responsible for community organisation. Thus, a community organisation conceptual framework was prepared by CHF and presented to the Agency (Nathan Report, 1982, pp.161-162). Community organisation, as defined in the various project papers, was limited to the involvement of local community organisations and leaders rather than community as a whole. Existing community organisations (eg Rashed Cooperative) or new community organisations created for the purpose of the Project, were to participate in the planning and maintenance of community facilities as well as to protect land designated for facilities from encroachment (Project Paper Excerpts on Community upgrading, 1987, p.10). The community in general and its involvement in the Project was given lip service. They were to be informed about the components of the Project and asked to cooperate in keeping facility sites available. The definition of community organisation and participation as it appears in one of the documents is as follows:

"Community organisation techniques are extensively used to encourage community participation. Community associations initiate and manage their own facilities, solid waste collection and septic tank services and other community programmes. Working with community associations, comprehensive urban planning ensures that the construction of schools, sewer and water, roads, electricity and other community facilities meet the needs of the residents in each community" (Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading, 1984, pp.5-6)

Many similar projects are criticised for their use of the terms 'community' participation when in fact it was 'leader's' or 'local association's' participation. Most of the implementors did not really see the distinction

between leaders, associations and communities. There were two major problems which coloured the community organisation and participation process from its early stages. The first was around the identification of who the leaders were in term of the degree to which they really represented their communities. This operation, as will be shown below, seems to have been done quite haphazardly, which had important implication for the power dynamics within communities. The second was that even these community leaders were not involved from the onset of the Project.

Project papers as well as interviewees, when discussing the issue of community participation, claimed that the upgrading communities were involved in the decision making every step of the way. In fact, there was no mention of the community in the pre-implementation stages of the project. They were contacted only at the time of implementations after all the plans as well as choice of contractors were decided. The following quotation is just one of many that show that the communities were in no way part of every step of the Project:

"After the original plans/designs were executed and as they were getting reviewed for approval, the Agency started to establish contact with two of the upgrading communities where implementation of the Project was to start" (PCR, 1989, pp. 30).

The implementation of 'community organisation' followed a number of steps. These steps, as described in the Project documents, started with the identification of the leadership of each community. Then through this leadership the community was informed about the upgrading components (Mid-term Evaluation, 1984, p.121). Then community organisations and the communities they represented, participated in determining priorities among upgrading interventions, specified sites and contributed in the design and planning (Evaluation of Upgrading Construction, 1987, p.30). Lastly, they were taught how to use and maintain the facilities and programmes after installation (Mid-term Evaluation, 1984, p.121).

Each of these steps will be discussed in the following section trying to point out the implications of the activities undertaken in the community organisation and participation process and the manner in which they were implemented.

1. Identification and establishing rapport with leaders or local organisations:

The Agency Community Development Team (CDT) with the Egyptian CHF social staff<sup>39</sup>, approached those they saw as the leaders of the upgrading communities to involve them in the Project. In most upgrading areas, easily identifiable local organisations were seen as the forum where leadership operated. In the case of Rashed, the Cooperative represented everything the project implementors needed. Again lip service was paid to the inclusion of other leaders, but this was limited to the CDT asking the Cooperative members to invite other leaders to attend meetings. In fact early meetings seemed to have been conducted in this manner, but this formality soon disappeared. In other communities where local leadership was less visible, newly created community institutions were developed to deal with the Project. In this case centres were built and members were recruited by the Agency team (Oldheim, 1987, p.105).

After the first steps of establishing rapport and describing the Project components to the community organisations, the CDT, the Project Completion Report explains, then worked closely with the organisations to establish these programmes and to provide equipment and administrative, financial and staff support. They also developed management training for the organisations and assisted them to develop a more active voice within the Ministry of Social Affairs and the local Helwan administration and political structure (Project Completion Report, p.31). The following stage was to use these organisations as 'the primary vehicles' to introduce 'self-help' projects.

There are three major assumptions in this approach that can be easily challenged. The first is that leadership is easily identifiable and that outsiders can 'create' it if it seemed to be non-existent. The second is the way the Project reports talk about 'introducing self-help' as if the very existence of these communities is not a product of self-help. The third assumption is that the staff of these organisations, which have been functioning for years, need to be taught how to deal with political institutions. Obviously these associations and communities were able to survive in a hostile environment by being highly organised, knowing every trick in the book and becoming experts at dealing with Government.

While Project papers and interviews with the Agency and CHF employees and Cooperative members, left no doubt that the Cooperative of Rashed was the legitimate leadership of the community, this fact does not seem as clear to community members. When the leadership of the Cooperative was discussed with the Rashed community, this 'fact' was questioned. Most saw the Cooperative as the place

where services such as the nursery or illiteracy classes are given. Some of those who did see it as fulfilling other roles such as solving disputes or the place where meetings are held to solve community matters, said that the Cooperative used to hold an important place in the community only when Salem Tamaa was alive. They saw the Cooperative, at the time that the fieldwork was taking place, as an organisation that only serves 'their own people'. 'Their people' meant in some cases the Arabs, the Upper Egyptians or the home owners, depending on who was saying it. Commenting on this point one of the CDT said:

"Most migrants reject the leadership of the Arabs in the community. This is one reason they do not accept the leadership of the Cooperative because it is seen as Arab dominated"  
(Interview, 1988).

