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## The Money of Qaroon and the Patience of Ayoub: Women and Land in Egypt's Mubarak Resettlement Scheme

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Graduate Program in Anthropology  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy  
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THE MONEY OF QAROON AND THE PATIENCE OF  
AYOUB: WOMEN AND LAND IN EGYPT'S MUBARAK  
RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Dina Najjar

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
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## Abstract

This dissertation addresses the challenge of achieving increased empowerment and equality for Egyptian women. The dissertation tests the assumption that land access (through both joint and full titles) increases empowerment and equality for women in two desert resettlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq, part of the massive Mubarak Resettlement Scheme (MRS). In particular, the dissertation identifies: 1) how land access could empower Egyptian women and 2) women's experiences with land access in the MRS. Findings reveal that land access is indeed the most promising route for women's advancement in life, but the desert land required patience and financial assets. Land access, however, is not ubiquitously empowering as has been argued by many scholars. The dissertation showed, for example, that joint titles did not increase women's ability to overcome inequalities. Women landholders of both title types experienced resistance from government officials and family members to capture opportunities provided to them through land access. The dissertation asserts that inequalities and injustices are reproduced in the MRS. Women landholders and other poor settlers were provided with the most marginal lands in the MRS and had to endure inadequate planning, limited access to basic services, and empty promises. Settlers, including women, resisted government's weak policies by covert (rumours, gossip, and passive non-compliance) and overt ways (open protest and defiance), increasingly after the Revolution of January 25. In response, the state participated in settlers' resistance, turned a blind eye to it, or legalized it to generate profit and please the angry crowds. The study confirms an interdependent household model for Egyptian families. Women did not aspire to opt outside their households, as has been advocated for by many scholars; rather, women landholders aimed to provide for their husbands and children. Long term sustainability of women's access to land is seriously challenged by women landholders' plans to bequest property mostly to their sons. The study also highlights the importance of relying on site-specific and locally relevant scientific knowledge for farming marginal lands, which is common to many parts of the world due to population pressures. Provision of land to women has the potential to be empowering, provided that policymakers also consider gender relations, land subjectivities, micro-credit, marketing, scientific research in desert conditions, adherence to promised policies, and patriarchy. In analyzing planners' agendas and officials'

implementation through the lens of local women's experiences, this study opens up new ways to systemically understand the links among empowerment, gender, and land access in the Middle East.

## **Keywords**

Mubarak Resettlement Scheme; Egypt; neoliberalism; state planning; poverty alleviation; desert farming; rural economics; scientific knowledge in development; women and land rights; women's empowerment; gender relations; structural inequalities; resistance; Revolution of January 25

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this thesis to the brave men and women who have died for “bread, freedom, and social justice” since January 2011.*

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## List of Acronyms

ARC	Agricultural Research Centre
AUC	American University in Cairo
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
DDC	Desert Development Center at the American University in Cairo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GARPAR	General Authority for Reconstruction Projects and Agricultural Reclamation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRS	Graduate Resettlement Scheme
GWL	Graduate Women Landholders
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAC	Local Agricultural Cooperative
LDU	Local Development Unit
LRS	Land Reclamation Sector
MALR	Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation
MIC	Ministry of International Cooperation
MWRI	Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation
MRS	Mubarak Resettlement Scheme
NEF	Near East Foundation
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

SRC	Social Research Center, American University in Cairo
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHH	Women Head of Household
WL	Women Heads of Households Landholders

## List of Arabic Terms

<i>'Aadi</i>	Normal/Common
<i>'Abaya</i>	Loose dress worn by women
<i>'Aish</i>	Bread. In Upper Egypt, women bake <i>'aish shamsi</i> , or sun bread, which is left to ferment under the sun
<i>'Amal</i>	Hex/Curse
<i>Ayoub</i>	Job, a prophet from the Bible or Quran
<i>Baytar</i>	Small/Individual diesel pump
<i>Berseem</i>	Alfalfa, animal fodder. <i>Berseem</i> is of two kinds: annual, <i>Baladi</i> , and perennial, <i>Hijazi</i>
<i>Borka'</i>	Cloth that covers a Muslim woman's face, usually black in color
<i>Dora</i>	Term used by one wife to describe another woman to whom her husband is married
<i>Feddan</i>	Unit of area measurement used in Syria and Egypt equivalent to 1.038 acres. <i>Feddans</i> will be reported as acres for simplification purposes
<i>Fellahin</i>	Farmers
<i>Ghafeer</i>	A person employed for attending to the entrance of a building or house
<i>Haram</i>	Forbidden, what conflicts with the rules set down in the Quran
<i>Il Hajja</i>	A term used to refer to an elderly woman out of respect; but typically means a woman who went on pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Infitah Policy</i>	Open door policy
<i>Jarjeer</i>	Green, leafy vegetable
<i>Karkadeh</i>	Hibiscus flower cultivated for tea
<i>Kelelah</i>	Type of fruit marketing whereby the purchaser is responsible for picking and transporting the crop
<i>Kharigeen</i>	High school, technical college, and university graduates
<i>Kholo'</i>	A type of divorce whereby a woman can divorce her husband without needing his permission

<i>Kima</i>	Brand of fertilizer produced in Upper Egypt
<i>Lib Jermah</i>	A type of pumpkin cultivated for harvesting its seeds
<i>Majlis 'Orfi</i>	Local council involved in resolving problems and disputes
<i>Mo'dameen</i>	The destitute/The landless
<i>Molokhia</i>	Green, leafy vegetable
<i>Montafi'een</i>	Beneficiaries
<i>Mostathmireen</i>	Entrepreneurs, private investors
<i>Motadarireen</i>	Farmers who lost their land access due to Tenancy Law 96 of 1992
<i>Nafaqa</i>	Monetary allowance
<i>Nouh</i>	Noah, a prophet from the Bible
<i>'Orfi Marriage</i>	Unregistered marriage
<i>Radmiya</i>	A layer of soil or gravel or both covering the ground to prevent or overcome water-logging
<i>Ray raha</i>	Irrigation by gravity
<i>Riba</i>	A punishment from God; but typically means an interest rate on borrowed money that is considered <i>haram</i>
<i>Sadaqa</i>	Charity
<i>Satitha</i>	Cloistering a woman by mediating her connections with the outside world, such as grocery shopping
<i>Shader</i>	Shop selling agricultural produce
<i>Shari'a</i>	Islamic law based on the Quran
<i>Sheeh</i>	A plant belonging to the <i>Artemesia</i> genus and common in the Sinai desert. It is often used as a pest repellent
<i>Sol</i>	A spirit in human form
<i>Tahrir</i>	Liberation
<i>Tafla</i>	In the Sa'yda settlement, this term means an impermeable sub-surface layer, reported to be clay. <i>Tafla</i> originally referred to clayey soil that inundated the plains during the Nile flood seasons prior to the construction of the Aswan High Dam

<i>Tamkeen</i>	Enablement. <i>Tamkeen</i> is the Arabic translation for empowerment
<i>Tresha</i>	The horned viper/Snake
<i>Zimam</i>	An area under the jurisdiction of a government body

## Chapter 1

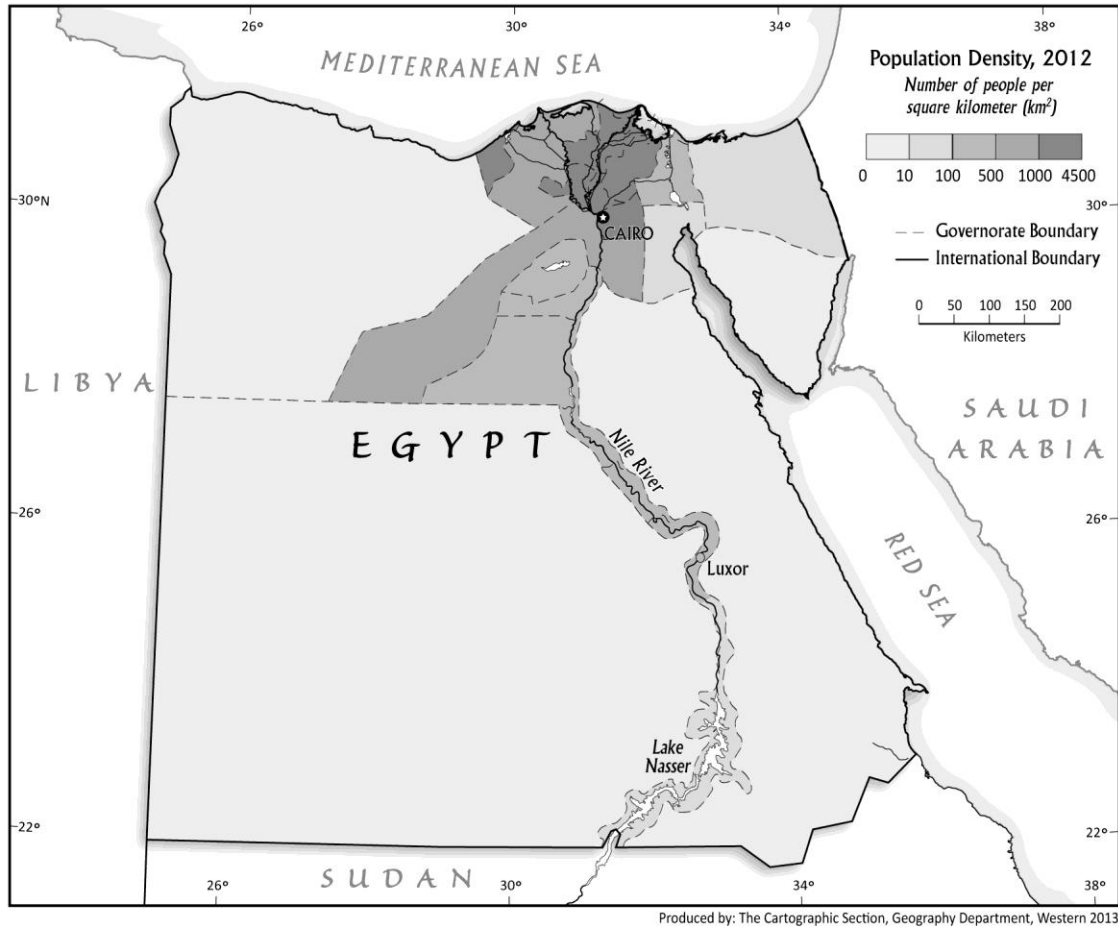
### 1 Introducing the Context

In this Chapter, I will introduce the history of land reclamation in Egypt, describing the policies that guided reclamation projects in relevant eras and the political economic context. I will also examine problems with land reclamation and their consequences. I then move to look at women in land reclamation, with a particular focus on the Mubarak Resettlement Scheme (MRS) (type and percentage of women settlers who accessed land), and more broadly women's contribution to agriculture in Egypt. Finally, I examine the impacts of the Revolution of 2011 on land reclamation projects, agricultural policies, and the social and economic situation more generally.

#### 1.1 Political Economy of Land Reclamation

Egypt's economic development is often framed as a "problem of geography versus demography" or of "environmental determinism" and is usually conceived in an illustrative map depicting a thin green strip and the Nile Delta with an exploding population, growing at a rate of 2%, surrounded by vast desert land (Mitchell 2002: 209; Bush 2007: 1610). Since the postcolonial era, maps of Egypt are often used by the Egyptian government and development agencies as compelling proof of the fact that only 4-6% of the Egyptian land mass is occupied by 85 million people (Figure 1). Egyptians are also described as having one of the lowest ratios of agricultural land per capita in the world (Mitchell 2002: 209-213; United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 2010: 4; Biswas 1993a: 556; Sowers 2011: 162). It is no surprise, then, that expansion into desert land for its cultivation and habitation has been a policy priority since 1952 up to the current time (Meyer 1998, Sowers 2011: 160). An exploding population on limited arable land, or Old Lands, has often guided the planning for desert reclamation to create what is called the New Lands (Voll 1980; Barnes 2012; Lonergan and Wolf 2001; Wichelns 2002) (see Figure 2). Many scholars, however, argue that Egypt's real problems are engrained in unequal access to national resources and a lack of focus on social problems in policy-making combined with a faulty belief in privatization and cultivation of non-food export crops as a solution to all ailments (Bush 2000; Mitchell 2002).

In total, gradual land reclamation in the past 50 years has increased Egypt's cultivatable land by more than three million acres (Barnes 2012: 518). Egypt farms 8.6 million acres. Reclaimed land contributes to a third of the cultivated land (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2002). But despite the increase in cultivable area, the contribution of the agriculture sector to the Egyptian economy drastically declined over time due to neglect (Hopkins and Westergaard 1998: 4; Bush 2007: 1693). The economy instead depended on oil, rents from the Suez Canal, and remittances (Bush 2007: 1603). In 1974, agriculture accounted for 30% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 25% of exports, and 47% of employment (Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 128). By the early 1990s, agriculture contributed to 20% of the GDP and 20% of commodity exports, employing 36% of the labour force (Bromley and Bush 1994: 207). More recently, under the direction of structural adjustment policies, agriculture contributes to 14% of the GDP and employs 29% of the labour force (USAID 2010: 4).



**Figure 1 Population map of Egypt**

**Sources:** Map based on 2012 Egyptian Census Data.

## 1.2 Prominent Early Land Reclamation

Land reclamation<sup>1</sup>, or bringing previously infertile lands into cultivation, was notable with Muhammad Ali, an Ottoman viceroy, as early as the early 1800s, particularly in the Nile Delta region (Allan 1983). Areas reclaimed in the first five decades of the Nineteenth Century were clayey, saline, and waterlogged, which required expensive drainage and irrigation. To encourage reclamation of these areas, which was only possible for those with resources, Muhammad Ali provided land titles to entrepreneurs, including European

<sup>1</sup> Barnes (2013: 267) notes that land reclamation is a misnomer because desert lands are not reclaimed from a lost state but are instead brought into agricultural production.



capitalists and affiliated Egyptian families (Allan 1983: 475-476). As such, most of the newly reclaimed lands were concentrated in the hands of this small elite. The purpose was to generate income through the export of cotton and sugarcane crops (Allan 1983: 476; Sowers 2011: 159). Muhammad Ali depended on agriculture to finance other sectors, including the army and industry (Allan 1983: 476; Farah 2009: 26-27). He introduced the most comprehensive system to date for controlling water in the Delta, expanding cultivatable land by more than one million acres (Allan 1983: 471, 475).

Peasants had usufruct rights only and sold their cotton to the state at much lower than the market prices (Farah 2009: 26). The reclaimed land was most profitable when the American civil war during Khediva Ismai'l rule led to a boom in cotton export for Egypt, which financed urban development, aiming to transform Cairo into another Paris (Farah 2009: 27; Mitchell 2002). Upon the end of the American civil war, cotton exports were severely impacted, and Ismai'l had to take loans to complete his projects, where he also resorted to selling land for the Egyptian elite to repay his loans (Farah 2009: 27-28). A weakened, bankrupt Egypt allowed for a British intervention that sponsored further privatization of landownership for almost a century to come (Farah 2009: 28). When Egypt gained independence in 1922, the Egyptian landowners became the ruling elite and dominated Parliament, with peasants benefitting little from the resulting policies (Farah 2009: 29). By 1952, 0.1% of the population owned 20% of Egypt's cultivable land (Bush 2002: 8-9; Farah 2009: 29).

### **1.3 Reclamation during the Nasser Era**

The Revolution of 1952 was accomplished by a group of military officers headed by Nasser. The officers led attacks on British authorities in Egypt's main cities and on July 23, 1952 won power through a military coup. The Revolution resulted in a new constitution, ending King Farouq's Monarchy (a descendent of Muhammad Ali) and creating the Republic of Egypt, abolished the ruling elite, and ended British occupation. Nasser redistributed Egypt's lands to the landless and the poor. The Old Lands, however, were insufficient for Egypt's landless and growing population, which fueled expansion into desert lands (Voll 1980: 127). The construction of the High Aswan Dam allowed for storage of water in Lake Nasser for multiple uses including desert reclamation. Within two months of the 1952

Revolution, Nasser announced a plan to reclaim several million hectares of desert lands for distribution to the landless, most notably in the Tahrir province (reclaimed desert land), whose revolutionary name means ‘liberation’ (Meyer 1998: 337). These expansions into the New Lands were vigorous and comparable in determination, scale, and investment in resources to Muhammad Ali’s reclamation projects but for sandy, virgin desert lands (Allan 1983: 475).

Nasser’s political alliances were guided by pan-Arabism. He supported the Palestinian cause of ending the Israeli occupation. He created alliances with Arab leaders in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. He nationalized all French and British holdings, such as the tobacco industry and the Suez Canal. His nationalization of Suez Canal led to the withdrawal of US funding to complete the canal, and Nasser eventually replaced this aid with Soviet aid. He grew popular in the Arab world among the youth and older generations, most notably in the pan-Arab ‘Nasserist Party’. In 1958, Nasser established a union with Syria, The United Arab Republic that lasted only until 1961. Nasser is criticised for being a dictator who imprisoned opponents, such as members of the Communist Party and Islamic Brotherhood. His autocratic rule is often characterized by top-down planning and a general lack of democracy. Bush (2007: 1601) argues that, while Nasser suppressed political participation by both the middle class and the poor, the trade-off came in the form of basic services and better living standards.

From 1952 until 1970, Nasser implemented broad nationalization plans for Egypt’s cultivatable areas and redistributed land to the families of the landless rural population. Nasser made land access more equitable by imposing land ceilings, redistributing the excess land to the rural landless, and reclaiming desert lands on the fringe zones of the Old Lands in a series of land reform laws in the 1950s and 1960s (Meyer 1998: 334; Farah 2009: 32). In 1952, for example, the share of the large landowners dropped down from 20% of the total land to only 6% (Farah 2009: 32). Land in the desert and elsewhere was mainly provided to the landless rural population, as well as to those dispossessed by the building of the Aswan High Dam, particularly the Nubians (Meyer 1998: 337; Voll 1980: 134; Fahim 1983).

The originally landless settlers were called the Beneficiaries, *Al Muntafi’een*, and constituted the majority of the participants in the newly reclaimed lands. Funding for the

Tahrir province project was to be provided from the sale of royal properties and ongoing profits generated by gradual reclamation (Voll 1980: 130). Settlers were chosen after psychological and medical tests and were subjected to rigorous training in hygiene, religion, and physical exercise to achieve a 'modern mentality' (Sowers 2011: 166-167; Voll 1980: 129).

Training was gendered in nature. Men were trained to work in the fields (Warriner 1962: 51). Women, on the other hand, did not work in the fields, but their training constituted working on dairy farms and receiving general instructions in child and house care, including cooking, knitting, and sewing (Warriner 1962: 51). Land was farmed cooperatively in large parcels (Voll 1980: 129). Nasser introduced agricultural cooperatives into the New Lands, which, as in the Old Lands, oversaw agricultural marketing, crop rotations, extension services, and agricultural subsidies (Voll 1980: 130). During Nasser rule, cooperatives were aligned with state policy, increased in number, and thrived, as they became mandatory to join for landholders and a prerequisite for accessing loans (Abdel Aal 1998: 280). State appointed officials replaced large landowners in cooperatives, imposed cropping patterns, and provided credit and farm inputs (Bush 2007: 1601).

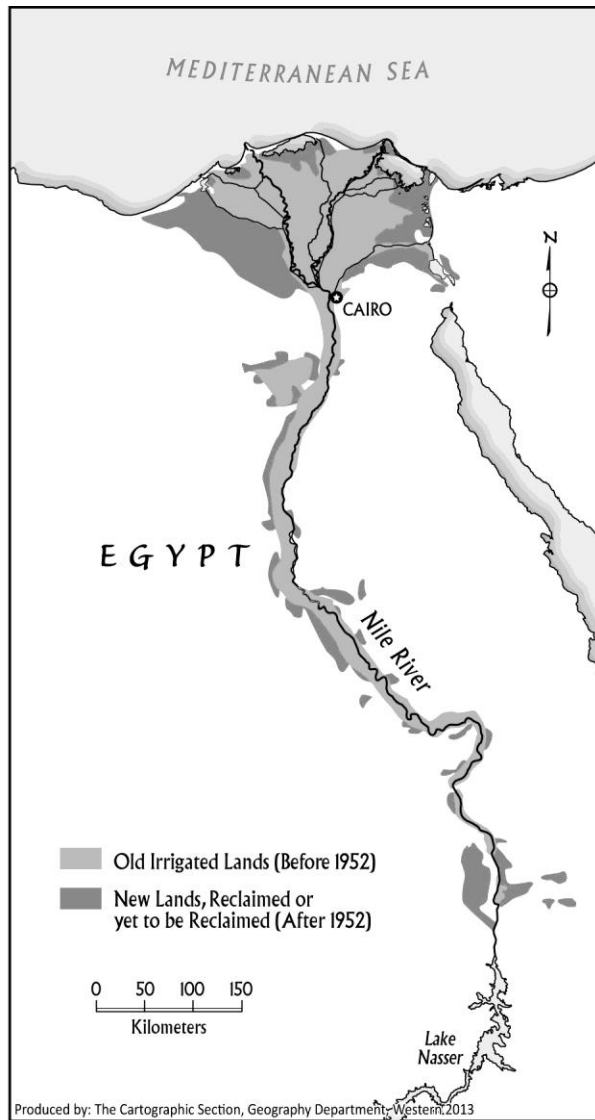
A smaller reclamation project was launched by the American Rural Improvement Services Organization in 1953 to be replicated in other reclamation projects, which was funded by both the United Arab Republic (the union that existed at that time between Egypt and Syria) and the USA (Voll 1980: 130). A model settlement consisted of a central administrative village surrounded by satellite villages that provided housing; cooperatives that provided marketing, technical services, and extension education, in addition to farming inputs; houses of concrete and brick; and associated public services (Voll 1980: 130). Model communities were established and replicated throughout the reclaimed areas (Voll 1980: 130; Sowers 2011: 166-167).

Nasser's reclamation plans, however, were hindered by the war against Israel in 1956 and by an overwhelming perception of limited profitability from cultivating the desert. Although land reclamation picked up speed upon the completion of the High Aswan Dam in the 1960s, by the 1970s only 380,000 hectares were reclaimed; however, the original plan was to reclaim millions of hectares (Meyer 1998: 337; Voll 1980: 131-132). Sowers (2011:

167) notes that by 1967, land reclamation was largely abandoned during Nasser era due to the fact that only 47% of reclaimed lands were under cultivation. These reclaimed areas were at the fringe zones of the Nile Valley and Delta, mostly in the Western Delta area (Figure 2) (Meyer 1998: 337; Sowers 2011: 164). In general, Nasser emphasized social welfare and national sufficiency in food production (Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 128). Under his rule, agricultural production increased. He introduced ration cards in 1966 for families' access to subsidized food items, the quantity of which was determined by the size of the family and included bread, flour, sugar, edible oil, and kerosene (Abdel-Latif and El-Laithy 1996: 298-299).

Not all farmers were provided with land ownership in the reclaimed desert areas. Some newly landed farmers paid rent to the original landowners, and others to the state. After realizing that even reclaimed land was insufficient for the landless population, many of the state farms were leased in five acre plots for three years of renewable rent contracts (Voll 1980: 136, 144). The rent prices for all agricultural land and real estate were set at low prices (Farah 2009: 35). Rent contracts were inheritable and effectively ownership contracts. Owners could not sell their land unless provided with permission from the renter, who was entitled to 50% of the sale (Farah 2009:35). Renters could not be evicted unless they did not pay their rent (USAID 2010).

During the late stages of Nasser's regime in 1965, the government focused on land reclamation to increase government revenue, foreign exchange, and national income by creating state farms, which were also leased, rather than sold, to small holder farmers (Voll 1980: 137). The belief was that there was not enough land to provide to individual farmers and that a focus should be rather placed on state farms that would make use of the economies of scale and increase national revenue (Voll 1980: 137). Using Soviet funding and expertise, the Nubariya project was initiated as a state farm model and training center for other similar projects (Voll 1980: 137). The project focused on mechanization of farms and emphasized high value crops like citrus, grapes, and livestock production (Voll 1980: 136-137). A few large state farms, along Soviet lines, adjoining the Western Delta were built, which operated at a modest profit (Meyer 1998: 331). A few of these state farms failed due to waterlogging and/or mismanagement (Meyer 1998; Voll 1980).



**Figure 2 Old and New Lands before and after 1952.**

**Source:** Modified from Meyer (1998: 336).

## 1.4 Reclamation during the Al Sadat Era

Al Sadat was Nasser's Vice President for about a decade. Upon Nasser's death, he ascended to the presidency of Egypt in the early 1970s. Al Sadat had ambitious desert reclamation plans, which accelerated under his direction (Sukkary-Stolba 1985: 183; Meyer 1998: 334). In 1978, in response to an increase in agricultural exports, Al Sadat proclaimed a 'Green Revolution' that entailed an increase in Egypt's cultivated land by 50%, 1.2 million hectares by the year 2000 (Meyer 1998: 334). Al Sadat, as opposed to Nasser, had privatization plans. He declared an *infitah*, open door, policy in 1974 that stipulated private investment and privatization of state property (Meyer, 1998: 337).

After two decades of strict regulations for foreign investments and imports, Al Sadat's *infitah* policy set the stage for liberalization (Mitchell 2002: 211; Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 128). *Infitah* opened the door for private land reclamation projects (Meyer 1998: 331). During the same time, and along the same lines, the International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) loans involved neoliberal and structural adjustment policies starting in the 1970s (Mitchell 2002: 223-234). As opposed to Nasser, who believed in social equality for solving poverty, Al Sadat believed in neoliberalism, a market-oriented solution out of poverty (Harvey 2005). Private companies and investors from the Arab Gulf, Europe, and the US were allowed to reclaim and buy desert land. The government also reclaimed land for sale to private investors, as well as for its own management (Meyer 1998: 337). This new category of private investors is referred to as *Al Mostathmireen*, the Entrepreneurs.

Although Al Sadat initiated liberalization of the Egyptian economy, he also focused on social welfare, most notably on achieving food security through land reclamation (Voll 1980: 142). Sadat reduced the role of agricultural cooperatives and transferred much of their responsibilities to the newly established village banks (Abdel Aal 1998: 281). Al Sadat also distributed desert land to *Al Khirigeen*, Graduates, who were mostly men and agricultural high school or university graduates, perceived as the foundation of agricultural development (Sukkary-Stolba 1985: 183; Mansour and Ismail 1993: 445; Ghanam 1990). High school and university graduates were provided with 10 or 20 acres, respectively, which were purchased from the government using long-term credit as a solution to the mandatory hiring of graduates (Voll 1980: 146).

Al Sadat, initially in the early 1970s, upgraded the rations of the card subsidization system, introduced by Nasser, to include larger portions and other commodities, such as tea, pasta, and rice, and subsidized bread was sold in specific outlets (Abdel-Latif and El-Laithy 1996: 298-299). His plans, however, in 1977 to end subsidies on basic foodstuffs largely failed with massive protests, termed the ‘Bread Riots’, across the country that led to many deaths, and ended with the reinstatement of the subsidies (Bush 2000).

The oil boom in the 1970s led to increased consumption in wheat in addition to meat and dairy production, increasing grain imports (Mitchell 2002: 215). Grain imports eventually put Egypt into massive debt in the 1970s (Mitchell 2002: 216). By 1974, Egypt was the world’s third largest importer of grain (Bush 2007: 1603). The United States, as a condition for re-financing, imposed changes in agricultural production from staple crops to export production. As a result, Egypt’s agricultural production further shifted away from grain production (Mitchell 2002: 217). International policies and the local elite changed the country’s priority to cultivating crops that fed cattle and poultry for the consumption of the elite and increased grain imports, particularly wheat (the staple of the poor), contributing to debt and food insecurity. Mitchell (2002: 223-234) explains how Egypt’s debt further increased by IFI’s funding of mechanization programs in the 1970s that increased Egypt’s debt and benefited machinery manufacturers abroad rather than the farmers. During the Sadat era, Egypt’s debt increased by \$25 billion, from \$5 billion at the end of the Nasser era to \$30 billion by 1981 (Bush 2007: 1603).

## **1.5 Reclamation during the Mubarak Era**

Starting in 1981, Hosni Mubarak became Egypt’s president. In 1986, land distribution became inclusive to all graduates from all kinds of high school programs (manufacturing, agriculture, arts, and commerce) and university faculties (Meyer 1998: 345) in what was known as the Mubarak National Resettlement Scheme for the Graduates (MRS) and more recently, due to the 2011 Revolution-induced ban on the use of the name Mubarak, as the Graduate Resettlement Scheme (GRS) (Figure 3). Only 30%-40% of the graduates, however, were involved in farming their lands and relocated with their families (Meyer 1998: 345; Sukkary-Stolba 1985: 183). Many remained in cities due to their lack of agricultural knowledge and opted to look for other jobs (Meyer 1998: 346).

Israel's support of the MRS in the Western Delta, in particular, was generous and widely advertised. This support was grounded in actualizing the Peace Treaty signed by Sadat in 1979 through agricultural cooperation (Adriansen 2009: 672). Furthermore, IFAD, Danida, USAID, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) all eagerly funded many of the MRS training and development programs, especially in the Western Delta, in hopes of fostering peace in the Middle East (Adriansen 2009: 672). Agricultural engineers and extension personnel from all over Egypt were funded by both Israel and development agencies to visit Israel on educational trips in modern irrigation and agricultural production. The State of Israel has extensive expertise in desert reclamation and cultivation.

Under the MRS, women were provided with unprecedented access to land (Adriansen 2009) due to international pressures. Since the onset of the MRS in 1986, women accessed distributed land as Graduates. By signing international treaties and due to an overwhelming dependency on aid from donor agencies and countries that advocated gender equality, the Mubarak regime was pressured to reduce gender inequalities by, for example, providing women with increased access to resources (Salime 2010; Sholkamy 2012). In 1992, the gender component in the selection criteria for land access in the MRS was cancelled to allegedly reduce gender discrimination (Vice Head of the Land Reclamation Sector (LRS), pers. comm.).

Over the years, the MRS added several categories to its programs' beneficiaries during its five phases (from 1996 until 2004), most notably the special Social Categories, which included the Women Heads of Households (WHHs), Early Retirees, and the Destitute (Table 2). Settlers were attracted by the subsidized terms for land and housing access (Meyer 1998). Many settlers of the MRS received food aid from the World Food Program (WFP) for four years, theoretically until their lands started producing, and were provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) with a sum of money for their first cultivation, as well as a monthly income of 50 EL (Vice Head of the LRS, 2010, pers. comm.; Meyer 1998: 345; Bush 2002: 25). The land would be taken away if left fallow (Bush 2002: 25).



The land was provided based on a mortgage loan to be paid over 10-30 years depending on the settler category (see Table 16). Until the mortgage is completely paid, settlers had usufruct rights over the land but not ownership rights. The government owns the land until all land payments are complete. As such, settlers could not rent, bequest, or sell their lands. Upon the completion of the first 15 installments, an Interim Land Ownership Contract is issued. The 'Interim Land Contract' basically stipulates that settlers cannot sell or rent their lands, but they must farm their lands or face eviction. They also must abide by the rules and policies set forth by the state, such as rules that outline irrigation methods and crop specifications.

In 1998, WHHs were given land in four 'Widow<sup>2</sup> Villages' (two in the Wadi Al Sa'yda settlement, one in Bashayer Al Kheir settlement, and one in a Suez desert settlement). Many government sectors offered an early retirement for their employees in exchange for land to solve the problem of unemployment and open new opportunities for new hires. The Destitute, those who own no property and lack employment, were provided with land for eradicating poverty throughout Egypt's 26 governorates. Other categories for settlement included the armed forces (see Table 2). Since 1952, armed forces personnel have been historically entitled to reclaimed land as rewards for their involvement in the Israeli war or more generally for their services to the country (Meyer 1998; Voll 1980; Vice Head of the LRS, 2010, pers. comm.). Furthermore, the military personnel are of the ruling elite in Egypt. Mitchell (2002) argues that USAID funding for desert reclamation was channeled, for the most part, to the military. The Oweinat project (part of the Toshka project), for an example, was a desert reclamation project implemented with the help of the military's machinery (Sowers 2011: 166).

The Evicted Tenants, who were originally given land under the Nasser regime through an Agrarian Reform Law No. 178 of 1952, require special attention. In an effort to have the free market determine rent prices, many of the original landowners via Law 96 of 1992 were given back their lands, which Nasser had seized for the landless peasants. Rent

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<sup>2</sup> Widows refer to not only widowed women but also the divorced and those who are an only child responsible for their parents.

prices went up by at least 15-fold and about one million peasants, who were farming 23.7% of Egypt's cultivable land, lost their land (Bush 2002: 18; Saad 2000: 24). Counting their family members, these farmers who lost their access to land constituted 10% of the Egyptian population (Bush 2007: 1606). Only 1.5% of the evicted farmers were provided with land access in the desert despite the government making it seem as if all evicted tenants would be compensated with desert land (Saad 2000).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, to benefit from debt write-offs and to gain more loans, which were both conditioned on the adoption of neoliberal and structural adjustment policies, Mubarak exercised a policy termed the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme (Bromley and Bush 1994: 203). Structural adjustment policies deregulate, privatize, increase export production, and remove trade barriers to foster a more market-oriented economy guided by the private sector (Harvey 2005). The Mubarak government, starting in the mid-1980s, adopted deregulation of agriculture by selling state land and gradually removing previously imposed crop rotations, pricing, plantation quotas, and marketing restrictions (Mitchell 2002; Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 127; Bush 2007: 1603-1604). For example, state farms in the desert lands, which often operated at only modest revenue or at a loss, were privatized (Meyer 1998: 334). Increased foreign debts in agriculture and from other sectors (such as health care) limited benefits from new loans taken under the structural adjustment policies, and the oil crisis in 1985 made it difficult for Egypt to repay its loans. This forced Egypt to become more involved in export production to generate revenue (Mitchell 2002: 223-234).

Structural adjustment policies did little to solve problems of agriculture, particularly those related to soil salinity and waterlogging (Bush 2000). These two agricultural problems are largely a result of perennial irrigation after the building of the high Aswan Dam. They are considered the most important factors affecting agricultural production in Egypt (Ayubi 1993: 133-134). Structural adjustment policies have also failed to solve social problems for farmers. In fact, the social wellbeing of farmers has diminished with unprecedented rates of poverty, inequality, unemployment, landlessness, repression, and food insecurity (Bush 2000, 2002, 2007; Bromley and Bush 1994; Mitchell 2002).

The government removed its support for unprofitable services (such as subsidization of fertilizers, pesticides, and low interest credit) and was to focus on profit-oriented agricultural production (Bush 1998, 2002, 2007). By 1992, all crop prices except for sugarcane, which remained under state control, became determined by a free market (Mitchell 2002: 249; Bush 2007: 1604). The idea was that deregulation of agriculture would encourage farmers to cultivate export crops, such as cotton, horticultural crops (or fruit trees), and vegetables, thereby generating profit for themselves and for the nation (Mitchell 2002: 252). The Mubarak government maintained its control over farmers through agricultural cooperatives that imposed crop rotations and facilitated the adoption of government policies more generally (Abdel Aal 1998: 281-282; Mitchell 2002).

Public enterprises were privatized leading to an increase in the prices of electricity, fertilizer, seeds, pesticides, and transport, as well as to deterioration in health care and other public services (Abdel-Latif and El-Laithy 1996: 314; Okonjo-Iwaela and Fuleihan 1993: 131). The price of fertilizers increased by sixteen-fold (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003: 144). On the other hand, the Egyptian state initiated a Social Fund for Development in 1991 to protect the poor from rapid economic reforms along with sustaining the subsidies program for basic foodstuffs, which was already in place since the Nasser era, and cash transfer programs provided by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (Bromley and Bush 1994: 204; Okonjo-Iwaela and Fuleihan 1993: 130-131; World Bank 2009:2). Although Mubarak did not end subsidies for foodstuffs, as Al Sadat attempted to do, subsidized bread and basic foodstuffs deteriorated in both quality and size (Mitchell 2002). Furthermore, by the early 1990s the privatization of 116 public enterprises led to a loss in jobs for 600,000 people, which was deemed a necessary step for improving efficiency (Abdel-Latif and El-Laithy 1996: 308). Between 1990 and 1995, the agriculture sector alone lost 700,000 jobs (Bush 2002: 16).

Since 1986, privatizing state land for commercial investors was also fiercely advocated by donor agencies, such as The World Bank and the USAID (Bromley and Bush 1994: 210). Large private investors were reluctant to buy state farm land due to the high expenses needed for installing drainage systems and upgrading into modern irrigation techniques, and also due failure in previous attempts by private investors to manage state farms (Meyer 1998: 343). Allan (1983: 477) reports that the failure of private agricultural companies (Egyptian and foreign) was attributed, for the most part, to the very high price of

land and to technological difficulties related to drainage and water supply. Crops grown then on these farms were wheat, barley, and fodder in the winter and maize and fodder in the summer. Apples, pears, grapes, figs, and olives were also commonly cultivated.

As a result of entrepreneurs' lack of interest in desert lands, most of the state farms were distributed to the farm workers according to their years of service and education for 1000 EL per acre over a thirty-year period (Meyer 1998: 342). In 1992, state farmlands were also sold in auctions to delta farmers who sold half an acre in the Old Lands for the same price of up to ten acres in the New Lands (Meyer 1998: 343). A few entrepreneurs from the Arab Gulf and wealthy migrants partnered with family enterprises, often living in Cairo and Alexandria, to operate desert-based farms, which were highly mechanized with American and European technology and supervised by Israeli experts (Meyer 1998: 346).

The MRS goals changed over time towards an increased focus on export production through the cultivation of desert lands (Adriansen 2009; Sowers 2011; Barnes 2012). Even during the onset of the MRS in 1986, lands with better access to water and closer to markets were sold and not distributed at subsidized prices to the categories of Graduates, Evicted Tenants, Social Categories, and Beneficiaries. All these categories accessed land and housing that were at the end of the water lines and farther from cities.

With the change in goals of the MRS the methods by which to achieve these goals had also changed. By the mid 1990s, the guaranteed employment policy was cancelled (Hassan and Sassanpour 2008: 2), meaning that providing graduates with land was no longer perceived as a necessary means for solving unemployment. In the late 2000s, the government strongly believed that the beneficiaries and graduates were inefficient desert reclamation agents, and since 2004 limited the distribution of reclaimed land to the entrepreneurs (Head of the LRS and his Vice Head, 2010-11, pers. comm.), most notably in the ambitious Toshka or New Valley and Sinai Peninsula reclamation projects. Only the Minister of Agricultural and Land Reclamation himself could provide land (or basically sell it to entrepreneurs). The massive reclamation projects aim at increasing Egypt's cultivable land by 3.4 million acres between 2000 and 2017 (Bush 2002: 24).

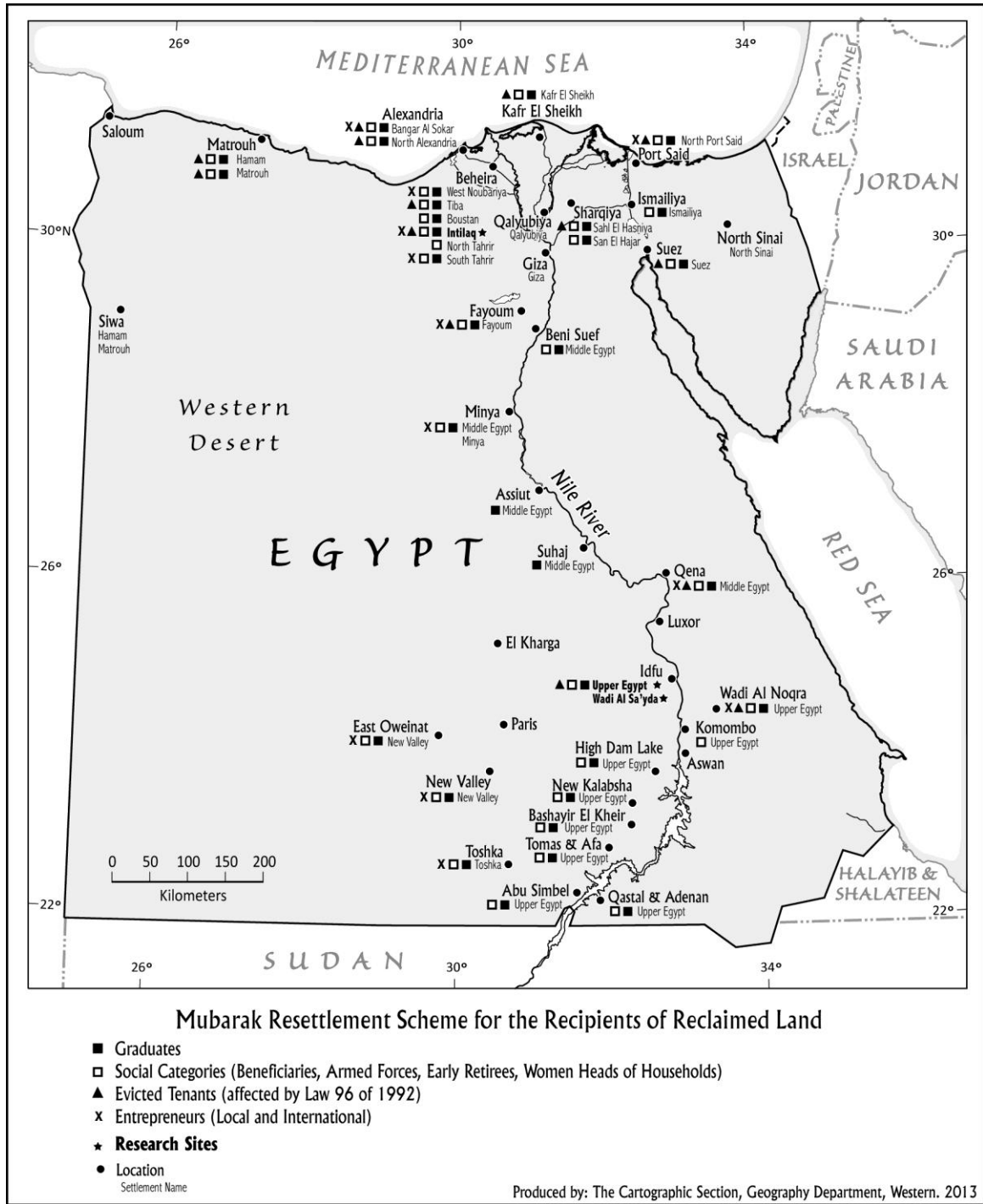
Many settlers were not able to relocate or to reach marginal productivity in the desert lands, due to problems described below. Entrepreneurs, such as Al Walid Bin Talal and Al

Rajhi, who have multiple enterprises and are thus able to absorb failures, were better able to invest in land reclamation, which often requires large sums of money and about three years to start producing crops. Meyer (1998) and Voll (1980: 146-147), however, stated that settlers' farms successfully absorbed the unemployed and contributed to profitable desert reclamation, comparable in yields to the Old Lands. Many officials reported that the entrepreneurs financing these projects would provide jobs to the unemployed graduates and better help the government achieve their desired growth in export production (Barnes 2012: 533; Head of the LRS, 2010, pers. comm.).