The manner in which leadership was identified and the impact of that on community organisation will be described and analysed in great detail below. However, in order to help put the next sections into context. some of the implications of this process will have to be clarified at this point.

There is no doubt that CDT were aware of the existence of other forms of leadership in Rashed. It however decided to ignore this fact and work only with the Cooperative. No effort was made to create a forum where various significant groups in the community were represented such as the Club members, migrants, and tenants. Women of all groups were also marginalised from the process. The CDT actually seemed to have encouraged factionalism and splits in leadership to achieve its own interests and to keep in control. As will be further clarified below, they used the competition that existed between the Cooperative and Club to keep the former in line.

In order to understand this point more fully, it is important to examine the Project's objective in attempting to implement community organisation and participation. Both documents and interviews show that the main purpose of involving the community was to get the various upgrading activities implemented successfully. 'Community participation' followed a recognised pattern which as Moser describes, it entails that the community organisations protect sites, maintain services and promote programmes. In other words community organisation is seen as a way to achieve efficiency, a means to improve Project results rather than linking participation to empowerment (Moser, 1989, p.83).

2. Informing and promoting the project:

<sup>39</sup> The differentiation between the EAJP and CHF staff was not made by the Cooperative nor the Club, they were all referred to as members of EAJP.

After the contact with the Rashed Cooperative was made and support to the Project was guaranteed, the Cooperative members were asked to invite community members and leaders to meetings about the Project. The first meetings were about informing the people about the project. Other meetings followed which were promotion rather than informative meetings. The latter meetings were mostly about the Home Improvement Loan Program.

The first meetings were mostly of a public relations kind where a number of community members and leaders were invited by the Cooperative, as a way of gaining legitimacy and support. While Cooperative members claimed that these meetings were open to all, community members with whom this issue was discussed said they were never invited to such meetings. Very few even knew of the existence of the meetings.

In fact, as interviews show, only 7% knew of the existence of the project as a whole. Most only knew of one or two components (75.5%). 17.5% did not know of its existence at all. 27.5% acknowledge the achievement of the project in building the school, 22% mentioned the infrastructure, and 16% the loans. Most said the project was implemented by the Government. Some gave the credit for these achievements to Salem Tamaa the previous Cooperative committee chairman. They said that it was due to his efforts and his contacts that the Government finally fulfilled some of its obligations towards the community (Interviews with Rashed community members, 1988-89).

When asked about why community members knew so little about the Project as a whole, Rashed Cooperative members said that it was their intention not to promote the Project, as a 'big Project' funded by the Americans. They said they did not want to provide the latter with the propaganda they wanted.

When it came to the Home Improvement Loan Programme, this was another matter. The majority of people in Rashed knew that the loan came from the Americans. Special meetings were organised for the promotion of the Loan Programme, where this time everyone was invited. Both the Agency and Cooperative interviewees explained that it took a long time to get the loan scheme accepted by the people. Very few people applied for it at the beginning. Most Rashed inhabitants were suspicious of the loan, they were worried what the consequences would be if they could not repay the loans, and they were worried about the religious implications of the interest. *Reba*, which is the practice of loans with interest, is considered a sin in Islam<sup>40</sup>. This led the CDT to organise meetings to promote the Programme and try to reassure people that there were no risks involved. Religious people were also invited to interpret the loan system that tried to make it religiously acceptable.

When discussing their role in the promotion of the Home Loan Programme, the Cooperative members said that without their support the Programme would never have taken off. This was one of the examples brought up by the Cooperative members of how nothing could have worked without their support. This issue was usually brought up in the context of what they saw as the Agency letting them down at the later stages of the Project. Commenting on this point, one of the Cooperative committee members summed up what most of the others said about it, as follows:

"The successful implementation of the Loan Programme was a proof that the Agency could do nothing without us. They tried the loan system in other areas but they failed because the people were suspicious. Here also there was discomfort because of that interest business. But we gave the people the green light which immediately made it acceptable" (Interview, 1989).

While the Loans Programme was introduced in 1980, it took about a year for the Rashed inhabitants to feel comfortable enough to apply for loans. 610 loans were given in Rashed for an average of LE2000 per loan. Loans were used mostly for the completion of the construction of houses, adding a floor or fixing a roof. The loans were used as follows: 41% for complete houses, 34% construction of two rooms, 17% construction of one room, 6% construction of 3 rooms (PCR, 1988, Appendix C). In my survey, of the 53 who took the loans, 35% rebuild their houses, 23% added a floor, 15% fixed

<sup>40</sup> This is a highly controversial issue in the whole of the Muslim world. The discussion is mostly around banking and whether or not dealings with the banks is against Islam. Religious people are engaged in the debate and those among them who condone are criticised by some for being 'Government people'.

the roof, 7% built additional rooms and the rest did repairs, repainted walls etc.

Because of the failure of the Project implementors to obtain land tenure for the community, the eligibility criteria to get loans was limited to home owners who were salaried employees. Formal salaried employment was the only collateral the bank would accept instead of land ownership. Those involved in the informal sector had to have as guarantor someone who is a salaried employee. This meant that the majority were in fact excluded from the loan programme. In this sense this Project was no different from any old housing project in Egypt which only gave access primarily to Government employees, something that was against the basic principle of this particular 'demonstration project'.

One of the major reasons why the home owners in Rashed found the idea of the loans attractive, was that it gave them de-facto legal tenure. The idea was that no one could really challenge the legality of their home ownership when they were part of a Government loan scheme. This fact led home-owners, Arabs, in the majority, to get a stronger hold on their position and many were further encouraged to get access to more land and build more houses, mostly for rent. As Omar describes in her research, since they did not need expansion (they already had enough house space), the Arabs chose to reconstruct their homes (Omar, 1987, p.86). New building materials were used which allowed them to keep up with migrant housing built or expanded at later stages to their own houses. All this led to another construction boom from which contractors, mostly Arabs, benefited. Discussing this point, a member of the Cooperative community and a contractor said:

"The loans helped the local contractors and local builders to find jobs which led to a general economic boom in Rashed. Now the same people are suffering from unemployment. Construction workers used to have us contractors on waiting lists, now they look for us to say they are available if we needed any work to be done" (Interview, 1989).

Again the knowledge that four out of the nine Cooperative committee members are contractors, also helps understand their enthusiasm for the Loan Programme. Their close involvement in the Programme by being both its main promoters as well as providing the headquarters for the operation played an important role in enhancing their political leadership and, in some cases, their economic position.

### 3. The impact of the Home Improvement Loans:

In Rashed, the Home improvement loans were given to 580 home owners (53 of the 200 household in the sample). Because of the condition regarding public sector employees, 53.5% of home-owners interviewed were denied access to the loans. Arabs and those of Upper Egyptian origin<sup>41</sup>, some of the others claimed, because of their connections to the Cooperative leadership, were able to get loans even when they did not fit the eligibility criteria, which caused resentment.

The repayment of the loans, according to most of the borrowers, constituted a financial burden mostly to those who had no tenants or economically active children. Home owners who took loans had to pay between LE20 and LE35 a month for 15 years in instalments. While the majority complained that this has been causing them financial hardship, most admitted they would never have been able to improve their houses or add new units had it not been for the loans.

The instalment repayment had, in turn, serious implications for tenants. Not only were they not allowed to get a share in the benefit of the loans, but their already vulnerable position as tenants was further jeopardised. Many home owners who took loans and made improvements or added units to their housing, and who had tenants, put up the rent. Those who could not afford to pay extra rent, were often asked or forced to leave. Research carried out in Rashed in 1991 which specifically examines displacement of tenants, show that the introduction of infrastructure in the area has attracted a number of higher income households to Rashed who were able to pay higher rents. This meant that the original tenants had to compete with the newcomers and some could not afford the new rents. Of a sample of 126, 14 tenant households were forced to move out (Daef, 1994, p. 90). In 1986, an adjacent squatter area started to develop on what was marshy land with hazardous environmental conditions and had no infrastructure, not even electricity. By 1991, 360 plots were occupied. Half of the 33 households in Daef's sample in this area were found to belong to the same category of Rashed tenants had been forced out of their homes (Ibid, p. 243).

There were a number of reasons for such displacement, which are common to upgrading Projects in general. However in this case there was the added complication that the Project components were in fact not completed. With the issue of land tenure unresolved, the community was still considered 'illegal', and tenants were in a vulnerable position. One does not have to be around the community very long to notice the tension that exists between home owners and tenants. Most tenants live under the threat of losing their homes as they

<sup>41</sup> My survey shows that 50% of those who took loans were Upper Egyptians, 27% were Arabs, 16% were from Cairo and 7% Lower Egyptians.

have no binding legal claim to their rented accommodation. Very few have contracts as home owners are reluctant to issue such documents. With the increased demand for housing, tenants often accept to rent housing without a contract because it is just a matter of taking it or leaving it. Although Egyptian law<sup>42</sup> protects tenants in the sense that owners cannot expel tenants who have been living in units for over two years even without contracts, this law is not always enforced. Because the tenants of informal settlements feel more vulnerable than others, few resort to the authorities. Another reason why they often do not complain to the police, is that owners often have contacts with the police and tenants have learned this lesson very quickly. The owners are also often in a position to harass tenants and make their life so miserable that they give up and they move out. As tenants describe it, and as was witnessed during the research, owners often use various strategies to make life uncomfortable for them. They pick fights around the use of water and electricity, around the children of tenants being noisy etc. The intimidation and harassment of tenants often got quite vicious and many stories are told about this. As one member of the CDT who worked for a long time in Rashed explained:

"Tenants cannot rely on the law to protect them. What it all boils down to in the end is who is tougher and whether the tenant can bare the intimidation and abuse of the owner" (Interview, 1988).

The owners on the other hand complain that tenants are reckless, that they mistreat the property and throw water in the septic tank which causes overflows and 'harm the houses' foundations'. They also blame the tenants for the ever increasing charges in water and electricity bills<sup>43</sup>. One owner was complaining about the children of the tenants saying "... as they walk they brush themselves against the walls of the house, they will cause the walls to wear down".