The Toshka project envisions building a parallel Nile from Lake Nasser in the Western Desert but also depends on aquifer or fossilized water for irrigation (Sowers 2011: 166; Voll 1980: 131). Although the proposal of the Toshka project was initiated during the Nasser era, it was then deemed unfeasible and uneconomical (Sowers 2011: 166; Voll 1980: 130). Because these new expansions are very costly and the projected export crops' water requirements tax Egypt's already depleted water allowance, many scholars argue that a more economical and profitable project would be a similar export- and horticultural-oriented focus, but in the Old Lands, in what is also referred to as a vertical expansion (Meyer 1998: 351-353; Voll 1980: 142; Wichelns 2003a: 55). Unable to convince the IFIs with the profitability of reclamation projects and thus secure funds from IFIs, the Egyptian state eventually financed the Toshka project by itself, building the pumping station and parts of the main irrigation canal (Mitchell 2002: 456; Bush 2007: 1610). The Egyptian government also sold 100,000 acres in Toshka to Al Walid Bin Talal, a Saudi prince, at very low prices to create and manage 'the world's largest farm' that would consume 1% of the Nile water (Mitchell 2002: 273-274). The Toshka project more generally is expected to use 10% of the Nile water (Bush 2007: 1611).

The growth in agricultural exports, however, was decreasing (Mitchell 2002: 456; Bush 2007). Instead, an astronomical growth in the real estate sector gained momentum through expansion into desert lands, making real estate the third most prominent sector in the Egyptian economy instead of agriculture (Mitchell 2002: 456). Instead of less state interference, as stipulated by structural adjustment, the Egyptian state assumed heavy subsidization for the real estate boom, for example, in the so called fiber optics city 'Dreamland' and apartment buildings in New Cairo (Mitchell 2002: 456-457).

Land reclamation has been prominent as early as the 1800s with Muhammad Ali, an Ottoman viceroy, to increase the area of land cultivated, fueling a cotton export production that benefitted the state and more or less enslaved farmers (see Table 1). Then, during the Nasser regime in the 1950s land reclamation actualized the revolutionary aspiration of providing land to the landless (see Table 1). In the 1970s, the aspiration for a new 'Green Revolution' fueled land reclamation projects which were distributed to agricultural graduates during the Al Sadat era (see Table 1). In the 1980s, the first beneficiaries of the MRS were the poor and the unemployed. Owing to international pressure, the MRS was expanded its settlers' categories from previous land reclamation programs to grant women land access. Since 2004, the program has shifted to providing land exclusively to entrepreneurs (see Table 1).



**Figure 3 Map of Egypt’s MRS Settlements with Research Sites.**

**Source:** Modified from a map of the MRS provided in Arabic by the Land Reclamation Sector (2010).

**Table 1 Political eras' main policies, corresponding settlers' categories, and funding.**

<b>Era</b>	<b>Major Policies</b>	<b>Categories of Settlers</b>	<b>Funding of Reclamation Projects</b>	<b>Extent of Liberalization</b>
Nasser 1952-1970	Imposed land ceilings  Initiated rental <i>Hiyaza</i>  Expropriated land from large landholders	Mostly <i>Montafi'een</i> , or landless beneficiaries, as well as those deemed dispossessed by the Aswan Dam	Originally largely funded by the United Soviet Union (USU) then by the USA and Europe	<b>None</b>  Imposed crop rotations and regulated crop prices  Provided credit and farm inputs
Al Sadat 1970-1981	Green Revolution  Food security  <i>Infitah</i> policy (Open door policy)	Small holders, private companies, state farms, and Graduates ( <i>Kharigeen</i> )	Funded by the USA and Arab Gulf investors	<b>Moderate</b> due to resistance by local people and inherited welfare policies from the Nasser regime
Mubarak 1981-2011	Aimed to eliminate unemployment by providing desert land  Structural Adjustment Programme	MRS since 1980s to the Graduates ( <i>Kharigeen</i> ), small settlers ( <i>Montafi'een</i> ), and private investors ( <i>Mostathmireen</i> *)  Since 2004 exclusively to private investors	Funding provided mainly by the Egyptian government, few Arab investors, and Development Agencies, such as the WFP, IFAD and the World Bank	<b>Careful with some subsidization</b>  Sugarcane price were still regulated  Oil, bread, and other basic food stuffs were still subsidized
Post Revolution of January 25 <sup>th</sup>	Counter Mubarak policies, such as a sustained focus on achieving self-sufficiency in grain production	Focus on national food sufficiency, redistribution of private investors' lands to the landless and revolutionaries of Tahrir Square	The MALR alleges that cost of reclamation will be covered by international donors, but these claims are highly contested in the media (e.g, Al Ahram)	<b>Yet to be determined</b>  There are plans to reduce bread and fuel subsidies by introducing smart cards



**Sources:** Meyer 1998; Farah 2009; Barnes 2012; Mitchell 2002; Bush 2000, 2002, 2007, 2010; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003; Al Ahram Newspaper.

\*In October and January 1997 the canals of Al Salam and Sheikh Zayid were built to reclaim land in Southern Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, respectively (Meyer 1998: 351-353).

## **1.6 Problems with Land Reclamation**

Throughout Egypt's desert reclamation history, many criticisms have arisen concerning such efforts. These same criticisms continue even today, which points to the fact that there is a lack of learning from previous experiences. There seems to be a constant focus on technological advances in water management and planning on a massive scale (Mitchell 2002; Sowers 2011: 159; Allan 1983: 471; Barnes 2012), rather than small-scale experimentation, adaptive planning, and ensuring necessary and adequate access to resources (Scott 1998; Mitchell 2002; Warner 2013). The most notable symbol of this disappointment in large-scale planning is the constant misrepresentation by the government of the area actually reclaimed and cultivated at various stages during different regimes. The actual areas reclaimed are often less than the original plan and the cultivatable areas are even farther below (Voll 1980: 128-129; Sowers 2011). Allan (1983:471) reports that only 30% of the irrigated, reclaimed lands between 1953 and 1970 were profitable. Similarly, in the most recent reclamation of the Nile Valley project, the government aimed to increase Egypt's agricultural land by 3.5 million acres between 2000 and 2017 (Bush 2002: 24). By the year 2006, however, only 20,000 acres had been reclaimed (El-Din 2006).

This underperformance is often attributed to a lack of technical expertise in reclaiming desert land; isolation from the markets; and lack of basic services and proper schooling (Voll 1980: 131-132, 136, 138; Sukkary-Stolba 1985; Sowers 2011: 160; Lonergan and Wolf 2001; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003: 78-79). Some scholars went as far as describing land reclamation as a failure or as not nearly achieving what it promised to achieve in its increase in agricultural exports (Bush 2002, 2007; Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 129; Malm and Esmailian 2013; Warner 2013). Nonetheless, the image of an overcrowded population of 85 million people inhabiting only 6% of the land mass resonates more strongly with the state and development agencies than most of the criticisms, as does a faith in technological fixes, especially those related to water pumps and plans for water conservation

and recycling (Mitchell 2002; Barnes 2012; Waterbury and Whittington 1998; Wichelns 2003a; Sowers 2011: 161, 164; Bush 2007).

Over time, there seemed to be a change in what ‘reclaimed land’ meant. Before 1966 and at the end of the 1980s, ‘reclaimed land’ that was distributed by the Egyptian state constituted land that reached marginal productivity (the threshold at which yield is more than what was spent in cultivation, i.e. profitable production) (Voll 1980: 128). After 1966, ‘reclaimed land’ became land that underwent only soil treatment and had basic infrastructure (Voll 1980: 128). More recently, in the late 1990s, it meant land that was leveled within a certain margin of error and provided with irrigation pumps. The reasons for this change in the definition of land reclamation are due to a lack of funding and high reclamation expenses. This wider definition of ‘reclaimed land’ often led to more work for those who accessed land to reach marginal productivity of the land that might very well remain unachievable due to lack of irrigation water, drainage, and salinity issues. Allan (1983: 477) reports that *fellahin* (farmers) who were sold ‘half-reclaimed’ land during Nasser and Sadat’s regimes had to deal with both reclaiming the land and paying land installments, which created financial burdens for the *fellahin*.

The Egyptian economy was unable to solely sustain desert reclamation projects that bear a great cost at an increasing rate; this often led to dependence on foreign aid and subsequent loan conditionalities (Waterbury and Whittington 1998; Allan 1983: 475-476; Mitchell 2002). Allan (1983: 476), along the same lines, argues that reclaiming the sandy desert soils required that schemes be sustained and rehabilitated thereby exerting an ongoing pressure for finances via loans and aids from IFIs. The further away from the Delta and Valley a project was, the higher were the expenses to pump water and provide infrastructure (Allan 1983: 471). These aid conditionalities, as well as high reclamation expenses, led to the provision of land and water solely to entrepreneurs and investors (both foreign and local). Nonetheless, the financing organizations, whose involvement is crucial, given the history of land reclamation results, are growing skeptic of investing in desert reclamation (Bush 2002: 25; Lonergan and Wolf 2001; Mitchell 2002).

This financial burden on the government’s budget, related to desert reclamation, was felt in other parts of the Egyptian economy and led to underperformance in other areas.

Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan (1993: 128-129) attribute the decline of performance in agriculture during the Mubarak era to an unequal distribution of funds in the agricultural sub-sectors, with desert reclamation gaining up to a 55% increase in public investment, while other sectors gained a modest increase to a decrease in funds. Bush (2007: 1611) argues that money invested on the uncertain benefits of Toshka scheme could have been instead spent on small farmers, particularly on issues of access to markets and land, as well as poverty eradication, in the Old Lands. There also seems to be a concurrence in the literature that profit generation from desert reclaimed lands often took a long time (10-20 years) and was even questionable, for the most part, due to the expenses needed to pump water to higher elevations (Allan 1983; Bishay 1993: 303; Wichelns 2002, 2003a; Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 129).

Others have pointed to technical problems with land reclamation. Bashour (2002) argues that the depth of the soil surface and salinity levels are factors affecting short- and long-term soil fertility in reclaimed desert lands. He also maintains that the decisions determining which areas should be reclaimed must be based on these categories (Bashour, 2011, pers. comm.). Settlements with high soil salinity content and a shallow soil layer are difficult to drain and substantially limit plant growth. Along the same lines, Alzinati and Badawi (1995: 177) found that many land reclamation projects were faulty because they were performed on inappropriate soil types and profiles. Perhaps, most notably, Alzinati and Badawi (1995) and Biswas (1993a) found that most of the land reclamation projects suffer from waterlogging and salinization due to a general lack of drainage. Planning officials did not foresee a drainage problem in the next 10-15 years when in reality water tables increased up to 3 m in six years (Alzinati and Badawi 1995: 178).

Biswas (1993a) argues that reclamation needs to consider a more accurate leveling of soil surface, as in many settlements there are elevation differences, which, though thought insignificant, resulted in water-logging problems and limited cultivation on the newly reclaimed lands. Because reclaimed lands are often higher in elevation than the Old Lands, excess irrigation water often drains into the Old Lands, leading to loss in farming land. In Upper Egypt, for example, up to 300 acres of fertile, Old Lands adjacent to reclaimed lands in Samalout, Kom Ombo, and Fashan became waterlogged, with the water table reaching the surface (Alzinati and Badawi 1995: 121). Voll (1980:146), Alzinati and Badawi (1995: 177),

and the Near East Foundation (NEF) (2004) argue that extension services are limited yet crucial in these new areas as farmers are used to farm in different environmental conditions of soil type and fertility and weather circumstances.

Perhaps most importantly, the water supply system is inadequate because of inequitable distribution, with the Old Lands experiencing increasing water shortages due to desert expansion and those at the end of water canals in the New Lands experiencing water shortages (Bush 2007; Barnes 2012: 521; Wichelns 2003b). Furthermore, water-crop requirements turned out to be higher than expected, especially during summer times and in the hotter areas of Upper Egypt, where the New Valley project is located, for example (Allan 1983; Voll 1980: 148; Wichelns 2002; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2004: 79). The increased need for water supply to fuel land reclamation is endangered by quotas imposed in international water agreements, while Egypt is already using its 5.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> allowance (Waterbury and Whittington 1998; Wichelns 2002, 2003a,b; Lonergan and Wolf 2001). The Nile Basin Initiative, fostered by the World Bank, gives Nile countries other than Sudan and Egypt also rights to the Nile water. Some believe that conflict over water put a halt to land reclamation and could lead to military conflict between the Nile states (Waterbury and Whittington 1998). Irrigation methods installed in desert reclamation projects and increasingly promoted in the Old Lands are drip and sprinkler irrigation to increase water efficiency, as opposed to flood irrigation, which was the method used for thousands of years whenever the Nile flooded (Barnes 2012; Head of the LRS, pers. comm.).

A fifth important limitation to land reclamation became clear after the recent Revolution, namely ‘corrupt land contracts’. Vast lands designated for reclamation and agricultural purposes were sold cheaply to entrepreneurs who instead built resorts for tourism. Zoning laws only allow a certain percentage of agricultural land to be buildings, and the price of land used for resorts was much higher than agricultural land. After the Revolution, these transactions were fiercely attacked and some of these lands were returned to the Egyptian state. The other related lands’ prices were to be recalculated according to the average cost of land used for resorts. More limitations to land reclamation are presented in Chapters 3 and 5.

Despite the limited success of desert reclamation (Adriansen 2009: 665; Bush 2002; Meyer 1998; Biswas 1993a; Malm and Esmailian 2013; Aldabaa et al. 2010; Okonjo-Iweala and Fuleihan 1993: 129; Voll 1980; Allan 1983), it continues to be used on a massive scale to solve many problems in the Old Lands<sup>3</sup> (Mitchell 2002; Adriansen 2009). The government sees desert reclamation as its only option to compensate for the loss of arable land and meet the growing demand for food, given the increasing population (Bishay 1993: 298; Alzinati and Badawi 1995: 175). Desert reclamation has more recently, in the age of Mubarak, been justified for various, changing policies: land loss due to urban expansion and desertification (Abou-Hadid et al. 2010), to mitigate for home and agricultural land loss induced by climate change (NEF 2004), to achieve food security (Adriansen 2009), alleviate poverty (especially in Upper Egypt), reduce unemployment (Adriansen 2009), increase export crops (Wichelns 2003a,b), provide evicted tenants with alternative access to land (Saad 2000), and even to settle blood feuds. More recently in 2011, desert reclamation was justified as it would eventually provide the revolutionaries of Tahrir Square and the poor with land (refer to Table 2), as well as achieve self-sufficiency in wheat production. Mubarak policies were widely criticized in the media for increasing export of wheat and threatening food security. The Revolution-induced reforms were aimed at countering Mubarak's policies. Wheat production was encouraged by increasing the price of wheat. Eventually local wheat production in 2012 increased by 1.5 million tons (Al Ahram early-mid September 2012) and is expected to increase by 30% in 2013 (Al Masry Al Youm May 15, 2013).

Although there is a growing body of literature assessing the human conditions in the New Lands, such as inequalities in water and land distribution (Barnes 2012; Mitchell 2002; Bush 2007), little social research explored the gendered dimensions of land access and resettlement. Adriansen (2009) and Sukkary-Stolba (1985) explored the socio-economic impacts of resettlement from women settlers' perspective. In both studies, women felt that their workloads increased and that their roles were changed into becoming farmers to fit with the conditions of the New Lands. Both studies also reported that many married women broke free from oppressive and controlling mothers-in-laws by resettling into the new lands in far,

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<sup>3</sup> A review of literature and media reports revealed that land reclamation is increasingly unsupported by development agencies and, for the most part, is solely championed and carried out by the Egyptian state (Mitchell 2002; Warner 2013).

independent houses. Both studies also found that women had new opportunities to become entrepreneurial and open businesses in the New Lands. Saad and Ayeb (2006) emphasized the role that women have in maintaining local varieties of seeds. Briggs et al. (2003) explored in the Eastern Desert of Egypt the impacts of resettlement on the indigenous environmental knowledges held by Bedouin women. Adriansen (2009) pointed to the fact that women in the New Lands had the opportunity of becoming members in the Local Agricultural Cooperatives (LACs), as landholders with joint titles with their husbands. None of this gender-related research in the New Lands, however, explores systematically the impacts of women's access to land.

## **1.7 Gender, Inequality, and Land in Egypt**

The Arab world, in general, continues to be one of the most gender unequal regions in the world (Kaplan et al. 2011: 1468). A survey in Egypt in 1995–96 with 7121 women aged between 15 and 49 years reported a 34% incidence of domestic violence by a partner and 16% incidence by a partner, family member, or close friend during those 12 months (Watts and Zimmerman 2002: 1234). Another national survey in 2008 found a 62% rate of inter-partner violence for Egyptian women (Kaplan et al. 2011: 1467). Gender violence, physical harm inflicted on a woman's body and psychological harm, is often accompanied by control over a woman's mobility, social interactions, education, vocation, and financial spending (Watts and Zimmerman 2002: 1233). Kaplan et al. (2011) found in their study about domestic violence for married Egyptian women that the extent of a husband's control over household decision-making was highly correlated to domestic violence. This power differential between men and women is maintained and reproduced by socialization, but also by unequal access to resources (Kaplan 2011: 1466).

Women in Egypt remain largely marginalized educationally. For every 100 educated men, only 66 women have a comparable education, and this number is reduced to 34 women in rural Upper Egypt (El-Tobshy 2005: 117-123; Badran 1993: 201). In health, women's conditions are marked by significant anemia and maternal mortality rates (El-Tobshy 2005: 117-123; Badran 1993: 201). In participation in the labour force, they only constitute 34% of their male counterparts' involvement and earn only two thirds of the men's wages (El-Tobshy 2005: 117-123; Badran 1993: 201). In political life, they enjoy only a 2.2%

representation in the 1996 parliament and less than 1% in the 2012 parliament (El-Tobshy 2005: 117-123; Badran 1993: 201). WHHs constitute 12.6% of the heads of households in Egypt (El-Tobshy 2005: 122). Although these women make most of the decisions related to their households, as opposed to the married women, on average these women earn only 79% of what male headed households earn. WHHs also depend on support from their male family kin, which is inadequate as poverty and food insecurity in Egypt dramatically increased in the past three decades (Bromley and Bush 1994; Bush 2010).

In agriculture, Egyptian women constitute 4% of the agricultural landowners and more generally 6 % of all urban and rural property owners in Egypt (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2007: 16; USAID 2010: 10). The rates differ between the vast areas of Egypt. Women in Upper Egypt's Aswan governorate, for example, constitute only 1-2% of the landowners. These low property ownership rates for women in Egypt led the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to describe Egypt as 'lagging behind' and 'alarmingly low' in its allowance of property ownership for women (UNECA 2007: 19). Women rarely get their inheritance shares as land but may get rent money, often far less than market prices for rent, for their land shares from their brothers who farm the land or receive produce from the land (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) n.d.; USAID 2010: 10).

Land is perceived as a masculine domain both in the sense that men farm the land and in the sense that the men need money to raise their children, as opposed to women who are not as involved in farm labour (especially in Upper and Lower Egypt) and are rarely breadwinners of a family. Daughters and sisters, who come from landed families, are often pressured to marry cousins, especially in Upper Egypt, so that wealth remains within the family (Bach 2004). Upon their marriages, women often get bridalware from their parents (which includes, depending on the area a bride comes from, her clothing for years to come, kitchenware, cupboards and their contents, carpets, curtains, and a washing machine, and could also include gold in cases where the families can afford it).

Women in Egypt are also largely excluded from agricultural extension (or training). For example, a study conducted by the FAO on women and agriculture in Egypt reported that only "3 out of 6,497 participants in on-farm research between 1987 and 1993 were women;

there was only one woman among 745 participants in field days; and no women among the 129 participants in residential training” and only had 12% access to loans, mainly through agricultural credit societies as opposed to the agricultural banks (FAO 1993). El-Tobshy (2005: 127-128) attributes this lack of extension services for women to a lack of women extension agents and the minimal credit access for women to their lack of property ownership, which could act as collateral.

Many scholars feel that women are underrepresented in their contribution to agriculture (Saad and Ayeb 2006; FAO n.d.; Badran 1993: 199). El-Tobshy (2005: 115, 126) reports that about 47% of Egyptian women are engaged in agriculture, for the most part, in tasks related to animal husbandry, especially poultry and small ruminants. Women, in addition to animal husbandry, take care of cleaning planting seeds, as well as threshing and storing these seeds, and are also responsible for sowing seeds and spreading fertilizer (El-Tobshy 2005: 126). Men irrigate the land and are responsible for preparing the land for cultivation, pest control, and weeding (El-Tobshy 2005: 126).

Most of the literature about women and agriculture gives little importance to regional differences in gender roles and is focused, for the most part, on Lower Egypt, or the farmers of the delta. On the other hand, Beshai (1993: 267), for an example, observes that women in Middle and Upper Egypt are rarely seen working in the fields, rather these women manage households and care for animals. Younger girls, however, in Middle and Upper Egypt, until the age of 13, work in the fields (Beshai 1993: 267). Women in Egypt, in general, are seldom involved in land preparation and mechanized activities (El-Tobshy 2005: 126).

Many scholars expressed concern over the gendered impacts of structural adjustment policies that focus on mechanization and cash crops (Mitchell 2002; Badran 1993; Bush 2007, 1998). These policies marginalize Egyptian women in agriculture because most women have no training in operating heavy machinery or in growing non-food cash crops, and so the continuation of these policies jeopardized the availability of food for the families (Badran 1993: 204; Mitchell 2002; Bush 1998). Bush (1998: 104-105) also notes that due to structural adjustment policies-related rise in food prices, electricity, and agricultural inputs, many women had to work as agricultural labourers, wait for longer hours in the market to access cheaper food, and become involved in petty commodity production, all of which



exerted pressure on their limited time and resources. Most notably, the sole focus of the structural adjustment policies on profit accentuates the disregard for women's contributions to the household realm (Bush 1998: 105). Furthermore, in Egypt Bush (2000) notes that widowed women who accessed land through their husbands' rent contracts that were initiated during the Nasser Era, upon the deregulation of land rent prices due to the Tenancy Law 92 of 1996, had a hard time renting other parcels of land due to their gender. Landowners preferred renting their lands to men and thought of women as unreliable tenants. As a result, these women lost their sources of livelihood and resorted to casual labour and lower paying jobs.

Because of the elaborate donor involvement in the New Lands, many women-centered farming projects are employed by the International Labor Organization (ILO), IFAD, FAO, WFP, USAID, and NEF in collaboration with the Egyptian state (FAO 1993; NEF 2004; WFP 2000; IFAD 2002; USAID 2010: 10). In the past two decades, women, social equality, empowerment, and land ownership are often linked in a growing body of theoretical and applied assessment literature of development projects (Agarwal 1994; Deere and Leone 2001; Razavi 2007). The WFP and IFAD, for example, explicitly state conditions for land and property access for women in their aid programs (Carpano 2011; IFAD 2008; WFP 2000; USAID 2010). These organizations feel that land distribution in the New Lands is an opportunity to ensure women's equitable access to land, as it would seem less feasible to initiate such a project in the Old Lands. Land access provides women with a tool to obtain credit, skills, and information (not only limited to the agricultural domain), be involved in public life, achieve food security, and thereby potentially overcome inequality, including domestic violence (Agarwal 1994, 2003; Panda and Agarwal 2005; Agarwal and Panda 2007; Datta 2006; Deere and Leon 2001).

Given this background, I wanted to see how and whether women in Egypt's MRS are gaining land access and training, and whether they can consequently break free from inequality and oppression. Despite the growth in development projects advocating women's access to land in the past two decades, many scholars worry that such access would lead to a new generation of landed sons and landless daughters (Agarwal 2003; Jackson 2003). I also consider the fate of the land, particularly inheritance and bequeathing. I examine land transfer strategies to sons and especially daughters, as well as the role of marital residence and

kinship in daughters' access to inheritance. In many places in the world, such as India, Vietnam, China, Egypt, and Palestine the kinship status of women's marriage partners or marital residence determine their access to land (Agarwal 1994; Belanger and Li 2009; Moors 1996; Scott et al. 2010; FAO n.d.).

The literature also reveals that the type of land tenure (joint or full title) impacts the extent of autonomy and achieving equality for women. In the last two decades, especially in Latin America, particularly Peru, joint titles have been adopted in property distribution schemes that are guided by a joint, rather than a single, household model (Datta 2006; Deere and Leon 2001). While some research confirms the importance of joint-titling in giving women decision-making voice in the household and public life (Datta 2006), others argue that joint-titling leads to coercion in cases of divorce, bequeathing, and decision-making related to the land (Agrawal 2003; Jacobs 2002). Agarwal (2003) argues that full titles are to the best advantage for women, whether married or single. An Egyptian case study would participate in this dialogue, which so far, very limited research has been conducted around (Razavi 2007; Varley 2007).

## **1.8 Research Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to explore the basis and extent for achieving social equality and empowerment for Egyptian women through land access in the MRS by a focus on three objectives: (1) understand the factors that enable and impede women's ability to individually access land, retain or manage this land, and benefit from the land (socially or economically); (2) understand the experiences of women landholders and their hopes and aspirations; and (3) formulate policy implications for relevant government bodies and development agencies in collaboration with local officials and settlers as well as policy makers. I attend to the question of women's empowerment through land access for the achievement of social equality and control over their lives and focus on individual, household, community, and institutional dynamics. I conducted ethnographic research over a year-long period in seven villages located in two settlements: Upper Egypt's Sa'yda settlement and Lower Egypt's Intilaq settlement. Three of these seven villages were women exclusive. In the women exclusive villages, I examined the experiences of women with full titles. Two of the gender-mixed villages were tenant villages, where I looked at the

experiences of Evicted Tenants' wives who had access to joint titles (20% of their husbands' land titles).

## 1.9 The Mubarak Project and Women

During Nasser and Sadat's reclamation projects, little focus was placed on the distribution of land to women mainly due to a male head of household model, which guided planning and excluded even widows and divorced women, who are also heads of households (Adriassen 2009; Sukkary-Stolba 1985). The MRS, however, due to the involvement of the IFAd and WFP explicitly targets women for their land provisions. For women's shares in each of the formal categories refer to Table 2. Meyer (1998:345), for example, reports that a village of only single women was formed to attract single men to farm desert lands.

**Table 2 Settlers' categories in the MRS and women's shares.**

Category of Settlers	Land Access Type and the Percentage of Women Settlers in that Category	Area in Acres	Number of Settlers	Description
<i>Al Khirigeen, Graduates</i> <sup>#</sup>	11%, as full title access	198,567.5	37, 236	Graduates from a University, Technical Institute or a Secondary or Technical School
<i>Al Motadarireen, Evicted Tenants</i> <sup>#</sup> affected by Law 96 of 1992	17 %*, as full title access Wives of beneficiaries in both settlements in the Evicted Tenants category were provided with joint title access**	44,573	17, 258	Tenant farmers evicted from their lands due to Law 96 of 1992 (called <i>Motadarireen</i> or Evicted Tenants)
<i>Al Montafi'een, Beneficiaries</i> <sup>#</sup>	10%***, as full title access Beneficiaries (including WHHs) were entitled to the same amount of land given to Graduates (5-6 acre)	63,284	10, 871	Landless farmers who were deemed poor by the government (called <i>Mo'dameen</i> or the Destitute) and include WHHs (widowed, divorced, and married to disabled husbands)

<b>Government Workers and Armed Personnel and other category</b>	2 %, full title access	35,114	5, 539	This category included land given to armed forces personnel and their relatives, as well as friends. It also included Early Retirees working in any of the government sectors
<b>AI Mostathmireen, Entrepreneurs</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	This category is diverse (local and foreign entrepreneurs)

**Source:** Data provided from LRS, MALR 2010.

\* The high percentage of women landholders in this category may be attributed to the fact that wives of deceased men whose lease contracts were canceled due to Law 92 were compensated with land.

\*\* Note that only 1.5% of the one million evicted tenants obtained land in the MRS.

# Settlers' lands in these categories were located at the end of water canals (Head of LRS per. comm.; Vice Head of LRS, pers. comm.; Abou Layla 2009).

## 1.10 The Egyptian Revolution of 2011

Bush (2000) argues that reforms undertaken by Mubarak under the direction of the IFIs (The IMF and The World Bank) led to unprecedented high rates of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and food insecurity, as well as to land consolidation and landlessness. Many also argued that the neoliberal policies in Egypt led to a more authoritarian, corrupt state rather than democracy and good governance (Bush 2000, 2004; Saad 2000). Resistance by everyday people increased due to the deterioration of economic and social conditions, which was met with violence by the Egyptian state and resulted in many deaths and injuries. The violent protests in a number of affected villages opposing Law 96 of 1992 are one example of growing civil discontent (Saad 2000: 25). More recently, although the food riots of 2007 in Egypt were partially triggered by a spike in food prices, many have argued that they were also triggered by increased inequalities (Bush 2010).

With the influence of the Revolution in Tunisia of late 2010 that toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali within the same month and with the help of social media, the Revolution of January 2011 spread like a wildfire throughout Egypt's main cities in Upper, Middle, and Lower Egypt, and more gradually into rural areas. The Revolution affected agriculture through the lack of an export market, the tourist industry plummeted, and there was a lack of fuel for irrigation and transport in isolated areas. During the Revolution, Land Squatters increased in number and grew more defiant. Some, for example, slept under the wheels of excavators that the government used in order to remove their plantations.

After the Revolution, the government's agricultural policies shifted towards the small farmers and wheat production once again (see Table 1). A stronger focus on the wheat crop was evident through numerous newspaper articles. The government increased the price of the wheat it bought from farmers to encourage farmers to plant wheat. Land was offered in small parcels at subsidized prices for the general public to appease angry crowds. On a regular basis, newspapers (both pro and against the government) described land reclamation project plans in Sinai, Suez, among other places in Egypt. Entrepreneurs who did not reclaim and cultivate the lands they bought were dispossessed of their lands, such as Al Walid Bin Talal. It is unclear whether women would also benefit from accessing land reclamation projects promoted by the Revolution. Many feminists fear that the Muslim Brotherhood marginalizes women on many fronts, such as through political involvement. In the 2011 parliament that is constituted of predominantly Islamic parties women make up only 2% of its members.

Two years after the Revolution of 2011, the economic and social conditions in Egypt have not improved. Many argued that the Muslim Brotherhood president Dr. Mohamad Mursi was no different from Mubarak. He ran the state autocratically with the majority of the seats belonging to Islamic parties and repressed his opponents. With protests becoming a common scene, even some of Mursi's supporters decried the lack of economic progress. Unemployment in 2013 was deemed higher than ever, even higher than during the Mubarak era. The theft rate skyrocketed and security conditions deteriorated (e.g., a notable increase in incidents of sexual harassment). An almost dead tourism industry and lack of foreign investment contributed to inflation and increases in food prices. The local currency value decreased, and exports, such as wheat and gasoline, became more expensive. Severe shortages in gasoline are commonplace, and a fear of shortage in the wheat supply is often

reiterated in the media. Much aid was poured into Egypt, such as from Qatar and the USA. A loan of 4.8 billion dollars from the IMF is still being negotiated. Many fear that the loan conditions will include a cessation to the subsidization of fuel that costs the Egyptian government one fifth its budget.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

In summary, Muhammad Ali reclaimed land for profit generation for the few elite, whereas Nasser reclaimed land for achieving social equality and national revenue. While Al Sadat's desert reclamation purposes stand in between the two, Mubarak's desert reclamation increasingly benefited a few elite to the detriment of the majority of the poor smallholder farmers. Mubarak's structural adjustment policies led to job losses, land tenure losses, increases in food prices, and lack of employment opportunities. These factors led to many riots, most notably evident in the Revolution of January 25, 2011, which toppled the Mubarak regime. Due to pressure from development agencies and international treaties, Mubarak's land reclamation scheme provided women with opportunities for land access that were not previously available to them. I explore the basis and extent of reaching empowerment through land access for Egyptian women, who face staggering rates of domestic violence, as well as historic inequalities on many fronts: public life, mobility, education, and property ownership. More recently, the Revolution opened doors for land access to the poor and middle class through promised land reclamation projects. The deteriorating financial conditions make it questionable whether the Egyptian state can afford more land reclamation projects.

## **1.12 Organization of Dissertation**

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Following the introduction to the research context, problem, and purpose, Chapter 2 outlines the limitations encountered and research methodology employed during the 14-month fieldwork period in Cairo and the settlements of Sa'yda in Upper Egypt and Intilaq in Lower Egypt. Chapter 2 also describes sites and participants' selection criteria, limitations to the current research, and the unforeseen impacts of the Revolution. Chapter 3 describes the local villages and types of services available, development agencies and government bodies involved, local associations, and agricultural production. Chapter 4 examines how women accessed land in the MRS and the underlying

government and IFI policies. Chapter 5 looks at women's personal stories to understand the effects of providing women with full land title access in comparison with women who do not access land. Chapter 6 looks at the experiences of the Egyptian government, WFP, and concerned women and men with joint title access. Chapter 7 examines the changing relations between settlers and relevant government bodies (both local and regional officials), with a particular focus on the Revolution of 2011. Chapter 8 looks at the fate of the land provided to women, how this land is bequeathed, and in what form, with a focus on what factors shape and impact daughters' inheritance rights. Chapter 9 provides a summary of the research findings, policy implications, and broader contributions to knowledge.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Research Methodology

Between August 2010 and August 2011, and between January 2013 and March 2013, I conducted a fourteen-month residency in Egypt spent in Cairo, and in the Upper Egypt settlement of Wadi Al Sa'yda (herein after Sa'yda), and the Lower Egypt settlement of Intilaq (Figure 3). I used a qualitative, extended ethnographic approach with long-term field research, including observation, interviews, life histories and case histories, focus group discussions, and document analysis, as well as information cross-checking (Bernard 2006; Marcus 1995). I attended to the question of women's advancement in their lives through land access with a focus on class, ethnicity, marital status, education, generation, and location (culture and land productivity); the recent Revolution was taken into account after the events of 2011. All of these factors were considered in the context of relations amongst the 55 women landholders interviewed, the various government and development agencies, family members, and other local men and women. I also looked for indicators for women's advancement in life due to land access. In this chapter, I lay out my research approach and the implications that the Revolution had for my methodology, as well as the timeline I followed, site and participants' selection criteria, specific methods, and limitations to the current research.

#### 2.1 Research Paradigm

We are all influenced by our own worldview and upbringing that filter the data we collect and analysis we come up with. My research approach fits into a feminist interpretive social science paradigm. An interpretive social scientist attempts to thoroughly understand the everyday lived experiences of people by a focus on direct contact in natural settings (Neuman 2000: 70-71). My primary methods pivot on participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and farm visits. Because of my prior training in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, I was able to converse with local farmers and officials on their own terms, developing strong research relations on the basis of shared expertise.

The interpretive approach considers that action and reality have no inherent meaning on their own, but that meaning is held in subjective ways by various social actors (Neuman



2000: 71-72). I identified the social actors with regards to women's experiences with land access through the MRS as the women landholders, government and development agencies' officials, family members, and other local men and women. I use systemic logic by observing patterns in data based on ethnographic material (Bernard 2006), such as stories, rumours, behaviors, and opinions, particularly those that pertain to the relationships between the settlers and Egyptian government, to understand narratives—here viewed as automatic thoughts and behaviours for understanding the world (Roe 1994)—around women and their experiences with land access.

I also integrate a feminist approach, whereby I pay attention to gender and other social inequalities and make inequality (and injustice) an explicit focus of this research with an awareness that the experiences of women differ from those of men and are also different from one woman to the next (Neuman 2000: 82; Goebel 2010). In the field, I refused to be treated differently from the women settlers. I rode in the back of cars with women when I was asked, as a guest, to sit in the front. I participated in labour and rode on donkeys with women. I often stressed that the women landholders were my teachers and professors, as sometimes many women in the beginning believed me to be knowledgeable about many aspects of their communities. I also often told women landholders whom I interacted with that, although I constantly interact with the government, development agencies and NGO officials, if I was to take a side, it would be theirs. All this being said, I do acknowledge that a power difference was inherent in my relationships with these women.

By collecting detailed life histories, I was able to assess the differences between the experiences of selected women landholders (Geiger 1986; Peacock and Holland 1993). Abu Lughod (1991: 149-157) employs the notion of the ethnography of the particular, whereby ethnographers focus on the particulars of an individual's life that often manifests the impacts of extra-local and long-term processes. Along the same lines, Goebel (2010: 71) explains how scholars concerned with land rights for women evaluate the impact of globalization and capitalism on the local land tenure and gender relations through a sustained focus on extensive empirical work. I use life histories to understand how individual women's lives have changed with their access to land, these women's feelings and aspirations, and the factors (local and external) that impede or enable women to benefit from the land (socially and/or economically). I also differentiate between the particularities of Upper and Lower

Egypt. I look at whether and how the two sites differ or overlap in the gendered roles and relations, government and development agencies policies, socio-economic factors, and biophysical characteristics.

Feminist researchers, in addition to believing that gender has a fundamental role in shaping culture and society, also believe that gender has a role in the researchers' findings (Neuman 2000: 83; Sprague 2005: 3). I employ reflexivity, particularly awareness that my gender and researcher status mediates the informants that I am able to interact with and topics that can be discussed (Altorki and El-Solh 1988; Wright 2006). I was able, for the most part, to build friendships with women, and not men, as it is culturally inappropriate to build friendships with men, especially in Upper Egypt. In fact, most of the male informants often proposed to me as I interacted with them on a regular basis. This constant interest in me as a bride and a culturally inappropriate behavior of befriending non-related men led to my reluctance to interact with men (single or married) on other than professional grounds. I limited my interaction to those men, for the most part, who are government employees in the Local Development Units (LDU), such as the drivers and Village Engineers. Nonetheless, I became friends with younger men, who are the sons of women landholders, and a few were also my research assistants. On a few occasions, I spoke with men when accompanied by women landholders. Also, I was not able to enter into male-specific worlds such as the mosques and the local coffee shops. In addition to my gender, the government mediated my interactions with informants.

The LRS of the MALR facilitated my research in generous ways but also restricted the people and places that I could visit. I, first, visited the Head of the LRS, akin to the Minister of Agriculture in the New Lands, and told him that I want to describe the status of women as landholders in the MRS, a pioneering experience in the Arab world for other parts of the world to learn about it and for providing recommendations to the ongoing reclamation efforts. Both the former and current Heads of the LRS welcomed my research topic and are interested in my findings. Being PhD-holders themselves, they understood the value of research.

Both the interpretive and feminist approaches develop personal relationships with the informants, but the feminist approach also considers action towards social change and gender

equality (Neuman 2000: 83; Sprague 2005: 3). I explicitly mentioned in my research objectives a focus on providing recommendations for a better inclusion of women in the LRS and won two major research grants, a Middle East Research Competition from the Ford Foundation and an International Doctoral Research Award from the International Development Research Center (IDRC), which condition a public policy implications component in the research and plans for dissemination. My own upbringing shapes this focus on land rights for women. As an Arab who grew up in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, I have witnessed first-hand gender inequalities related to women's lives in the Middle East. Now as a scholar with field experience in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, and with training in Socio-cultural Anthropology, I am motivated to contribute to the elimination of injustices for women in the Middle East, specifically through a focus on Egypt's New Lands.

Even in the field, I aimed for change. I facilitated one workshop in Upper Egypt and also held individual discussions with various women landholders regarding their roles as members in the local agricultural cooperatives for these women's improved involvement in public life. I held the one workshop in the LAC of the 'Widow Village' (Samaha) in the presence of the Village Engineer, sons, and other men in the community who resisted the involvement of women landholders, including the board members, in the local village cooperative. Finally, I convinced the Head of the Say'da settlement to provide a dozen women landholders with micro-credit, previously thought unworthy of micro-credit due to a misconception that states that women landholders inadequately farm their lands. Nonetheless, many of the recommendations stemming from the current research (refer to Appendix C) also involve male settlers.