There are two major reasons why owners often want to get rid of their tenants. The first is when they want the space for their own marrying children. The second reason is when the owners want to raise the rent and the tenants refuse to comply, or cannot afford it. In this case they want to get rid of them and rent out to others who are willing to pay more.

With the implementation of the Loan Programme this whole problem was greatly exacerbated. The home owners, in getting de-facto legitimacy to their home, acquired even more power over the tenants. The loans also provided them with new ways of getting rid of their old tenants. In many cases, as many of

the tenants explained, they lost their houses when loans were used to rebuild the house or for other works. In these case, tenants were asked to leave supposedly until the work was done (from a couple of months to a year). On their return, the tenants were asked for a rise of up to 300% in rent. The rent per room went from LE5 to LE10 in the sixties and seventies, to LE15 to LE30 after the introduction of the Project. Those who could not afford this increase were not allowed back. In this process many lost their rooms.

When asked about this issue, the Cooperative members confirmed that there were indeed many problems between owners and tenants. They said that there was a committee formed by one of the Cooperative members called the lagnat al mossalahat (reconciliation) committee which deals with such fights. The member explained that the committee's role is to mediate and try to find a middle ground solution to help both parties. Another member of the committee also said :

"The biggest problems between people here is a problem between owners and tenants due to the former's greed. I am well known for mediating in such problems. A tenant would come to me with his complaints and I would give a judgment. Even newcomers to the area know of me. People would come to my house and even if I am just back from a long day of work I go with them to solve their problem" (Interview, 1989).

Few of the community members knew about this committee. Of those who did, most said they did not think the committee was fair. They explained that they tend to be biased towards the owners. The Loan Programme has had important implication for the power relationship between home owners and tenants. The role that the Cooperative played, in its promotion of the loan, is also important in terms of its position on the one hand vis-a-vis the community and on the other vis-a-vis the Agency and CHF. The Cooperative was seen by those who did get the loans as the facilitating link between them and the Project. Depending on whether the loan was judged to be positive or negative for those who got it, the Cooperative gained or lost points in terms of its status in the community. For those who were excluded from the Loan Programme, either because they worked in the informal sector or were tenants, the Cooperative's bias toward 'their people' was confirmed. After the initial resistance of the community to the loan and the role that the Cooperative played in promoting it, this created a feeling among the CDT that it actually needed the Cooperative to make the programme a success. The Cooperative, on the other hand needed the Project to strengthen its position and acquire the status of the strongest leadership in the community.

<sup>42</sup> This law is at present (1996) under revision

<sup>43</sup> Electricity bills are usually kept in the name of the owners to prevent tenants from using these bills as proof of their tenancy.

#### 4. Setting priorities, approving design and location:

Project documents and interviews show that one of the activities in community organisation was the participation of community organisations in the decision making around choosing services they needed, designs of community facilities and location of such facilities. However, as discussions with Cooperative committee members show, the meetings held around such issues were often one-sided. The 'community representatives' were not allowed to suggest changes in design or choose locations. When they did, they were told by the Agency that these were technical matters, and that they must just take it or leave it. One of the members of the Cooperative committee said:

"They claimed that the whole project was built on community participation. What they did was ask us here to arrange for meetings where we would invite the members of the Cooperative's committee, traditional leaders and the Club committee. We did that. Then what it amounted to was them describing to us the part of the Project under discussion. If we objected to a point they said 'no this is technical, do you want it as we describe it or not at all?' So of course the person who objected would shut up in fear that the other members would accuse him of losing this part of the deal" (Interview, 1989).

A favourite example that was given to illustrate this point was the discussion around communal septic tanks which were built for water disposal in the interim until the sewage new network started working. There was a big controversy about the design, the location and maintenance of these tanks. The fact that the tanks soon became dysfunctional, made the septic tank issue an even better example of how things went wrong when the Agency and CHF did not listen to the Cooperative.

"They [the Agency] decided to override us about the septic tanks. We have been building these tanks for years, we know our soil, but they decided they knew better. The result is they are not working and all this money was wasted" a Cooperative member explained.

Another added:

"There were seven of them built and they cost about LE300,000. The Agency insisted on building it in a way we told them would not work. They did a study, and based on it, decided on the locations. We told them this will not

work as they were in the midst of the houses. One of them said it should not be too far so that women don't have to walk to dispose of the water. But now you can see we were right. The pits started to fill up, get blocked, attract insects etc. This caused the residents around the pits to fill them up with cement to block them completely. We told them [the Agency-CHF] to get someone to maintain and supervise the tanks they said 'no get your own people'".

Cooperative members also explained that the engineers did not put enough openings for the water to go underground. The few openings were close to the surface which made it dangerous for the foundations of the houses. The result was that the bottom which was filled with pebbles became impermeable and so there was a constant overflow. They added that the fact that the evacuation cars only came once a week made it impossible to keep the tanks from overflowing. Concerning this issue, an Agency employee who worked in Rashed for many years said:

"The Rashed people raised objections about the communal septic tanks, they did not like the idea, nor the location. But of course the views of the engineers always win in the end. The inhabitants misused the septic tanks and that is what blocked them. They are an immature community. These tanks cost LE68,000" (Interview, 1989).