## **2.2 Methodological Implications of the Revolution**

Since the fall of the Mubarak regime, the informants (officials and locals) became much more open to criticizing the past, providing me with what would otherwise be censored or sensitive data, and talking about their informal (a euphemism for illegal) strategies. Due to the Revolution of January 25, my research shifted towards a stronger focus on the informal strategies and how these strategies were, and continue to be, important in the lives of women landholders and their families in the New Lands, as well as in the officials' (at the LRS, Local Development Units, and MRS Headquarters) everyday practices. On the other hand, a

few informants, especially those met after the Revolution, felt suspicious about my presence during such times with some accusing me of being a spy of the Revolution. I tried to reassure them by stating that I have been in Egypt for nine months, before the onset of the Revolution. Even the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), who ruled the country after the toppling of the Mubarak regime, grew suspicious of my presence in such times. The SCAF questioned the Heads of both the Intilaq settlement and the LRS about my presence in Egypt multiple times. SCAF was in turn reassured by the Heads of the LRS and Intilaq that my presence was legal in the country, and I am a researcher who is continuing my research about women and land in the New Lands.

### **2.3 Research Timeline, Activities, and Location**

I spent most of my field research in the Sa'yda site, around six months, as opposed to around three months in the Intilaq site. In the beginning of fieldwork, I stayed in Cairo for about six weeks to get approval for my research in the two sites from the MALR and the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit, plan for the research logistics (my accommodation and transport), and develop my research proposal under the guidance of IDRC and other scholars, whom IDRC requested I speak with for developing my proposal. Although I spent only about three months in Intilaq, I got lucky because women in Intilaq were much more willing to discuss sensitive research topics, such as domestic violence issues. The holy month of Ramadan also gave me ample time in the evenings to collect data since the settlers stayed up late and often chatted about their worries, hopes etc. I took the opportunity of Ramadan and conducted fieldwork at night, as well as during the daytime. Meeting women landholders after the Revolution in the Intilaq site also meant that they were more open with regards to many sensitive issues, like their relations with the government and informal strategies. Having already been in Egypt for nine months, I also knew what I was looking for in comparison to my Sa'yda site.

Starting in mid January 2013 and for six weeks, I conducted fieldwork in Cairo. The purpose of this second trip to Egypt was to return my research findings to the local communities and to provide policy recommendations to relevant organizations (including the WFP, the Noubariya Research and Training Station, the LRS, and the Aswan Governorate). The second trip also aimed at filling research gaps, particularly the cooperation and

responsibilities of participating institutions in the MRS, as well as understanding the impacts of the Revolution of January 25 and other developments at the research sites. Methods during this return visit were comprised of using phone interviews with women landholders and their family members, as well as face-to-face and phone interviews with officials (involved in the local settlements and residing in Cairo).

## 2.4 Case Study Selection Criteria

I worked in two desert settlements of Sa'yda in Upper Egypt and Intilaq in Lower Egypt. Each of these two settlements was chosen on the basis of differences in socio-economic, institutional, agricultural system, and cultural dynamics. Although the Say'da settlement was my main research site, where I spent the most time, to obtain breadth in my research account, nonetheless, I sought Intilaq as a comparative vantage point that would highlight the key variations and make their significance more evident. I chose villages in both of these settlements that have a relatively high number of women landowners: two women exclusive, 'Widow Villages' in the Sa'yda settlement of Iman<sup>4</sup> and Samaha; three Graduate Villages in the Intilaq settlement of Shohada, Safa wal Marwa, and Ali Mubarak. In both settlements, I considered villages that are at the beginning of water canals and adjacent to towns, as well as villages that are further on the water canal and relatively more isolated from towns. Shohada was my main focus in Intilaq, as it is predominantly (70%) settled by women graduate landholders. In both settlements, I also considered joint titles of the beneficiaries' wives in two gender-mixed and Evicted Tenants Villages: Al Shahama in the Sa'yda settlement and Imam Malik in the Intilaq settlement. I also visited (not as thoroughly though) the Evicted Tenant Village of Ozayr in Intilaq.

While the Sa'yda settlement was created more recently in 1998 (and settled in 2002), it suffered from reduced government spending, and is predominately settled by the women who are divorced or widowed, are illiterate, and come from a culture where it is inappropriate for women to farm, and where people originally have little to no knowledge about desert farming. Intilaq was settled in 1999. Although Intilaq was settled around the

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<sup>4</sup> The Iman village is a gender-mixed village. The 440 WLs did not all fit in the Samaha village. The remaining 137 WLs were resettled into a women exclusive sub widow village, on an elevated territory in the Iman village.

same time as Sa'yda, it is adjacent to the oldest settlements in Egypt's MRS project. These settlements were created during the onset of MRS in 1987, during a period of generous government spending. Intilaq enjoyed the extensive involvement of multiple development organizations, such as IFAD and WFP, and is settled by women who are predominately married and are educated, and many of the settlers come from nearby towns with better knowledge about desert farming. Some of these nearby towns are areas that belong to desert reclamation projects implemented during the era of Nasser in 1952, such as Markaz Badr.

As opposed to Sa'yda, which is considered one of the worst desert reclamation experiences, Intilaq is one of the best desert reclamation experiences in Egypt (Adriansen 2009; Vice President of LRS, 2011, pers. comm.). The Sa'yda settlement struggles with flooding (due to lack of drainage), lack of adequate supply of irrigation water, salinity, and poor soil fertility, as well as minimal micro-credit support. Most of the agriculture in Sa'yda is focused on seasonal traditional crops, such as wheat, *karkadeh* (hibiscus tea), and *berseem* (fodder). Animal production in Sa'yda remains strongly linked to wealth, and the main crop grown on the land for indirect profit is *berseem* (fodder). Agriculture in Intilaq, on the other hand, is more market-oriented and settlers have established orchards of mango, apple, plum, grape, guava, and/or cactus for sale in export and local markets. Farmers in Upper Egypt's Sa'yda, nonetheless, are modestly moving towards fruit orchards, such as planting mangoes and apple trees, which have yet to start producing.

In both sites there seems to be an agricultural progression from seasonal crops towards trees. During the first few years of planting trees, farmers often intercrop these trees with their annual crops. Once the orchards are well established four years after planting tree seedlings, the intercropped, annual crops become of poor yield because the trees close the canopy. This lack of adequate sunlight between trees to grow fodder leads to a situation where rearing cattle becomes difficult. Some settlers in Intilaq rent extra land to cultivate profitable seasonal crops, such as peanuts.

## 2.5 Participants Selection Criteria

I looked for women with as diverse experiences and views in the MRS as possible: those who want to access land, have already accessed land, retained the land, benefitted (socially and economically) from the land, and/or controlled the land (as outlined in Table 3,

below). I asked local women and men which women they thought (as a result of land access) their lives have significantly advanced their lives and for what reasons. Then, I followed up on such cases (3 cases in Upper Egypt and 5 cases in Lower Egypt). I also chose women landholders of various educational and religious backgrounds, social status, generations, involvement in public life, and ethnicities (e.g., Bedouin, Christian Copts, Upper Egyptians from various areas, and Lower Egyptians from various areas) (refer to Table 4, below). In Upper Egypt's Samaha village, I conducted fieldwork with the entire population. Only 50 houses were inhabited in the Samaha. Because there was a lack of micro-credit in the Samaha village and limited involvement for women in public life, despite the fact that the seven board members of the LAC were women, I looked at the nearby 'Widow Village' of Iman for women who took micro-credit loans and who were relatively more involved in public life.

**Table 3 The 55 women participants experiences with land in Sa'yda and Intilaq.**

Region	Wanted to Access	Already Accessed	Retained	Benefited	Controlled
Upper Egypt	2	40	38	3	5
Lower Egypt	2	15	12	12	12

**Table 4 Diversity of women landholder and non-landholder participants.**

Women Participant Categories	Women Landholders	Women without Land
Bedouin women	2 (UE)	1 (UE)
Graduates with degrees or diplomas in agriculture	1 (LE)	0
Graduates with other degrees	14 (LE)	3 (LE)
Illiterate women	35 (UE)	1 (UE)
Young women, less than 35 years of age	2 (UE)	0
Widowed women	34 (UE)	7 (2 LE, 4 UE)
Married women	14 (2 UE, 12 LE)	10 (6 UE, 4 LE)

<b>Divorced women</b>	4 (2UE, 2 LE)	1 (UE)
<b>Christian women</b>	2 (UE)	0

I examined both full titles for 55 women and joint titles for beneficiaries' wives in the two gender-mixed villages of Shahama and Imam Malik. I evaluated eight cases of women with joint titles (three in Lower Egypt and five in Upper Egypt). To highlight the impact of land access on the selected women's lives, I have included parallel cases of women without land to compare the two groups (refer to Table 4, above). These women come from varied backgrounds and particularly differ in social status (divorced, widowed, and single), ethnicities, generation, locations, and in their involvement in the work force (an accountant in a local agricultural cooperative, a school teacher, and a school principal). I examined the case of the landless women by closely observing ten women in Upper Egypt and eight women in Lower Egypt.

In addition to the women I have mentioned above, to further understand the experiences of women with land access (such as cultivating, bequeathing, renting, or selling the land), I maintained relations with other groups of officials (WFP and government), local men and women, and family members. In Upper Egypt, I had a great degree of mobility that, initially, I did not believe was realistic. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement made five drivers and four cars available to me. The drivers were incredibly patient and understanding, which allowed me the leisure of conducting research in the Old Lands that were sometimes as far as five hours away, like Aswan. I did some fieldwork in Upper Egypt in the nearby towns that belong to the Old Lands to understand the differences in privileges related to the land tenure and being a residence of the Old Lands or New Lands. I interviewed officials in the insurance, social services, Aswan Agriculture Directorate, National Council for Women, and agricultural bank (refer to Table 15 in Appendix D) and asked them about the services and conditions of those services that they offered to the residents and landholders. I spoke with the officials in the LRS, MWRI, and WFP mainly in Cairo (refer to Table 15 in Appendix D), initially, to obtain research permits, but I also interviewed these officials, particularly policy makers, to get a sense of their priorities, plans, accomplishments, and opinion on women's



access to land. I often called officials to interview them, such as previous Heads of Settlement, or to stay in touch. It is custom in Egypt to call one another for religious events.

In total, I interviewed and interacted with 78 officials on the ground and policy makers located in Cairo, for the most part (as outlined in Table 15 in Appendix D). Officials were chosen either on basis of their interaction with settlers (such as provision of microcredit, fertilizer, and training), involvement in policy-making related to settlers' lives (such as units of irrigation, rural development, and land reclamation), and/or on for comparison purposes either between the Old and New Lands or between the two settlements.

## 2.6 Specific Methods

I used multiple methods to collect my data. Multiple sources of data are important for validation purposes, necessary in qualitative research (Bernard 2006). I also worked with multiple actors (local people, development agencies officials, particularly the WFP, and government officials, in both the local settlements and Cairo) to follow connections, associations, and relationships (Marcus 1995: 97; Markowitz 2001: 41). I was sponsored by the LRS in Cairo that facilitated my research, including the provision of accommodation, transportation, policy documents, government reports, and safety, especially during and after the Revolution of January 25. My primary data collection methods were based on observation (participant observation in daily life and farm visits), interviews, and focus groups. I lived in government-provided housing in the villages of Shahama in Sa'yda and Imam Malik in Intilaq. I used media monitoring, report documents, and literature review for collecting secondary data and for learning the jargon used in agricultural training, as I intend to provide recommendations to the MRS training program, and other relevant organizations.

**Observation:** I observed the interactions of 40 women landholders in Sa'yda of Upper Egypt and 15 women landholders in Intilaq of Lower Egypt with their family members (brothers, fathers, sons, husbands, when relevant, sisters, etc.), government officials, and other men and women in the local communities with respect to labour and decision-making related to the land and its finances and other social, everyday interactions. I wore a head scarf and *'abaya* (loose, long dress) to be better accepted in the local communities. When I was unveiled, a few local men refused to speak with me because I was not properly dressed. To illustrate, when I was visiting the house of a woman landholder in Lower Egypt, her husband asked me

to keep my hat on, “what will people say about us that “your visitor is not properly dressed and her hair is showing’,” he complained. I kept my hat on. When I got veiled, settlers often appreciated this initiative, especially when they learned that in my ‘hometown’ I am not veiled, and I am veiling out of respect to their traditions.

Mosedale (2005: 244) emphasizes that women’s empowerment is relative to the situation of other women or to the respective women themselves in comparison to their previous state. With that in mind, I looked for indicators that differentiate women with land and women without land based on life histories and interactions with women who both have and do not have access to land. I also sought out the roles and opinions of women in the Old Lands (who did not have land) during my frequent visits to the extensive family of the Head of the Sa’yda settlement, who took care of me when I got sick and during the Revolution.

For understanding empowerment at the household, community, and institutional level, I looked for indicators including the ability to increase choices, strengthening fallback position (independence), and what the local women themselves identify as desired changes to advance their lives. I often asked women (older and younger), especially those who also had experiences in the Old Lands, about their thoughts on whether domestic violence in the New Lands has decreased and whether and how women landholders are different from other women. I asked local men and women in addition to officials about any new roles that women have adopted in the New Lands and followed up on that with practical examples.

Observation proved useful in examining gender-related issues especially because of what Bourdieu (1977) calls “misrecognition” in which people systemically convince themselves of responses to questions asked by researchers that observation of their behavior might bring into question. For that reason, I compared what I was told with what I saw and, not surprisingly, witnessed some of these discrepancies. While many women landholders and their sons, especially in Upper Egypt, mentioned that the sons are the ones who mainly decide what gets done on the land, observation revealed that mothers played major roles in initiating and implementing land projects, including cultivating fruit trees, purchasing camels for fattening, breaking the pavement for irrigation from the main water canals, and bargaining for reducing fertilizer price.

Because marriage strategies and bequeathing are often interlinked in Middle Eastern societies (FAO n.d.; Moors 1996; Staath 1990), I attended weddings and got a sense, both discreetly and in more direct ways, about what constitutes good marriage prospects.

I also looked at land dispute strategies (both formal in courts, for example, and informal by third party interference, for example). The recent Revolution, in particular, opened a door for land dispute strategies through the court system, especially against the former government injustices. The new dispute mechanism is especially important in Upper Egypt where the price of land for women landholders almost tripled due to shuffling in government positions. This change in officials resulted in moving these women landholders into another category of settlers who pay three-times more for the price of land originally set for women.

In addition to observations recorded in the villages, I also ‘hung out’ in officials’ offices, for the most part in Upper Egypt’s Sa’yda, observing the officials’ interactions with settlers, during the visits of the legalizing committee and the Ministry of International Cooperation, as well as day-to-day official operations. It is difficult to conduct classic participant observation with official organizations (Markowitz 2001: 43); yet, in Sa’yda I was able to observe interactions between local officials and local settlers, as well as observe visits by officials from Cairo. Because I lived above the LDU in Upper Egypt, I was often updated on a regular basis about the activities of the LDU, interactions with settlers, and external visits. When I took days off from fieldwork in the villages to review my data or due to fatigue, I often spent a couple of hours at the LDU of the Sa’yda settlement. I also visited multiple times four agricultural cooperatives in Lower Egypt’s Intilaq, especially during the first month of my study when I was looking for women landholders. Along the same lines, I made multiple visits to the LACs in the Sa’yda settlement where my driver often picked me up. In both settlements, I observed the interaction of settlers with the LAC members and understood firsthand the roles and responsibilities that the LACs fulfill. In Intilaq where there is on-going training, as opposed to Sa’yda where training significantly decreased after a few months of resettlement, I observed training sessions for women at the Safa Wil Marwa LAC.

I, furthermore, observed other real-time events, including agricultural seasons and the Revolution, in addition to the fears and hopes that the women landholders entertained in

these contexts, as well as decision-making processes related to agricultural practices, sale of agricultural products, micro-credit, and the LACs. I spent most of my time with the women landholders who were willing to host me, mostly with four women landholders in Lower Egypt and eight women landholders in Upper Egypt. I closely observed their interactions with and opinions about their lands, family members, officials (government and development agencies), and other local men and women. I also took part in field walks, farm visits, and social visiting to their friends, family, and neighbors for understanding these women landholders' relations with the land, as well as with the officials, family members, and neighbors. I observed how often these women went back to their original hometowns and what they brought back with them, sometimes, and before the Revolution, by accompanying them on their trips.

In addition to attending official visits from Cairo, I also attended women gatherings in the Samaha village for reading the future with stones or shells, as a way to understand the local hopes, fears, and aspirations, as the conversations in these readings often described ideal situations for one's future. Also these gatherings, when women landholders have not seen each other for a while and get together, were gossip venues about the latest developments and reflections on the past.

Another important source of observation was the drivers of the LDUs in both Sa'yda and Intilaq. Drivers lived in the desert villages and knew a wide variety of settlers. They often stopped to give rides to passersby, allowing me to speak with a diverse group of people, especially men (of the Graduates, Informal Buyers, Destitute, and Evicted Tenants categories). Many drivers also drove excavation machinery and provided insight into the relations between unrelated men and women landholders, as many of the women landholders hired these drivers to level their lands. Drivers also showed me irrigation canals and water distribution schemes, informally reclaimed areas, boulders removed to reclaim land by the settlers, and all kinds of crops and farming practices. Drivers showed me what officials might be reluctant to show me and what settlers may be unaware of, such as flooded land that was not yet distributed, but whose settlers were then protesting to obtain it; areas where water pumps are still lacking, but whose settlers were protesting to obtain these lands; flooded areas with tragic stories of how settlers lost their orchards or rarely, successfully buried the

flood with a couple of meters of a soil layer called *radmiyah*; and areas where land grabbers took over an entire settler village along with its LAC building.

**Rumours:** I also paid attention to rumours, which are a useful kind of story-telling often containing an implied plot that says something about the speaker. I looked at why people found it worthwhile to pass on these rumours. Rumours, especially during the Revolution, were rampant. This reflects the past and increasingly accentuated mistrust, due to the Revolution, between the state and local farmers/settlers. Rumours as Scott (1985) argues are a form of quiet resistance. In this case, settlers, as well as other local people, well before the Revolution and more so after, often resisted government unfulfilled promises and injustices by spreading rumours about the government officials, plans, and intentions. Rumours had two main sources: the media and the local settlers. Some of the rumours were on a large scale, such as Al Walid Bin Talal land deals in the Toshka project, while others were more localized, such as specific stories about a former Head of Settlement.

**Interviews and Focus Groups:** I moved between Cairo and the two settlements, as well as Lebanon to see family and seek academic advice with regards to the farming aspects of desert lands. Two former Professors from my undergraduate career have extensive experience working in desert reclamation and farming. I met with them for hours during my three visits to Lebanon. I used unstructured interviews with them with a request for discussing topics as wide as farming, salinity, and irrigation (Bernard 2006). Similarly, I used unstructured interviews during my meetings with officials in Cairo at the LRS. The Head of the LRS or his Vice led the interviews and lectured me, sometimes, on what is required for successful farming in the desert, the roles for women in Egypt, and their plans and conditions for land reclamation and access. As I learned more from settlers, I had specific questions in mind for officials at the LRS. I sought input from the WFP officials in Cairo about the reasons, location, setbacks, and accomplishments behind providing women with land access in the MRS. I also used unstructured interviews with open-ended questions about broad topics with NGOs, such as the Land Center for Human Rights in Cairo and the Center of Development Services, and scholars at the Social Research Center (SRC) and the Desert Development Center (DDC) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) to discuss pretty much anything about desert settlements, women, land, and farming. I also met with researchers at the Agricultural Research Centre (ARC) in Cairo to discuss technical and

social issues related to agriculture in the New Lands. These interviews with scholars and the Land Center for Human Rights provided important context to someone who had limited experience with Egypt's legal, historic, and farming system.

I, furthermore, conducted on an on-going basis a series of structured and unstructured interviews with women landholders, their family members, local community members, and officials at the local settlements to gain both a general and a detailed understanding about a diverse array of women's experiences with land access. The two types of interviews fed into each other. I used reflexivity in developing open-ended questions for structured interviews and focus groups. Emerging themes instigated further probing from various participants on an ongoing basis. As time passed and I gained a better understanding of the context, I developed a standardized set of open-ended questions that I have asked to participants at both sites (Appendix A). Developing a standardized set of questions, a survey or questionnaire, is necessary for cross-site comparisons (Bernard 2006). I did not only rely on this questionnaire, I also conducted unstructured interviews on an ongoing basis or meetings with the women landholders, which allowed them to constantly voice topics of importance to them, perhaps as these topics developed.

I used unstructured interviews to understand domestic violence and corruption. Bernard (2006: 213) argues that unstructured interviews are appropriate for collecting data on sensitive topics by using more general and vague questions that would lead the participants to opening up. Domestic violence issues were first broached in conversations when affected women themselves told me about their experiences or related other women's gossip. This confiding only occurred after I established a rapport with the participant women. By building rapport with women they would tell me about it when it happened. With women that I had deeper friendships, however, I was able to ask the question quite bluntly: What do you think about wife-beating here? Is it less than in the Old Lands? If no, or if so, why is that? I also used unstructured interviews during my frequent, sometimes long, trips with drivers to understand general issues in the community, such as preferred marriage partners, history and accomplishments of various Heads of Settlement, vague cultural and legal terms that needed clarification, and domestic violence issues. Drivers were like bystanders who drove around many of the Heads of Settlement and, similar to my case, chatted with the Heads on the way and overheard their phone conversations. When asked about the history of the settlements,

especially after the Revolution, drivers often commented with stories and possibly rumours related to the corruption of previous officials. Drivers also had sisters and wives. I asked the drivers about their relationships with these women.

Although Arabic is my first language, and despite the fact that I have watched considerable amount of Egyptian movies in my childhood and prior to my departure to Egypt, many of the local terms, which also differed between Upper and Lower Egypt, in the beginning of my fieldwork, were difficult to understand. This is one of the reasons why I hired research assistants. Younger research assistants use words that were easier to understand and often, in the beginning, translated the words that I did not understand and requested clarification about, especially in Upper Egypt, when older women landholders conversed with me. Many times, as people were attracted to participate in conversations, a discussion with an official, a woman landholder, or a family member turns into a focus group discussion with more than three people participating. When interviewing women landholders, often family members would be present and give their perspective on the changes they have seen in their mother or sister landholders and important events related to the land. In some other cases, focus groups were more purposeful. The lack of women board members' involvement in decision-making in the LAC of Samaha, I noted, was partially due to the women's lack of knowledge and training about their public roles. As mentioned earlier, I held a workshop for the women of the Samaha providing training based on the Law of Agricultural Cooperation related to their roles and responsibilities as LAC members.

In addition, I scheduled formal interviews in both settlements with officials, Coordinators of Development in the Settlements, Heads of Training, Heads of Agriculture, and Legal Advisors in each of the two settlements to understand the history of the settlement, women's involvement, laws, policies, training programs, and other material for developing case histories. I, furthermore, attempted to understand from officials the changes in the MRS regulations, WFP and IFAD's (when relevant) relations with the MRS body and involvement (including loans and training) in the MRS program, and the issues faced by the women settlers (especially those related to girls' inheritance, micro-credit, labour, and involvement in public life). I established rapport with government bodies by extensive visits to officials at different levels in the MRS, including local Village Engineers, Heads of Training and Agricultural Affairs in the local settlements, Heads of Settlement, Head of Training and

Agricultural Affairs of the MRS Headquarters in the Nobaria, Vice President of the LRS in Cairo, Heads of the LRS in Cairo, and the Coordinator of the WFP Projects.

The friendliest and most informative officials with whom I had contact were the local officials at the Sa'yda settlement. The offices of the LDU in Lower Egypt's Intilaq were relatively far from the place where I was living and more likely to be empty after 2 pm. On the other hand, in Upper Egypt's Sa'yda, as mentioned earlier, I actually lived above the local development unit, and there was always someone, such as the engineers and the Head, in the evenings when I returned from my fieldwork with the settlers. On almost a daily basis, I interacted with the local officials in the Sa'yda settlement in the evenings. I often wrote in a notebook the questions that I had for them to discuss in the evenings and listened to their conversations with each other regarding plans, regulations, and fears.

**Gender-based Asset Analysis:** Following Deere (2010) and Deere et al. (2012), I examined the gendered nature of assets in households. I did that for two reasons: 1- to understand how the profit coming from the land was used, to whose benefit, and the underlying decision-making dynamics and 2- to understand gendered distribution of inheritance. Asset categories included movable (such as, gold and bridalware) and immovable property (such as, land and housing), animal types (gender-differentiated), consumer durables (such as a car, refrigerator, television, and automobile), business ownership initiated or sustained by land profits (such as, renting additional land, fertilizer booth, greenhouse, clothing store, and grocery store), expansion in property ownership (agricultural land or building of land), and bank accounts. I also looked at how these assets differed between the two settlements.

**Media Monitoring:** Spreading rumours by the locals and advertising New Lands and housing by the government is often done through the media. I read newspapers (independent and pro-government) for two years on almost a daily basis, watched TV shows (both local and national) looking for stories or rumours and land access promises and plans, especially after the Revolution, when applications for land access were open to the mass Egyptian population again. I followed up on the ground to determine whether and why the new generation of young men, and especially women, were interested in land access, as well as which rumours were circulating in the local villages. I used newspapers to understand government policies. Because most of the newspapers before the Revolution on January 2011



were government-run, the content reflected government policies and viewpoints. Even after the Revolution, Al Ahram remained government-run and reflected the current government policies and viewpoints.

I also co-wrote an article with the women settlers in Upper Egypt in Arabic (refer to Appendix B, translation from Arabic). The settlers and their families who participated in this article felt that it is important to have their voices heard after the Revolution, and hoped to make changes to their conditions. They also felt that the Newspaper is the most appropriate venue for voicing their concerns as “they are read by everyone, especially the officials”. Indeed, during a visit to the LRS in Cairo, I noted that the officials in the policy community there were quite involved in reading newspapers and preparing responses. I also used the media to understand recurring or differing patterns in my findings that could allow for generalization.

**Document Analysis:** The SRC at the American University in Cairo (AUC) have a wealth of documents related to the human conditions in the New Lands, especially in Intilaq’s Moudiriyat Al Tahrir governorate, the most recent governorate in Egypt. I photocopied documents (published and unpublished papers, reports, and theses) related to resettlement in the Moudiriyat Al Tahrir area. I also photocopied research reports and brochures from the Land Center for Human rights in Cairo related to women and inheritance in Egypt, as well as resettlement issues in the New Lands. I used these documents to understand some of the issues that pertain to my own research area, such as a lack of proper schooling and other services.

For examining the government policies related to resettlement and women’s status in the New Lands, I obtained a letter from the LRS giving me access to the documents that I needed for my research from various government bodies, especially at the MALR. The Heads of LRS both the former and the present called the Heads of Settlement to give them instructions to facilitate my access to information, including documents, policies, and interviews. I have requested permission from the Heads of the LRS because most of the Village Engineers initially refused to provide me with even a list of the landholders’ names or a copy of the interim landownership contract without an official letter from their superiors

asking them to do so. Officials in Egypt in general seemed to be paranoid about providing information to foreigners.

I obtained the document of the Interim Land Ownership Contract, the policy document governing the relations between the Village Engineers in the local villages and LAC members, the policy document of resettlement laws and categories, the agreement that settlers sign when they receive their lands, Upper Egypt's women landholders faxes (complaints) to the WFP and governorate, and NGOs' New Lands-related reports (including the NEF and the Land Center for Human Rights), as well as the LDUs in Sa'yda and Intilaq general reports in both settlements related to the number and gender distribution of settlers and types and areas of crops planted. I have also read/collected newspapers' articles about the New Lands (as mentioned earlier), which have gained increased attention since the onset of the Revolution of January 25th. Because of my strong interactions with officials in Upper Egypt, I was given access to confidential documents that I was not allowed to photocopy but only to look at. These documents are a record of the faxes that come out from the LDU to different government bodies.

I also looked at Arabic training manuals and publications to familiarize myself with their jargon for when I returned recommendations to the Noubariya Research and Training Unit, for example. From the ARC in Cairo, I obtained a wealth of material related to cultivating wheat and other crops in the New Lands, as well as social, technical, and training reports.

**Life Histories:** I was keen on collecting life histories because they are useful in understanding whether women are better off in the New Lands and how important this land is in these women's lives. I asked women landholders whether they have seen changes in their roles and responsibilities since they came here and about important events in their lives. Life histories highlighted common characteristics among women who opted to stay in the New Lands, provided clues that might be difficult to see in the field context (such as events that have occurred in the past or the effects of land access on women's lives in general), and (see below) often provided material for case histories. I used life histories to both understand historical and ethnographic events and get a sense of the subjective experience of the narrator (Peacock and Holland 1993:369). Life histories are also useful in assessing whether the right

questions are asked, or whether women settlers have other issues that I need to consider by listening to their voices in their own terms and preserving the complex context (Geiger 1986). Additionally, life histories include women's voices, as mentioned earlier, when most of the literature about women, land, and empowerment lacks women's voices and opinions (Budlender and Alma 2011; Jackson 2003).

**Case Histories:** Based on life histories, interviews, and focus groups with different actors, I looked for shared events or processes among different sets of players, including settlers, local government officials, and the external government and development agencies officials, and focused on how the interpretations for those events differed or overlapped for the different groups. In other words, I look at accounts of cases that involved various players and examined underlying meanings for the various players. These cases included accomplishing something, overcoming an obstacle, a disastrous event and its aftermath, a struggle or a dispute, solving a problem or puzzle. Cases that I focused on included the theft of irrigation pumps, the lack of irrigation water, the lack of potable water, land transactions (renting, selling, and bequeathing), informal land reclamation, and formation of women exclusive villages. Cases also unfolded in real time, such as the Revolution, its processes, aftermath, and implications and how different social actors perceived and reacted to the Revolution. I also recorded various people's versions of how settlement and farming went, were, or should go to provide a rich, or thick description, and understanding for women experiences with access to desert land (Bernard 2006).

**Working with Research Assistants:** I worked with six research assistants: three female and one male in Upper Egypt, and one female and one male in Lower Egypt. Research assistants, as mentioned earlier, were important translators for difficult terms, especially in the beginning. They were also in many cases key informants. Most of my research assistants were females who have grown up in the communities, with good knowledge about the local problems, settlers, histories, and relations. My favourite and most helpful research assistant was a woman in Upper Egypt, a young, bright agricultural graduate from the University of Suhaj, whose mother is a landholder. Over time, as our relationship grew stronger, she told me about her mother's bequeathing strategies, as well as domestic violence issues with particular examples of victims in the village. Because she was educated and locally well-travelled, I made sure to tell her about the new dispute mechanism, through the court system

that was introduced after the Revolution. The court cases are concerned with complaints about any of the Mubarak unjust policies. I explained that she could hire a lawyer for free from the National Council for Women in Aswan, where she already took courses, to bring back the price of land for women in Upper Egypt's Sa'yda to its original price. I also called another male research assistant whose brother is a lawyer for advice and action in respect of the price of the land.

The two male research assistants had a good knowledge of the village roads, lands, and farmers, including the informal settlers. They plotted, with the help of their mothers who are landholders, both the social landscape (including labour and friendship relations) and the farming landscape (how much land is planted and with what) of the Samaha village in the Sa'yda site and Shohada village in the Intilaq site, where I spent most of my time. These maps are important to understand who stays in these villages and the social context and relations of the mostly husbandless women landholders in Upper Egypt and the mostly married women landholders in Lower Egypt.

**Farm Visits:** Farm visits were crucial in examining the knowledge that women have accumulated as a result of farming or accessing the land, as well as the biophysical characteristics and the farming practices (and their specific gendered nature) of the land. Farm visits were also important in understanding how gendered roles and cropping patterns evolved and changed, problems with the land (very many in Upper Egypt), and understanding labour strategies for women. I often asked these women "What did you already know about farming?" and "What did the land teach you?" I also wanted to know if their original knowledge about farming was useful and whether training took place (not quite the case for the Sa'yda's women landholders) and if so, how was it useful in cultivating the land. I made an effort to make farm visits convenient for women, especially in Upper Egypt where they are older in age. I hired drivers who often took me and the women landholders to their lands, and then gave these women a ride back to their homes. As mentioned earlier, drivers especially those in Upper Egypt, showed me many different farms, such as flooded farms, farms without water, farms of informal land cultivators, and farms of entrepreneurs.

**Policy Seminar and Policy Briefs:** In my six week return visit of 2013, I held a research findings and policy seminar at the LRS in Cairo, inviting key policy makers from the LRS,

Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI), Land Enhancement Sector, General Authority for Reconstruction Projects and Agricultural Reclamation (GARP), Women Development Unit at the Village Development Sector, and WFP-Assisted Projects Unit. Before the seminar, I discussed my findings informally with key policy players at the LRS (face-to-face) and women landholders and their families (on the phone) to get their input on the solutions I have proposed and their own solutions. From these two groups (locals and officials), I also sought information on additional problems and solutions that I might have missed or was unaware of due to my absence from the field sites. I also held minutes- to hours-long conversations on the phone and face-to-face discussions in Cairo with the Head of the Sa'yda settlement for the same reasons. I incorporated my findings into the findings and policy presentation.

I asked the Vice Head of the LRS, who were the key players in the MRS planning? He pointed me to the right people, as well as provided me with fax numbers and addresses. During the seminar, only nine, key officials from the LRS, two entrepreneurs, and two Heads of Settlement who happened to be at the LRS at the time of the seminar attended the seminar. Perhaps the rest of the invited officials showed up but did not enter the building because there was a large protest in the building on that day. After presenting my findings and recommendations, I opened the floor for discussions by ending my Power Point presentation with 1-What are your thoughts about solutions for problems observed in Intilaq? In Sa'yda? , and 2-How can these solutions be implemented?

I followed up with the rest of the officials who did not show up by speaking with them on the phone (one WFP official) or visiting them in person (two Land Enhancement officials, two MWRI, one GARP) to convey my findings and discuss my recommendations. Based on the resulting discussions, I formulated policy recommendations in the outline of policy briefs (see Appendix C) that I delivered to the Noubariya Research and Training Station, the WFP in Egypt, the LRS, and the Aswan Governorate, in English and Arabic. I sent copies of the policy briefs to the women I worked with in Intilaq and Sa'yda by mail, as well as discussed the documents' content through phone calls since many were illiterate.

**Safety in the Field:** I was affiliated with the LRS in Cairo which facilitated my research and provided me with protection during the Revolution, as mentioned earlier. Because I am a female, both the former and current Heads of the LRS felt that I needed extra attention with regards to my safety. They both emphasized to the Heads of both Settlements that I need to be in company of good neighbors and guards. The position of guard, or *ghafeer*, is common in Egypt; usually he (often a man) stays up all night and guards the entrance of a building or house. I was also accompanied by research assistants or women landholders and rarely walked by myself in the settlements. Often research assistants would walk with me to the places I want to get to, leave, and then come back to pick me up.

During the Revolution, despite the Head of the Sa'yda settlement emphasizing on the guards to stay up all night, I lost my sense of security. Kovats-Bernat (2002) argues that anthropologists working in conflict-stricken areas are under pressure to improvise due to a lack of adequate preparation for such circumstances. I requested from the Head of the Sa'yda settlement to move into his house and stay with his family in the town of Edfu. I rarely went out in Edfu, however, where demonstrations occur all day and night long. I commuted with the Head to and from the villages of Iman and Samaha in the Sa'yda settlement. I avoided meeting new participants who might not know me well and are more likely to see me as a target for their frustration. I left Egypt to Qatar from the farm of Om Badee' during a farm visit straight to the airport of Luxor. I left everything behind. I only took my passport and data, both of which I always carried around. I left all the money I had at that time with people who were closest to me, such as my drivers and my mother, Om Badee', in the Sa'yda settlement. Government workers were not paid due to the Revolution, and I felt that the drivers would make far better use of the money.

**Data Analysis:** Analysis is based on a search for common experiences, indicated by patterns within the data (Bernard 2006). Data analysis started in the field. I often created weekly tables, for example, that entailed filling in missing data regarding women and impediments to and enablements for their access, benefits, and control over the land. I also reflected on a weekly basis on the methods and questions that I used and asked. I then had thoughts for improving my methods and questions based on what worked, did not work, what I learned, and what I still needed to find out. I divided, and continued to do so, my massive data set into diagnostic issues for women status in the two settlements (impediments to access, retention,

benefits of, and control of the land and enablements for the same issues), as well as the underlying official, and especially nonofficial, relations. I also compared between, as mentioned earlier, the situation of the husbandless and mostly illiterate women in Sa'yda to that of the married and mostly educated women in Intilaq. I indexed my interviews on a daily basis using emerging themes and topics in the field. This was useful for revision of my data and writing up of my results, as this indexing provided an outline for the specific interviews.

## **2.7 Limitations and Inherent Biases**

The Revolution was a catalyst for people to open up and break their fears, but also for the Egyptian government, particularly the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) to grow cautious of my presence in my final stages of fieldwork in Lower Egypt, as mentioned earlier. Women landholders in Lower Egypt, who met me after the Revolution, were particularly cautious too. One woman landholder called the red line to report me as a spy of the Revolution. During and after the Revolution there were no police in the country and people feeling threatened or subjected to criminal actions are asked to call the red line to request help. Also because of the Revolution, the engineers and local Head of the Sa'yda settlement were under increased attack from the settlers both physically and through lawsuits and complaints to SCAF, and as a result most engineers and the Head of Sa'yda refused to participate in the local workshops that I planned to conduct but managed to do only one, as mentioned earlier, probably in fear of being attacked or rebuked by the settlers.

Because I was able to access sensitive data related to settlers' relations with their government, the Revolution introduced new concerns into my research, specifically taking drastic measures to protect my informants beyond the usual protection of confidentiality and anonymity. The latter, in this research, is sometimes difficult to accomplish because many officials knew where I was working and with whom I spoke. Kovats-Bernat (2002: 216) argues that data provided by informants in conflict-stricken and politically unstable areas might lead to the harassment, exile, imprisonment, torture, or even death of the informants. I am aware of such dangers. Although I use pseudonyms, many high ranking officials know my research sites and, in fact, helped me work in those places, as mentioned previously, and are aware of the identities of my informants. As a result, when deemed appropriate, and with

the help of my supervisors, I choose not to disclose what I was told by some informants to protect them.

Perhaps the most limiting impact of the Revolution was on my mobility. I was not able to leave the New Lands to the Old Lands as much as I wanted. For my final couple of weeks in Egypt, I had plans to follow women landholders to their original hometowns by conducting some fieldwork in some of the original villages and compare the status of the landless women there to the women landholders I interacted with in Sa'yda. The security situation in Upper Egypt's Old Lands, however, where the government and police absence led to an increased incidences of theft, inter-tribal kidnapping, revival of blood feuds, and crime, forced me to leave Upper Egypt to conduct research in the relatively safe New Lands of the Intilaq settlement. I also had heat stress complications in Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt is at least 10 °C cooler. I had no intentions of staying in an air-conditioned room for the final two months of my fieldwork.

The Revolution's impacts became particularly problematic during my return visit in January 2013. My research permit ended in August 2011, and I was denied a new one by national security forces, citing the "deteriorating security situation" as the reason. Nonetheless, luckily, I was able to use my former permit to hold a policy seminar and conduct interviews and focus group discussions with policy makers in Cairo. As I have expected, and even more so, during my stay in Cairo protests were common place throughout, most notably in front of government offices. The protests were carried out by both affected citizens and staff often resulting in road blockage. As a result, I relied on my feet to visit offices. These never-ending protests made it also problematic sometimes to meet officials and increased suspicion of officials towards my intentions for research. This chaotic situation also resulted in frequent change in big officials due to protests, which might mean that my policy recommendations might be discarded because they were given to officials who could lose their positions.

Three other limitations, not related to the Revolution, impeded my research. First, people misrepresented their economical conditions and benefits from the land in fear of being denied potential foreign aid coming out from the current research. Women often denied that they owned their cows and small ruminants or made up numbers for what the farming



revenue was for a certain crop. As the women landholders that I worked with understood that I will not be distributing aid or credit, they revealed their real economic conditions. I did validation by asking the neighbors whether the cow or ruminants are ownership or partnership, as partnerships are quite common too, or about the economic conditions of certain women landholders. I often got, especially in Upper Egypt, shocking data from the neighbors. Om Nizam, for example, who denied buying land to me, I was told, has bought two, not one, pieces of land and three houses.

The second limitation that arose in my research is related to my inability to stay with the women landholder informants during the nighttime. I left between 5:00 and 8:00 pm daily. I wanted to stay with the local women landholders, and I tried for four days. I was overwhelmed with how many rats there were in local settlers' houses and by the swarms of mosquitoes that would come in through cracks in the windows and walls no matter what kind of repellent was used. I was not able to sleep and was also told that wolves attack cattle and goats at night and so I was scared of the wolves. Women exclusive villages, especially in Upper Egypt, where I spent most of my time were also particularly vulnerable to theft. As a result of all of these factors, I ended up staying in the relatively luxurious government housing and commuting to the sites.

The third limitation is related to government's control over who I can speak with and what can I do. The LDU in Upper Egypt had opponents, especially after the Revolution but even before, who sent faxes and complaints to SCAF. I conducted interviews with two such notorious opponents. When the Head of the local Settlement knew, he got quite upset with the driver who took me there. I was asked not to visit these people again. Also, I was asked by the Head of the settlement not to publish the article that I wrote with women until it is edited and read by him. He was also upset that I took such an initiative. Sometimes, the Head of the Say'da settlement forbade me to speak with settlers not because he was afraid of what they might tell me but because I am an Arab woman, and I was supposed to behave decently.