Most Agency employees argued that there was nothing wrong with the technical side of the septic tanks. They said that the community members thought they know it all, while they know nothing about engineering matters. They were blamed for wanting to interfere in everything. "We consulted them in all matters which made them want to take it too far. At one point we had to put them in their place as they became too big for their boots", a CDT member said. The Agency employees blamed the failure of the system on people's misuse of them and they often used quite strong words about the community members' 'ignorance' and 'filth', one Agency senior employee said:

"The people in the upgrading areas are dirty. No point in upgrading services when people themselves are not upgraded. They must be educated to live like human beings" (Interview, 1989).

When asked about the misuse of the tanks, Cooperative members explained that it is true that the women were not used to separating used water and solid waste.

"The septic tanks were covered with a grid so the solid things in the dirty water, accumulated and rotted and were covered with insects. It is true that this is because the women lack the awareness but we told the Agency to employ someone to guard and clean up regularly, but they did not" (Interview, 1989).

A member of the Club committee in his resentment at not having gained anything from the Project, commented on this saying:

"There was not enough awareness raising of how things should be used and maintained. The septic tanks are all blocked and who is responsible? Now because there is no place to get rid of used water, filth is everywhere. Our football court is the peoples' favourite place for dumping dirty water and garbage. I feel that if we put up a wall around it we will cause more filth all around Rashed. It seems like we are doing the Project people and the community a big service" (Interview, 1989).

Another example of what a member of the Cooperative calls a 'community participation' disaster, was the manner in which a decision about the width of the main entrance road to Rashed was taken. The road went in between the Cooperative building and the football court of the Youth Club. The width that the Cooperative asked for meant that it would encroach on the court, which caused the Club members to protest. In recalling the incident, a Cooperative member said that the Agency had suggested that the width of the road be 8 meters and they wanted it to be 12 meters.

"Because this time they could not say it was a technical matter" he added, "they decided to do what they wanted by creating a problem between us and the club. They went to them with our two proposals and naturally the Club asked that the road be 6 meters".

At that point, four years into the Project, as one of the Club members explained, the Youth Club had a very bad deal from the Project. They had given up a large piece of land for building the primary school and did not get anything in return. Not only were they alienated from even the nominal sharing in decision making, but many promises given to them were broken. They had been promised that the Youth Club building would be expanded and that a fence would be built around the football court, and they got neither. They decided consequently that they would not compromise on this matter.

The Cooperative then suggested that they and the Club members should meet to settle their problems. According to the Cooperative members, the CDT however insisted, against the latter's advice, that this was a matter to be decided in a public meeting. As a result of CDT's coming and going between the Cooperative and the Club, and making a big issue of this, Cooperative members explained, the day of the public meeting ended up with half the 150 people present in hospital and the rest in the police station. The CDT was late for the meeting, arguments started which led to fist fighting.

Cooperative members explained that while there were always hostilities between them and the Club, in the past, they were still able to have joint meetings. After this big fight over the road this stopped. The CDT was blamed for that. Club members however said meetings between them had stopped long before that, but they agreed that the CDT meddling had aggravated the situation.

Both Cooperative and Club members agreed that the CDT played the Cooperative off against the Club on several occasions to stir up problems between the two organisations. A Club member explained that when the Cooperative caused the CDT any problem they resorted to the Club to bring the Cooperative back in line. He added: "This is what they did in other communities as well. They played leaders off against each other in order to weaken leadership and strengthen their own position" (Interview, 1989). This point of view was confirmed by Cooperative members, as one of them said:

"When they (CDT) felt we were dissatisfied with some aspects of the project, they decided that things had gone to our head and we needed to be taught a lesson. They did that by resorting to the Club as a way of showing us we were not indispensable. When they found the club was no use to them, they came back to us" (Interview, 1989).

This discussion brought out examples of what the CDT actually did in order to keep control over other upgrading communities. Ghoneim was one of the communities that Cooperative and Club members used as an example to prove their point. The Agency and CHF also spoke of Ghoneim as a community where leadership was unsuccessful, but for different reasons.

Cooperative and Club members explained that Ghoneim did not have an institutionalised leadership, so the Agency felt the need to create one. Therefore a cooperative building was erected and a leadership was formed for the purpose of the Project. But, they explained, the new leadership was weak and the Agency soon realised that they were not doing their

job well. So the Agency created problems in the community which led to the destruction of the previously existing leadership as well as the newly created one. To prove the potential danger that the CDT could cause to leadership, one of the Cooperative members said:

"The agency was not able to mess up our leadership here because we are well established and strong. However in Ghoneim because the leadership of the cooperative was created by the Agency, they were fragile. When the Agency decided to put them and the traditional leadership up against each other it destroyed them both" (Interview, 1989).

A Club member also said that from the way the CDT behaved in Rashed, he could understand how they 'messed about' the leadership in Ghoneim. A CHF consultant argued that experience in upgrading areas showed that when leadership was created artificially, community organisation did not work. "It worked in some areas where there was real leadership. When leadership was created for the purpose of the Project it did not work", (Interview, 1989). The CDT said that Ghoneim had a weak or corrupt leadership, so they had to create a new one. One of the CDT explained that:

"Sometimes the leadership is not successful. In Ghoneim for example the head of the new Cooperative was a crook, he took the money for a building in his pocket. We were able to get the people to unite against him" (Interview, 1989).