Because I am a researcher, my expectation was that I would be perceived as a sociological male, but this was not the case. I was, rather, perceived as a woman who is brave, who should get married soon (with lots of marriage proposals and match-making), and is expected to behave well. I was not allowed to visit women with 'bad reputations'. They

were called by the Head to come visit me, and they did. Nonetheless, I did not have as many interactions with these women as I wanted because I was not allowed to visit them in their own homes. I was also not allowed to stay up late chatting with the male Professors from the MRS Training and Research Unit. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement felt responsible for me. He thought of me as 'an educated woman from a good family'. My parents, brother, sister, and brother-in-law all spoke on the phone with the Head of the Sa'yda settlement and his wife on several occasions during and even before the Revolution.

On several occasions, he commented, 'what will people say about me now?', when I unintentionally defied the local norms by, for example, requesting a bike when riding a bike turned out to be inappropriate for women, or when he saw me with a woman landholder riding a donkey, which a well off woman never does. Except for riding on donkeys with my main informants and teachers, the women landholders, I did not want to defy the Head of Sa'yda, as he was akin to a brother and a protector, nor did I want to tarnish my reputation as it was important for my acceptance into the offices of the officials and the homes of settlers.

As to inherent biases, I acknowledge that the power imbalances between me and my informants could have affected my findings. Participants could have told me what I wanted to hear and not what their true experiences were with the land. As mentioned earlier, however, I used triangulation (interviewing other groups, such as neighbors, officials, and family members) and persistent participant observation to help overcome these barriers. Another bias was persistent throughout my research, namely the nature of my research topic being threatening to husbands of women landholders. When some husbands, especially those who assumed high levels of control over land, learned about my research topic, they were reluctant to allow their wives to participate in my research. I believe that these husbands felt threatened that their wives' participation would emphasize their exclusive ownership over the land. One Graduate Woman Landholder in Intilaq, for example, explicitly told me that talking to me was creating problems between her and her husband, and she could not talk to me anymore. I respected her decision, of course.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, due to my gender, I was limited in my ability to interact with men or to gain entry into their gathering places, such as mosques and cafes. On the other hand, due to my gender, I was able to connect perhaps better than a male researcher

would be able to with women settlers on the basis of shared or perceived interests, such as cooking, washing clothes, and advocacy for women's land rights. It is also not appropriate, especially in Upper Egypt, for unrelated men to befriend women and spend many hours in their company on a weekly basis.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The methods used in this research broadly draw from the interpretivist feminist methodology to an approach that uses narratives, by building on particular cases, life histories, rumours, interviews, and focus groups, as well as document analysis to examine how and whether women advance their lives through access to land. Diverse groups of women, chosen on the basis of differences in socio-economic status, were considered in both settlements of Intilaq and Sa'yda. Intilaq and Sa'yda represented two settlements with contrasting gender roles and values, agricultural systems, marketing strategies, and availability of services. In addition to a representative sample of women, the informants also consisted of drivers, officials (policy makers and field personnel), family members, and other local men and women. While the Revolution led to open discussions about informal (or illegal) strategies for both officials and settlers, it also led to heightened caution towards the researcher from officials and settlers alike.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Introducing the Villages: Settlers, Officials, Services, and Agriculture

In this chapter, I take the reader to the two settlements and seven villages I worked in. I focus on socio-economic characteristics as well as type of irrigation used, crops cultivated, markets, social relations, services available, development agency and government involvement, and type of associations.

#### 3.1 Site Description

Both the Settlements of Intilaq in Upper Egypt and Sa'yda in Lower Egypt are located in the Western Desert (Figure 3). Intilaq's climate is characterized as arid, as it receives 20-100 mm rainfall per year, has a mild winter, has a hot summer, and receives rain in December and January (Bishay 1993: 278-280). Sa'yda's climate is characterized as hyperarid with mild winters, very hot summers, and many rainless years (Bishay 1993: 278-280). Rainfall is estimated to be 5-10 mm every 10-15 years (Bashour 2010, pers. comm.). Sa'yda suffers in the summer time from both high temperatures and evapotranspiration rates, which make it difficult to irrigate crops during summer time. Many farmers in Sa'yda try to grow crops, and crops fail during the summer time. Intilaq, on the other hand, enjoys a milder climate, which allows for a relatively more abundant supply of water and for crops to grow during the summer time. Sa'yda is located 130 km north of Aswan and 30 km west of the town of Edfu. Intilaq lies about 90 km south of Alexandria off the Cairo-Alexandria desert road (IFAD 2002: 4). While Intilaq is close to the main ports, as well as to Cairo and Alexandria's tourist markets, Sa'yda is further away and isolated from the main markets.

#### 3.2 The Settlements

The Sa'yda settlement covers a total area of 24,168 acres spread over six villages, while that of Intilaq covers a total area of 38,348 acres divided into fourteen villages. One of

the villages in Sa'yda is completely occupied by Land Squatters<sup>5</sup>, who planted sugarcane even next to the building of the LDU. In the Sa'yda settlement, as in any other area in rural Upper Egypt, settlers struggle with the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the country (World Bank 2009) (refer to Table 5). Rural Upper Egypt is twice as poor as the rest of the country, containing 80% of those considered living in absolute poverty<sup>6</sup> (World Bank 2009). The employment situation in Intilaq settlement is better. IFAD provided employment opportunities to the youth in the larger area of West Noubariya (IFAD 2002: 4). WFP facilitates access to land for women, food aid to all settlers, loans to LAC members with low interest rates (only in Upper Egypt), development projects, such as draining waterlogged areas in Sa'yda and building extra housing for the Evicted Tenants in Intilaq.

IFAD in Intilaq provides loans through the agricultural bank in Naguib Mahfouz village, training (for poultry, fruit, and vegetable production, as well as marketing and irrigation techniques), and coordinates marketing with private investors. Both IFAD and the WFP employ participatory resource management and governance by creating water use associations in Intilaq and food aid committees and unofficial councils, or *Majlis Orfi*, in Sa'yda. Additionally, the two development agencies also provide schools and health care services, on a limited scale, in a few villages. Government presence in both settlements is minimal, and in Sa'yda is marked by empty village banks, veterinary services and health services buildings. The LDU in each settlement implemented government policies handed to them by the LRS. LDUs coordinate the services of other ministries and development agencies and NGOs. Birth certificates, social welfare, courts, and other government bodies require official papers from the LDUs to execute their services.

Compared to Intilaq, however, Sa'yda is lacking far more in public services and training. Many settlers in Sa'yda opt to register their children in the Old Lands rather than in Sa'yda to access timely and reliable vaccination and food rations. In Sa'yda, settlers have to

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<sup>5</sup> Although the term Land Squatter usually means impoverished, homeless people inhabiting land without any legal claims, here the people carrying out the act are not necessarily impoverished. In fact, some of these lands are cultivated by well-off men working in the Arab Gulf. Their use of the land could become legal by purchasing it from the state.

<sup>6</sup> Absolute poverty is poverty based on less than a dollar or so per day income and is characterized by a deprivation of basic human needs, such as food, health care, and education.

go back to their home towns once per month to get their food rations. Intilaq's settlers, on the other hand, get their food rations from their respective desert villages or gave it up altogether to their family members. The issue is further complicated in Sa'yda by the lack of reliable transport, which in the most remote villages can take up to four hours each way, unless a private car is called upon that costs per trip about one third the salary of a widowed woman. On the other hand, transport is far more frequent in Intilaq.

**Table 5 General characteristics of Sa'yda and Intilaq.**

<b>Description Criteria</b>	<b>Intilaq in Lower Egypt</b>	<b>Sa'yda in Upper Egypt</b>
<b>Age of settlement</b>	Settled in 1999	Settled in 2002
<b>Height above the Nile</b>	17 m	46 m
<b>Type of agriculture</b>	Profit-oriented, fruit production, as well as peanuts, potatos, and vegetable production	Subsistence-oriented (wheat, barley, and alfalfa) with cattle seen as symbol of wealth
<b>Type of irrigation and source</b>	Drip and sprinkler irrigation from Nile water and artesian wells	Flood irrigation from Nile water and/or drainage canals
<b>Total area</b>	750,000 acres	28,193 acres
<b>Rainfall</b>	2-3 times a year, light rains	2-3 times a year, light rains
<b>Unemployment</b>	8-12%	Higher than any other rural area in Egypt
<b>Poverty<sup>7</sup></b>	15.3%	40.2%
<b>Major development agencies involved</b>	WFP and IFAD	WFP
<b>Micro-credit</b>	Available from the local agricultural bank, with an interest rate of 10%	Available only from the LACs, with an interest rate of 3-6%
<b>Training</b>	Gender-mixed and frequent	Mostly men and infrequent

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<sup>7</sup> Source of these poverty rates is the World Bank (2009), which is defined as whether the households or individuals have enough resources or abilities today to meet their needs.

<b>Markets</b>	<p>Small-scale weekly (e.g., berseem, okra, cantaloupe) in nearby local markets</p> <p>Government mills and agricultural banks, which are more certain and reliable, thereby constituting the main market outlets</p>	Export, local, and tourist-oriented
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There are no doctors in many of the villages in Sa'yda, while Intilaq lacks specialists but has access to family doctors. IFAD in Intilaq provides a rotating group of specialist doctors two days a week in one of the villages. In both settlements, there is a lack of potable water provided by the government. Settlers initially drank from the Nile canal, but then opted for bringing in water from their hometowns after experiencing kidney illnesses. In Sa'yda, the issue is further complicated by the fact that sewage water from upstream towns drains into the Sa'yda canal. Many settlers in both settlements buy their potable water. In most villages in Intilaq, more recently, settlers raised funds and dug wells for potable water, and some of these wells are connected to individual homes.

Similarly, in many villages of Intilaq that lacked schools, the local settlers built schools and paid the salaries of the full time teachers. In both settlements, the government provided a limited number of elementary schools in the bigger villages. In the distant villages, many families chose to send their sons to school and not their daughters, as parents worried they would be harassed on the way to school. These schools in both settlements suffer from a lower quality of education due to low pay and the reluctance of teachers to relocate into the desert. The issue is further complicated for secondary schools, colleges, or universities. Very few girls make it beyond elementary schools in these settlements because advanced schooling is located much further away. Many parents feared that sending their daughters outside the settlement for education would make them vulnerable to sexual harassment. In general, nonetheless, even boys rarely make it to universities due to the lower quality of education in the New Lands.

Mosques are provided by the government, particularly the GARP, but many villages in Intilaq built extra mosques using local settlers' money. Cemeteries exist in Intilaq but are so far lacking in Sa'yda, as settlers in Sa'yda still choose to be buried in their original

home towns. In both settlements there are police stations in the main, services village but not prisons that keep law and order. Many settlers, however, complain that police presence is remarkably lacking in the New Lands, which puts them in danger of theft and other crimes. In each of the main villages there is also a post office that serves the entire settlement.

Most settlers in both settlements put up structures (extra rooms and animal sheds) in their backyards, which were provided by the government. Many settlers in Intilaq did not like the low roofs of the government housing and so built higher roofs. Also many in Intilaq built another or even third floor on top of the government provided housing. On the other hand, few in Sa'yda built on top of the original government housing. Many houses in Sa'yda cracked due to the flooding. In Sa'yda, farmers who rented out another piece of land or were surrounded by empty houses raised their birds and stored their produce in these houses. In Intilaq, many settlers dried their peanuts on the roofs of their houses and spread them on the asphalt to dry and also to showcase them for sale.

Shops in Sa'yda have a limited variety of goods and often lack non-food items, such as appliances or clothing. While in Intilaq, there are all sorts of shops, such as for clothing, and even restaurants. Both Sa'yda and Intilaq were established around the same time, in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, Intilaq is located in the larger, older settlement of Boustan, which was built in the early 1980s. Sa'yda is more isolated than Intilaq, which could explain why Intilaq, an extension of Boustan, has far more shops. Many of Intilaq's settlers, however, complained that, in the beginning, there were no shops, they had to bring everything from home, "including bread, potable water, the matches", and that, up to this day, they cannot find all that they need in the New Lands. Intilaq has many pharmacies almost in all the villages, but Sa'yda has only one pharmacy in Omar. Omar also has a mechanic shop to fix water pumps.

In Intilaq, IFAD and the government provide extensive and ongoing training to settlers, while Sa'yda had training only during the early stages of settlement, which was limited to how to turn on water pumps in the 'Widow Village' of Samaha. In both settlements, the Noubariya Research and Extension station, responsible for developing desert lands, sends training professors, almost on a bi-monthly basis in Upper Egypt and bi-weekly basis in Lower Egypt, to lecture in the field and in agricultural cooperatives. Farmers are also



contacted through the LDU for field trials by development agencies and extension and research personnel from the Noubariya station. Although I observed women farmers contacted for field trials in Intilaq, most farmers in Sa'yda contacted for research trials were men.

Agriculture in Intilaq per household is 3-4 times more profitable than the most profitable farms in Intilaq. Most settlers in Sa'yda farm parts, not all the area, of their lands and cultivate *berseem* (fodder) and wheat in the winter and *berseem* and hibiscus in the summer, along with few small ruminants and cows or camels, the latter often in partnership with investors from Daraw, a town where camels are exported from Sudan. The less wealthy settlers, especially those in Upper Egypt, fatten animals in partnership with investors. Camels are fattened by the Sa'yda farmers and sold by the investors in Cairo. The farmers are entitled to one third the price of the camels. In Intilaq, agriculture is focused on fruit trees, for the most part, peanuts, and *berseem*. Beneficiaries and Evicted Tenants, who access half the area of the land provided to graduates, mostly grow *berseem* for fattening their ruminants. Many of the women graduates, due to the lack of adequate services, especially schooling for their children, planted their lands with cactus. Because farming the land is a condition for retaining it, these women had to farm their lands and opted for cactus, which requires little labour, irrigation, and fertilization, and is consequently labeled as the lazy farmer crop, but in Intilaq is also 'the absentee settler crop'. The Cactus fruit, or the prickly pear, is sold for good prices in tourist markets. More recently, cactus orchards have generated income equivalent to that of fruit orchards.

It is also important to talk about the local diet when talking about agriculture, since the diet influences the choice of crop farmers make, particularly women farmers and landholders. Women's lands, as opposed to men's lands, had many food crops. In Upper Egypt, women grew lettuce, *molokhiyah* (a green, bitter, and leafy vegetable), onions, garlic, and *jarjeer* (another green, leafy vegetable) for home consumption. In Lower Egypt, women grew these greens and one fruit tree of each kind of fruit for home consumption. Bread constitutes more than 40% of the calories consumed in Egypt (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003). In fact bread is called '*aish*, or life. In Upper Egypt, bread is left to ferment under the sun and is thus called sun bread, '*aish shamsi*.

In Upper Egypt, most women landholders and other settlers plant wheat in the winter for home consumption, with the excess sold to government mills and the agricultural bank in Edfu. In Lower Egypt, people eat a thinner type of bread called flat bread and also more rice than those in Upper Egypt. Bread provided by the government is of low quality, with some complaining it is raw, has flies in it, burnt, or too thin. The Samaha village, however, in Sa'yda had a good government bakery and many people, even from outside the Samaha, lined up in long lines every morning for bread. The new Revolution promised better quality of subsidized bread and flour, which was advertised in the media.

Nonetheless, subsidized bread is an important source of animal feed. Most settlers in both settlements feed the low quality bread to their birds and dogs. In both settlements, women rear small ruminants and poultry (rabbits, goats, geese, ducks, chicken, and turkey). Many sell these animals in the local vegetable markets and buy vegetables for their house on that same day. Women in Upper Egypt, as opposed to those in Lower Egypt, seldom go to the animal markets. Only men go to the animal markets to purchase cows or small ruminants.

### **3.3 The Villages**

Villages in the two settlements were locally referred to as 'the desert'. Many complained that it was hard to get to cities and fix things that go bad, such as a television or a washing machine. The settlements were isolated in the Western desert, hours away from the original hometowns. I worked in seven villages and considered five village models, Graduate (3) (one of which was women exclusive), Widow (2), and Evicted Tenants villages (2). Two of the graduate villages and both of the Evicted Tenants villages were gender mixed. Three villages were, for the most part, inhabited by women landholders (see Table 6). The relations between villages are based on a model settlement initiated in the late 70s (Voll 1980).

Each settlement had a service village (containing the LDU, a police station, and a postal office) surrounded by satellite villages for housing. Each satellite village contains a shops area, a health care unit, a veterinary service unit, and a LAC. Shahama and Imam Malik were the service villages of Sa'yda and Intilaq, respectively. Intilaq was settled by women who are predominately married and educated. In contrast, Sa'yda was predominately settled by women who are divorced or widowed and illiterate. Women with joint titles married to evicted tenants in the mixed villages of both settlements were mostly illiterate and

many were widowed. Literacy is a crucial factor for participating on a board committee in the local agricultural cooperatives. Agriculture in Sa'yda is mostly subsistence-based, focused on wheat cultivation for home consumption and *berseem* for profit, which is either used to raise cattle or rented for herders. A few graduates plant henna and sesame for profit. Intilaq, on the other hand, is profit-oriented with fruit trees as the main crop. One settler complained that Sa'yda is very poor and not surprisingly devoid of trees (where money is required to buy seedlings).

**Table 6 Distribution of women's access to land in Sa'yda and Intilaq.**

Village Name and Location	Village Type	Number of Households	Percent of Women Landholders
<b>Samaha</b> Sa'yda settlement	'Widow Village' Women exclusive	303 Households, WHHs	99% are WHHs with full title access
<b>Shahama</b> Sa'yda settlement	Graduate and Evicted Tenant Village  Gender-mixed	1129 Households, in the Graduate and Tenant category	About 2% are women landholders with full title access  30% are women with joint title access
<b>Iman</b> Sa'yda settlement	Widow and Evicted Tenants Village  Gender-mixed	469 Households, 104 WHHs and 392 Evicted Tenants	22% are WHHs settled in a widow sub-village
<b>Safa wil Marwa</b> Intilaq settlement	Graduate Village  Gender-mixed	597 Households, mostly Graduates	6% are Graduate Women Landholders with full title access
<b>Ali Mubarak</b> Intilaq settlement	Graduate Village  Gender-mixed	387 Households, mostly Graduates	20% are Graduate Women Landholders with full title access
<b>Imam Malik</b> Intilaq settlement	Evicted Tenant Village  Gender-mixed	1849 Households, mostly Evicted Tenants	50% of titles were for wives of Evicted Tenants in joint titles
<b>Shohada</b> Intilaq settlement	Graduate Village  Almost women exclusive	595 Households, for Graduates	70% are Graduate Women Landholders with full title access

The Samaha, also called the ‘Widow Village’, is considered the worst in terms of the living conditions between all of the seven villages and was referred to by the local women as the ‘last lands God created’, ‘rotten lands’, or ‘poverty-stricken’. This village lacked shops, a vegetable market, transportation, loans, adequate water supply, and the number of the school’s teachers was more than the students. Only 5% of the houses are inhabited. To make things worse, the village had recently flooded on a massive scale. All the villages are referred to by the settlers as ‘the Mountains’, *Jabal* (the New Lands are higher than the Old Lands), and no matter how prosperous, are often lacking in the eyes of the settlers. Settlers complained a lot about lack of mosquito control. “Mosquitoes ‘eat’ us at night,” many settlers complained in both settlements. The best women exclusive village in terms of the living conditions was located in Lower Egypt and called Al Shohada. Women landholders there had an adequate supply of irrigation water, participated more effectively on local committees, and had access to loans and extensive training.

### **3.4 Local Agricultural Cooperatives and Local Development Units**

The LACs are responsible for providing farmers with agricultural training, fertilizers, seeds, and extension advice, as well as solving social and economic problems in the village (Voll 1980: 146-147, Abdel Aal 1998). The LACs in each village have members at large, all the landholders, who have to pay annual fees, and elect the board members and run for elections as board members (seven members), who are responsible for solving local agricultural disputes, providing technical advice to other farmers, and raising funds, as well as making decisions about spending the respective LAC money on development projects for the public (Voll 1980: 146-147; Law of Agricultural Cooperation 1992). Board members elect a president for the cooperative. The board members are also responsible for the day-to-day operations, such as fertilizer sale, seed sale, accounting, and rent of the machinery (excavators, tillers, combines). In addition to the seven members, there is an accountant and a person responsible for the fertilizer storage space, and three or four part-time hires for operating the agricultural machinery, as well as guarding the fertilizer and the machinery.

Each LAC has its own budget. It raises its own money from development projects, such as a tree nursery or sewing circles. Some development agencies, such as the WFP and

Italian debt swap program, target local agricultural cooperatives, not individual farmers. The Village Engineer is paid by the LRS but the rest of the employers are paid by the cooperative's budget. Board members positions are considered volunteer positions. Elected members are paid 10 EL for each of the monthly meetings and about 400-600 EL per year for their services. In Upper Egypt's Sa'yda village banks are non-existent and loans are provided by the agricultural cooperatives, as opposed to Intilaq where village banks provided the loans.