This stage of the Project implementation in Rashed, is the phase that shows best how the power struggle between various actors materialised. The 'informing and promoting' phase had left the Cooperative confident that it was indispensable to the success of the Project. It had maintained its role as the sole representative of the community and succeeded in keeping all other leadership at bay. The CDT not only went along with this monopoly over representation, but it encouraged it. However, during the 'priority and design' phase, when the Cooperative disagreed with the CDT over issues like the septic tanks or the road, then the CDT found ways to threaten this monopoly by resorting to other leadership structures in the community.

#### 5. Preventing encroachment:

The fourth and the most important component of 'community organisation' and participation for the Project implementors, was the prevention of encroachment on land designed for construction of facilities and services and then later the protection of

the sewage network. As the Evaluation of Upgrading Construction put it:

"..ensuring that further encroachments which might jeopardise works to benefit the community do not occur..is probably the most important aspect of community participation in upgrading programmes" (Evaluation of Urban Construction, 1987, p.31).

Thus, the Agency and CHF measured the success of community organisation by how much community organisations failed or succeeded in preventing encroachment. Community organisations were put into two categories, those who cooperated and those who did not. Organisations which prevented encroachment described as having 'cooperated' with the Project. In other words, cooperation was not measured by their involvement in the decision making or in the actual implementation of upgrading activities, but rather by how seriously they took their policing role. The Rashed community was always given as an example by the Agency and CHF staff as one of the best communities in this role.

#### 6. Maintenance and running of community service:

The last activity that community organisation was to achieve was the maintenance and running of services, especially the evacuation of septic tanks and garbage collection. In Rashed, these activities became the responsibility of the Cooperative after the upgrading Project completion in 1988.

With the water network installed and the sewage network still not in operation, the septic tanks needed to be more frequently evacuated. There were always private sector cars servicing Rashed, but the higher demand for their services led to higher charges (around LE8). As a result, a number of evacuation cars were purchased by the Agency with the intention of handing each community a car under the supervision of community organisations. When the Project ended, however, the cars were left to operate in the communities (with a charge of LE5) on the condition that they would still belong to the Agency, that they would be driven by an Agency driver and that it would remain in the Agency garage. The arrangement was that the community organisations would get one third of the service charge for running the car and the Agency two thirds. The Rashed Cooperative saw this as a great injustice and a breaking of the promise that the car would be handed entirely over to them to run as well as to keep the revenue. Long negotiations occurred around this issue but the Agency would not change its mind. It was yet again an example of the difficulty that the Agency had in letting go of control over the Project. The Cooperative then tried to get its own way by refusing to pay the Agency. After a number of letters were exchanged, the car was withdrawn. After about six months, the Cooperative reluctantly

decided to give up and pay what it owed to the Agency and got the car back on the terms of the latter.

The dispute over the evacuation car caused a lot of resentment on the part of the Cooperative members. They claimed that the Agency had promised them full control of the vehicle but had changed its mind. They saw this as just another disappointment, one of a long list of broken promises. One of the Cooperative members said:

"The way we ran this vehicle was a great service to the community. They only had to pay LE6. After the vehicle was taken back by the Agency the private sector took the opportunity to exploit the people by raising their price from LE8 to LE10. In the meantime the car was rusting in the Agency garage just because they don't give a damn about us" (Interview, Cooperative member, 1989).

Another added that as a result of withdrawing the car, people could not afford to evacuate their septic tanks regularly which caused overflows (Interview, 1989). The Cooperative members also found it unacceptable that they were doing all the work of taking orders and organising the rounds and that they should get so little in return. "Also isn't it unfair that the revenues should go to the Treasury when we could use the money for the benefit of the community?" one of the Cooperative asked (Interview, 1989).

Commenting on the issue of the evacuation car, the Agency staff explained that there was no way they could just give it to the Cooperative. They said that they had never promised such a thing since the car is Government property and its revenues had to go back to the Government. The Cooperative, a member of the CDT said, was just trying to win a bargain, that they were being greedy. "They wouldn't pay their dues so we held back the car to teach them a lesson", he added (Interview, 1989).

The evacuation car was not the only service the Cooperative was supposed to run. Two intensive studies were undertaken in Rashed to decide on the most suitable garbage collection system. The final decision was that modern vehicles were to be purchased instead of using traditional garbage pickers. This resulted in the purchase of vehicles from the U.S. to be run by the community organisations of the upgrading areas. These however, unlike the evacuation cars, never left the Agency garage. The Agency staff explained this was a result of administrative problems with the customs. It seems they were brought in by cutting through some of the red tape which became problematic later. The problem of these vehicles was unresolved until the completion of this research in 1989.

Although the Cooperative members knew that they may never get to see the garbage vehicles, they seemed reluctant to find another alternative. They blamed the Agency for the accumulated garbage everywhere in the community, but they were worried that if they found another solution they would definitely not get the vehicles. They risked losing the evacuation car and were willing to wait for years to get the garbage vehicles, in both cases to the overall detriment of the community.

#### **IV CONCLUSION: THE AFTERMATH OF THE PROJECT**

The upgrading process in Rashed highlights a number of important issues regarding the relationships between different actors as well as the resulting impacts, both economic and political. The major set of actors involved on the organisational level were: the Agency-CHF, the Cooperative and the Club; on the community level, there were the landlords and the renters. Rashed, in both its organisations and its community, had their 'ethnic' divisions of 'Arabs' and 'Egyptians'-`fellaheen', the latter again including the Upper and lower Egyptians, as well as the Cairenes.

In terms of the relationships between the Agency-CHF and the Cooperative, the conflict that occurred around the evacuation of the septic tanks, though on the surface of little significance, was in fact a catalyst for the power struggle that developed over the years of the Project. It illustrated the complaints and resentments that each party had towards the other. At the start of the Project there was a potential conflict in the relationship between the Agency-CHF and the Cooperative. The Cooperative was suspicious of what the Project intended to do in the community. The Project implementors held negative stereotypes of squatter communities. However, pushed by their realisation that it was in both their interests to establish a good relationship between them, they managed to create a seemingly harmonious one. The Agency-CHF knew they needed the Cooperative as a way into the community as well as the Cooperative building as a headquarters for their work. The motivation was never that of community 'participation as an end'-it was a purely 'as a means' to have a local headquarters in the community<sup>44</sup>. The Cooperative on the other hand was delighted to resume the role of representative of the community, and if not real, at least nominal partners in the decision making process. The fact that a government agency was dealing with the Cooperative as the community representative was in fact giving the latter some sort of legitimacy in this particular role which it previously did not have. In fact, as discussions above show, many community members denied the representation of the Cooperative because of the

<sup>44</sup> I refer here to Paul (1982) and Moser's (1989) typology.

Arab domination in it. Renters also raised the issue of alliance of the Cooperative members with landlords. The issue of representation of the Cooperative was doubtful.

The alliance between the Agency-CHF and the Cooperative did not last long. The superficial harmony between the two started to 'crack' when the Cooperative started to disagree with the CDT and the latter made overtures to the Club to show the Cooperative that they were not indispensable. The relationship then went through a number of ups and downs during which each party tested the other on how far it could go without breaking the link.

When the Project ended, the Cooperative members were left disillusioned. They felt that the Project implementors did not deliver all the goods. They felt that they had been used by the Agency-CHF and were not given what they were promised in return. In addition to the vehicles, the Cooperative members said they were promised a health centre, a preparatory school and a post office. "We provided them with a place to work, helped them in every way but they broke many of their promises" (Interview, 1989), was a typical comment of Cooperative members. They also said things like: "they [the Agency/CHF] used us a lot at the beginning then they dropped us when they did not need us any longer" (Interview, 1989). They explained how they were always told they were the best community that the Project had worked in, but then in the end all the other communities got better deals.

The relationship between the Cooperative and the Club, which had always been conflictive, was left even further damaged by the Project. This was the result of the Project singling out the Cooperative as its headquarters as well as later using the already existing competition between the two leadership to keep the Cooperative in check. This, it seemed, was very much a strategy the Agency employed to maintain its powerful position during the Project process.

Another major criticism about the Project that the Cooperative members agreed on was that the Project "killed" community mobilisation. They said that before the Project, people were always willing to participate in doing things for the community. The major examples given as proof of community initiative was the financing and construction of both the Club and the Cooperative buildings. "Now when we ask the people for financial or other kinds of contribution, they say "let the Americans do it", a Cooperative member said.

In terms of the community members, most resented what was seen as neglect on the part of the Government, and in this particular case, the Agency, of their needs and interests. They felt they never got any services from Government and always had to resort to their own resources to make the area habitable. Most had very little notion about what the

Upgrading project in its entirety was all about. Only those who were involved in the Loan Programme and those who were seeking land tenure, knew to varying degrees of the existence of a project that was implemented by a government agency, ie, the Agency. Those who took loans saw the Agency and GOE in general as making profits out of the poor. They complained that the interest were too high and often brought up the issue of interest as a sign of defiance to religion, 'something the Americans can impose, but a Muslim Government should never accept'. Land tenure and the difficulties they faced, was blamed on a '...greedy Government that is trying to make a profit out of the pockets of the poor'. The

renters saw the project as an example of the '...alliance that always exists between the haves and the have nots'. The alliance here was perceived to be between the Government, the landlords, and the Cooperative members (the latter groups mostly seen to be Arabs) on the one hand and the renters (mostly newcomers) on the other.

Therefore, overall, the impact of the Project on Rashed, was to widen the already existing splits and often exploitative relationships between and among community organisations and community members. The split was broadly between 'Arabs', landlords and Cooperative on the one hand and 'newcomers', renters, the Youth Club on the other. Since the majority of Arabs are landlords they were able to get

the most out of the Project. The Cooperative, which is dominated by Arabs, were in support of this process. Since the Club was marginalised during the Project process, 'newcomers' had no channels of representation.

Therefore, while the Project was meant to meet the housing needs of whole communities, the failure to recognise social diversity resulted in the exclusion of some groups. At best they were marginalised, at worst they were left worse off. The Project's impact on the housing market resulted in tenants having to pay higher rents, and/or suffering harassment from landlords, and in some cases losing their homes. They were the major losers in the Upgrading component of the Project.

## REFERENCES

- Abu Lughod, Janet (1977), Third World Urbanisation, Chicago: Maaroufa Press
- Chubb, Judith (1982), Patronage, Power and Poverty in Southern Italy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Daef, M. Ayman (1986), "Impact of Open Door Policy On Public Services in Urban Egypt", Unpublished Msc Thesis, London: Development Planning Unit (UCL)
- EQI (1986), "Squatter Areas in Cairo", Cairo: Environment Quality Control EQI)
- "Evaluation of Upgrading Construction" (1987), Prepared by C. Banes and P. Gabele, Cairo: CHF
- "Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading for Low Income Egyptians: Mid-Project Evaluation of the Community Upgrading Component-USAID Project 263-0066"(1984), Cairo: Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF)
- Hopwood, D. (1982), Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1990, London: Harper Collins Academic
- "Mid-term Evaluation of Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading for Low Income Egyptians" (1984), Cairo: CHF
- Mayo, S., Malpezzi, S. and Gross, D. (1986), "Shelter Strategies for the Urban Poor in Developing Countries", The World Bank Research Observer, Vol. 1, No. 2
- Moser, C. (1989), "Community Participation in Urban Projects in the Third World", in Progress and Planning, No. 32, Part 2.
- Nathan, Robert (1982), "Housing and Community Upgrading for Low-Income Egyptians: Final Evaluation Report", Prepared by RRNA Consulting Economists, Cairo: USAID
- Oldheim, Linda et al (1987), "Informal Communities in Cairo: The Basis for a Typology", in Cairo Papers in Social Science, Vol. 10, Monograph 4, Cairo: the American University in Cairo
- Omar, Hala (1988), "Housing, Services and Integration: The foothold of a Squatter Settlement, Unpublished MA Thesis, Cairo: American University in Cairo
- Paul, S (1987), "Community Participation in Developing Projects: the World Bank Experience", World Bank Discussion Papers, No. 6, Washington
- "Project Completion Report (PCR): Housing and Community Upgrading of Low Income Egyptians" (1988), Cairo: CHF-USAID
- "Project Paper: Egypt-Housing and Community Upgrading"(1978), Cairo: USAID
- "Project Paper Excerpts on Community Upgrading" (1987), Cairo: USAID
- Taher, Nadia (1986), "Social Identity and Class in a Cairo Neighbourhood", in Cairo Papers in Social Sciences, Vol. 9, Monograph 4, Cairo: The American University Cairo Press
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1997), "Foreign Aid and Power: the Government of Egypt, USAID and Housing in Helwan", Unpublished PhD dissertation, London: LSE.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **THE LOCATION OF HELWAN IN THE GREATER CAIRO AREA**

## APPENDIX 2

### OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT COMPONENTS OF THE HELWAN PROJECT

The project objectives as they appear in the project paper include a series of overall objectives, policy objectives and working objectives. The following is a summary of the key objectives:

- (1) To enhance the ability of the entire Egyptian housing sector to respond to shelter and community needs of the urban population, particularly for low income households [overall objective].
- (2) To reduce public sector housing subsidies by scaling standards of plot size, infrastructure, house construction, and by seeking cost recovery from the target group according to their ability to pay [policy and working objective].
- (3) To mobilise private resources for improving existing housing stock by providing home improvement loans; to encourage such investment by legalising informal areas through the process of survey, subdivision, recordation and sale of titles to residents [policy and working objective].

(PCR, CHF, 1988).

## APPENDIX 3

### THE PROJECT COMPONENTS AS PLANNED IN 1978

#### Upgrading

Upgrading of seven existing communities with an estimated population of 110,000.

#### Services provided

1. Sewage
2. Water
3. Schools
4. Community centres
5. Home Improvement Loans
6. Small Enterprise Loans

#### Helwan New Community

The development of Helwan New community (HNC) divided into ten neighbourhoods.

#### Services provided

1. Sewage
2. Water
3. Electricity
4. Schools
5. Community centre
6. Health Centre

### The Project as Implemented After its Official Completion Date in 1988

#### Upgrading

Water and sewage pipes installed but sewage not operating.

#### Helwan New Community

##### A. Sites-and-Services

Infrastructure installed but only two of ten nbs were sold as plots.

All buildings finalised except for a number of centres.

##### B. 'Public Housing' flats

Five of the remaining eight neighbourhoods were constructed as three floor flats.

## IDENTIFICATION OF ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

### A. Policy-implementation level:

#### The Egyptian side:

Central Government

Ministry of Housing  
Egyptian Agency for Joint Projects

Local Government

Cairo Governorate  
Sectoral agencies

Private sector

Construction Contractors

#### The American side:

Congress  
USAID  
Consultancy firms  
Design and infrastructure contractors

### B. Community-Target group level:

#### The upgrading communities:

Traditional leadership  
'Young' leadership

Arabs (bedouins)  
Migrants from Upper Egypt  
Migrants from lower Egypt  
Cairenes

Home owners  
Renters

#### The inhabitants of the public housing flats

#### The inhabitants of Sites-and-Services