The LACs in each settlement are collectively administered by a LDU. In Intilaq, almost all LACs vote in members for a general cooperative that is responsible mainly for marketing agricultural produce for member settlers, such as potatoes and vegetables. Each LDU is headed by a Head of Settlement, who is a male agricultural engineer or an agronomist and is responsible for coordinating the development of his respective settlement to become equivalent in services to the Old Lands. The GARPAP constructs buildings for schools, agricultural cooperatives, health care, veterinary services, markets, post offices, youth clubs, subsidized bread bakeries, and daycare (Voll 1980: 146).

The Heads of Settlement are responsible for contacting the relevant ministries to provide the respective staff in the services' building, as well as other services such as electricity and water and coordinating rural development projects with development agencies and NGOs, such as the WFP, NEF, and Africa Care. Many of these agencies come through the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit, which is similarly responsible for coordinating rural development in the New Lands, but often with the assistance of the LDUs and the local agricultural cooperatives.

The administration of the local development units also includes the Vice Head, the Head of Training, the Legal Consultant, the Head of Agricultural Affairs in the settlement, and the Head of Settlers' Affairs. All of these positions are occupied by agricultural engineers or agronomists, except for the legal advisor, who is a lawyer. All of the local development units are headed by the LRS in Cairo. Monthly meetings between the Head of the LRS and the Heads of Settlement occur for resolving emerging problems and executing new initiatives.

The LDUs constituted almost the only government presence in the New Lands, but also there exists constant visits from the Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Research Institute, particularly from the Noubariya Training and Research Station (refer to Diagram 1). Other government and development agencies are involved but through the LDUs and agricultural cooperatives execute their plans and policies. Diagram 1 outlines the relations between these institutions and how they work together to provide farmers with public services, fertilizers, and loans.

### **3.5 Other Associations**

In an effort to promote public participation, government and involved development agencies, as mentioned earlier, created venues for settlers' participation in resource management, community development, and women's empowerment. In some cases, settlers themselves created associations, such as the Local Councils to resolve conflict. Settlers used many of these associations to organize development of their community, such as through building of schools, potable wells, and marketing.

Water User Associations in Intilaq are supported by IFAD through training and provision of water filters and seem to have an active role in demanding equitable water distribution, albeit unsuccessfully. In Sa'yda, Water User Associations are created by the MWRI but are largely inactive. Many settlers in Sa'yda have not heard about the Water User Associations or solicited their services. In both settlements, IFAD and the MWRI encourage and appoint women to be members in these Water User Associations.

The Social Development Associations were initiated by the WFP in Sa'yda and Iman villages to train women and provide them with employment opportunities to solve their own problems in the community (WFP personnel, pers. comm.). In Iman a weaving station was created for local women's employment. The engineer of the village coordinated marketing of the products. The Associations operated for a short time (one to two years). Then the Samaha village flooded and the women members left the association, as 95% of them relocated into the Old Lands. The WFP stopped training sessions and farmers' exchange visits. Similarly, when the WFP left marketing in the Iman village stopped and so did the activity in the weaving station.

The Social Development Associations are currently inactive in Sa'yda (see below), but in Intilaq they are active and largely comprised of women members. Social Development Associations have done great jobs in creating daycare facilities, including in Sa'yda, and attending to women-related issues, such as better schooling for children and better transport. Social Development Associations are administered by the local governorates but are also supported by the LDUs, IFAD, and the WFP through micro-credit provision, appointment of desirable members, and funding activities, such as a specialist-doctor clinic in Intilaq.

Local Councils, or *Majlis Orfi*, are more democratic and women inclusive in Intilaq. In Sa'yda, on the other hand, the Local Councils are dominated by Village Engineers and exclude women from participation in meetings, even the women who were board members in the agricultural cooperatives. Although the WFP tried to create Local Councils in Sa'yda the group dissolved shortly after the WFP left the region.

People in the new lands have no voting rights or political representation according to geographic areas and, owing to their isolation (and high transport expenses), they rarely participate in elections or other political activities in the Old Lands.

### **3.6 The Comprehensive Rural Development Unit**

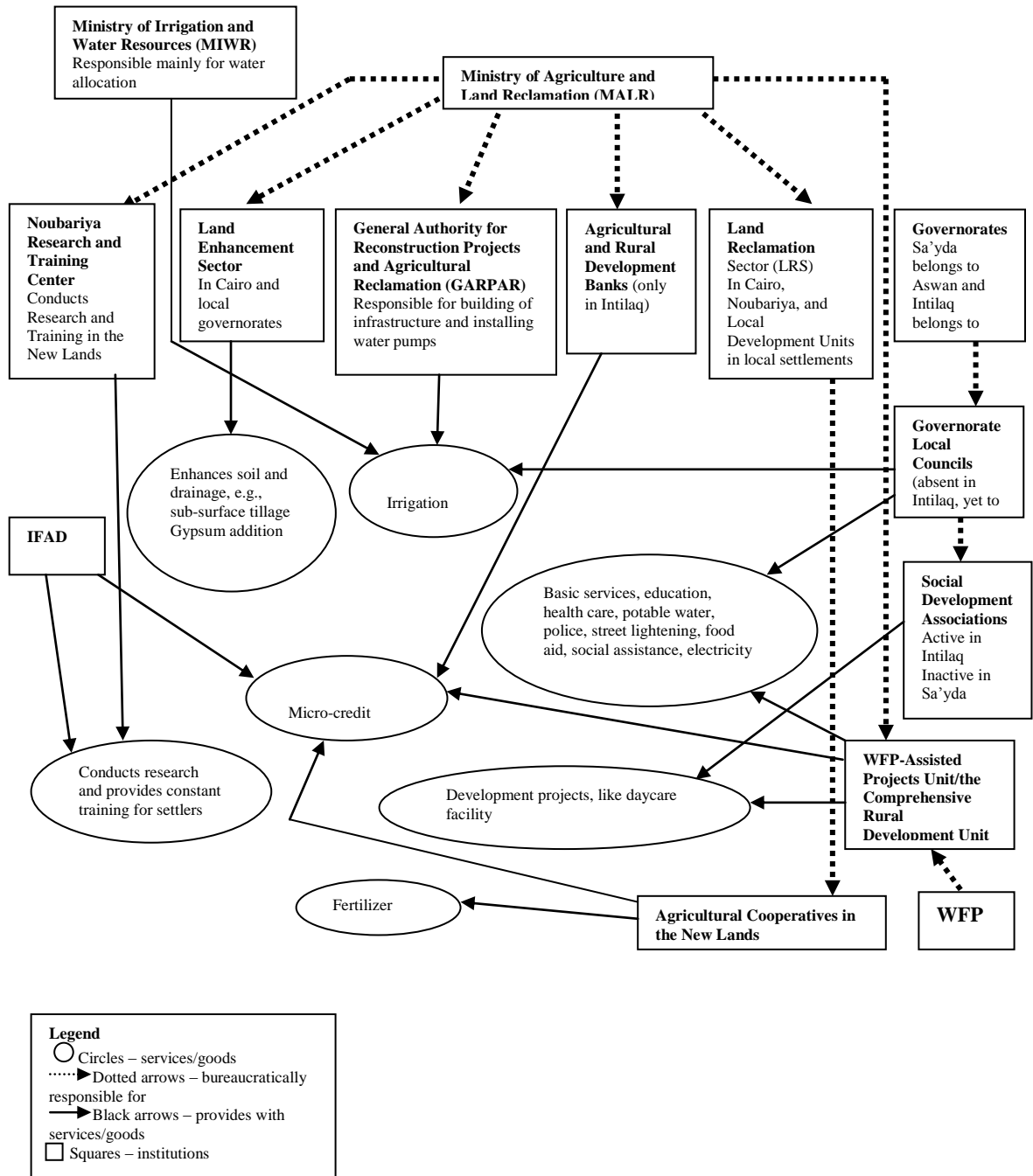
The Comprehensive Rural Development Unit formerly referred to as WFP-Assisted Projects Unit gets money mainly from WPF and First World governments such as Italy through debt swap programs, as well as food aid. Food aid is provided usually over a four year area after resettlement occurs until the land starts producing. Desert land requires reclamation before it starts producing and this could take up to three or four years. The money is used by this Unit to provide basic services, training for farmers and engineers, agricultural machinery, development projects, and transport in these isolated areas. It depends on what the area needs. In Kalabsha settlement, for example, there was no electricity and the Unit provided settlers with an electric motor. In Sa'yda, as another example, settlers were provided with transport and an industrial refrigerator to store produce. Most importantly, in Sa'yda even after the exit of the Unit, which often works for 5 years in an area and then leaves, Amr Ibn Il A's village was provided with machinery and labour to excavate a drainage canal, that cost seven million EL, one million US dollars at the time.

Some of the notable women-related programs and projects in areas where the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit works include a 20% share for women to be landholders, and an imposition of a female quota in LACs and Social Development Associations which is intended to facilitate the participation of women in public life. In Upper Egypt, WHHs were provided with land in coordination with local governorates in four 'Widow Villages'. The Unit's coordinator felt that by being in women exclusive villages, these WHHs would have better access to women-related services such as security and transport, as well as become easily involved in public life, through a women exclusive LAC and Social Development Association. Many WHHs based on having proper education and an ability to spread knowledge were selected as 'rural women pioneers' and sent for training and exchange visits with farmers in Lower Egypt. Some of these women were also rewarded with baby rabbits or chicks to begin small-scale nurseries.

The WFP aided funds focused on gender, especially ownership rights. WFP and the debt swap programs focused on cooperatives by providing them with loans that would be distributed to farmers on a long-term, rotational basis; income generation activities; and training of board members in fundraising. The premise is that, once these programs end, they should leave behind a long lasting structure, namely an institutional framework (the LACs) to sustain desired outcomes, such as participation in local governance and economic development. As such, LACs were provided with agricultural machinery and money to create a tree nursery, for example, and generate money for the LAC to provide loans to farmers and other services.



**Diagram 1. Government and development agencies involvement in the New Lands.**



### 3.7 Formality and Land Reclamation

Although there are formal categories of settlers, on the ground, there seems to be a wide discrepancy between the formal legal categories and the informal reality. Despite the fact that the informal reality could come to be recognized as a formal legal category<sup>8</sup>, it is important to distinguish between the two due to the differing privileges and land tenure security either is able to offer. Informal land reclamation, as clearly articulated by Barnes (2012), played a very complex role in land reclamation. Informal settlers consisted of several categories: (1) informal land buyers from the legal settlers, (2) entrepreneurs who work in the Arab Gulf and first occupied land but paid bribes and then registered their lands when this became possible, (3) Land Squatters who are either settlers looking to expand their existing land or nearby farmers with high hopes for the New Lands (refer to Table 17, Appendix D). Some categories of reclaimed land were formal but not legislated in the Law of Land Reclamation. These categories were various and included: (1) land set aside as unproductive, but then auctioned behind closed doors between officials and their friends, (2) land provided to WHHs, and (4) land provided through a governor decision to solve a particular problem, such as blood feud. What this means is that the government does not have to provide these types of beneficiaries with land when more land is reclaimed.

Most notably, the MWRI, as well as the LDU in Upper Egypt, did not enforce water regulations, which made informal irrigation and thus reclamation possible (Barnes 2012: 520). Three groups were responsible for enforcing irrigation regulations: the Governorate Local Councils (responsible for the roads), the MWRI (responsible for the water), and the GARP (responsible for the pumps). All had field personnel who removed informally cultivated crops using excavators. Some informally cultivated lands are eventually accepted by the government. It is unclear how this process happens. Some argue that, the more persistent one is (e.g., keeps replanting), the more likely one would succeed in imposing land use claims. Others argue, in Upper Egypt, that the bigger the crops are (such as trees and established sugarcane), the more difficult it is to remove crops and the more likely the

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<sup>8</sup> Land Squatters could become legal settlers by buying the land from the government, and hence legalizing their access to land, and then be categorized as Entrepreneurs.

government would give in. Others argue that bribery works as effectively in establishing land claims. Sugarcane stays for years in the ground. Since 2002, legalizing land sales and land squatting became a priority for the government in the New Lands (Adriansen 2009: 671). Those who squat on government land or who bought land from original settlers legalize their land access and own this land by paying 22,000 EL per acre over a 10-year period.

Because these informal settlers are an illegible category to the government, their use of water and practices in general were outside the jurisdiction, or *zimam*, of the MWRI and LRS. In other words, these informal settlers were not obliged to follow laws that settlers should follow or entitled to irrigation water; yet, they took from the irrigation water earmarked for settlers. For example, in Upper Egypt they cultivated sugarcane, which is banned in the New Lands due to its great water demand, which is about ten times more the water requirement of fodder or wheat (the main crops grown by settlers) (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003). Furthermore, in Sa'yda because settlements are built downstream from the main water canals, parcels of land left vacant were reclaimed by these informal settlers. The Entrepreneurs and Land Squatters, also owing to their location at the beginning of the water canal, consumed most of the water. This lack of irrigation enforcement and informal use of irrigation water which left settlers with limited water were commonplace throughout the MRS settlements (Al Ahram, September 2012, Vice Head of the LRS, pers. comm.).

Barnes (2012) and Bush (2007) note that the Mubarak government aimed at directing water away from the poor farmers to the entrepreneurs in massive projects, such as Toshka and East Oweinat. While categories of Graduate, Tenant, and Beneficiaries settlers were not allowed to grow water-consuming crops (including bananas, sugarcane, and rice) to save water, formal entrepreneurs in Intilaq cultivated with government blessings water-consuming crops, such as bananas. Most of the smallholder settlers (both formal and informal) were left to rely completely or partially on inferior quality of water, which is either recycled drainage water in Upper Egypt or tap into saline aquifers in Lower Egypt. Worse, some settlers' lands were provided with no access to irrigation water.

### **3.8 Livelihood Strategies**

In Sa'yda, most of the Widowed Women Landholders (WLs) depended on their sons for income. Sons often worked as casual labour during harvesting seasons, most notably in

the sugarcane fields, as well as in building houses and fishing. Women planted only about one third to one tenth their lands and struggled with low yields and lack of money to provide adequate fertilization. These women landholders also depended on a monthly stipend from the government owing to their widowhood or on their deceased husbands' insurance plans. This amount of both types of salaries ranges between 130 EL and 450 EL. A few women, however, managed to produce income from the land with the help of their complying sons.

Many of the women's sons in both settlements were not happy with farming their mothers' lands and preferred government jobs in addition to farming the land. Farming the land alone was perceived as being unemployed. A few women in Upper Egypt, most of whom could not afford cultivating the land, hired their lands or even sold their land through middlemen to marry off their children and go on pilgrimage. Not surprisingly, given that there are two prices for land (a subsidized price and an entrepreneur price), a black market emerged for land sales (Datta 2006). Middlemen often resided in the community and were either sons of the women landholders or outsider men looking for a source of income. Women in Sa'yda also reported using revolving funds as a source of income, which they also used to raise, educate, and marry their children. In the Samaha village, for example, there are two revolving funds: one for 1000 EL and one for 100 EL.

On the other hand, in Intilaq, Women Graduate Landholders and their families often hired labour from nearby towns. Nonetheless, in the early stages of settlement, labour was difficult to find, and all family members, including the women landholders, participated in labour. The land in Lower Egypt was productive to the extent that many of the women landholders I spoke with have bought additional one or even three pieces of land, with many hiring more land to grow *berseem* and peanuts, because their own farms were shaded with fruit trees. Similar to Sa'yda, some of the women landholders who could not cultivate their lands also rented out or sold their lands.

Rent in both settlements took two forms: partnership and rent. For partnership, renters who cultivate the land get two third the profit and the landowner get one-third the profit. The landowner also equally contributes to the purchase of inputs such as seed and fertilizer, but to the full amount of doing permanent changes to the land, such as building irrigation furrows or levelling it. The rent price is determined by the location of the land with respect to the

roads and more importantly water. In Sa'yda the type of irrigation largely determined the price. Some lands were irrigated by gravity while others were irrigated by diesel pumps. Those irrigated by gravity were more expensive to rent since they do not require any oil or gas expenses.

In Intilaq, the price of renting the land depended also on whether it had an orchard or not and if so, what stage the trees were at. The rent of five acres of land with mature trees is valued at 40,000 EL per year. In both settlements, rent contracts are often signed. In Sa'yda, where crops are mostly annual, rent is annual, while in Intilaq rent was charged on a five-year basis. Yet in Sa'yda cultivation of henna, which stays in the land for a decade, could be rented for a couple of years, especially when rent is in partnerships, as renters worry they grow the henna and then get kicked out from the land.

### **3.9 Social Relations**

Settlers felt isolated in the New Lands and in fact were antisocial with people who are from a different religion or a different location than theirs. Location was equivalent to identity, in both settlements (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003: 8). People from Monofiya are called Manayfah; people from Beseliah are called Basaylah, for example. Many settlers, in both settlements, complained about a lack of social life and most women felt afraid 'in the desert' in the beginning of resettlement. Most opted to befriend people who were from the same region. People from the same area felt responsible towards each other and protected each others' reputations. In fact, in Sa'yda houses were arranged by the location that settlers originally came from. Those from Ramadi area, for an example, were located next to each other.

In addition to settlers coming from various areas, they also differed in religion. Although the Christian population is roughly 10% of Egyptians, I noticed very few Christian landholders in the New Lands. Christian and Muslim women landholders seem to have good relations with each other in many cases. However, a few discrimination incidents were observed and reported. One Muslim woman landholder in Sa'yda refused to eat food prepared by non-muslim women (not necessarily food containing meat, food in general). In another case a Muslim landholder, who was friends with a Christian landholder and often shared transport costs with her, was asked by other Muslim landholders to leave the Christian

woman behind because she is Christian. This same Christian women landholder felt isolated in the New Lands and told me that her neighbours are all Muslims and as a result felt it was difficult for her to befriend them. She did not participate in weddings in the village even when she was present.

In both settlements, many settlers held a grudge towards what they called the 'entrepreneurs' (Land Squatters and those Entrepreneurs who bought land from the government), who took most of the water. In Sa'yda, some had to sell their cattle because they could not cultivate enough *berseem* due to the lack of water. Other settlers in Sa'yda benefitted from the entrepreneurs, who provided them during the harvest season with sugarcane leaves for animal feed. In both settlements, more so in Sa'yda, family members rarely visited the settlers. The isolation of these settlements and the difficulty in accessing reliable transport to these areas all led to minimal social visiting. Many women landholders in Sa'yda, especially in the waterlogged Samaha, reported that they were encouraged by their relatives to leave the New Lands, while in Lower Egypt relatives encouraged women settlers to be patient and stand by their husbands in the *Jabal*. The Village Engineers, in both settlements, are part of the villages and lived there, and many rented land for cultivation. In Samaha, for example, Village Engineers married some of the settlers' daughters.

Marriage prospects for the girls in Intilaq were far more promising than they were in Sa'yda. Girls in Intilaq often married men from the New Lands, but in Sa'yda were reluctant to do so, describing the men of the New Lands as already married, lower class, and most notably the girls refused to stay in the New Lands. Many of the girls in Sa'yda were engaged to their maternal cousins. This was the case also in Intilaq, as many parents preferred relatives as in-laws, but this was more so the case in Sa'yda. Men and women in Intilaq married as young as 18 years old, while in Sa'yda many were still unmarried, and they were well into their thirties. It was notable that girls who married non-family members in both Sa'yda and Intilaq often made a list of what the bride and the groom brought into the house, and the list was witnessed by a third party and signed by each of the two groups. It was also notable that girls who married outside the family in Sa'yda had a far more extensive bridalwear. Brides in Intilaq had a three-fold greater number of items in their bridalwear than those in Sa'yda.

### 3.10 Irrigation

The MWRI is responsible for maintaining the main water pumps (that pump water out of the Nile into the higher desert land), cleaning and maintaining the main canals, and planning and executing water distribution schemes. In Sa'yda, for example, five pumps are responsible for pumping water onto land that is up to 46m above the Nile. In each settlement, there exists an irrigation engineer and a group of assistant staff (with engineering, social work, and high school diploma backgrounds) who plan and execute water distribution, allegedly, in collaboration with local Water User Associations. The LDUs are responsible for cleaning the sub-canals, which are on village land. Water canals and pump encasing structure are dug and built by GARPAP. In both settlements, drip and sprinkler irrigation were encouraged, as elsewhere in the New Lands. Irrigation equipment, such as on-farm pumps, aluminum tubes, and sprinkler irrigation, as well as, only in Upper Egypt, two drip irrigation lines were provided by GARPAP. The GARPAP continues to own the on-farm pumps that were distributed to settlers.

In the Sa'yda settlement, however, during the early stages of settlement, the LDU managed all the canals and employers related to water distribution. In Sa'yda, from 1998 until the late 2000s, the water arrived to farmers on a bi-weekly basis. This made it difficult to use sprinkler and drip irrigation, rather than flood irrigation, as drip and sprinkler irrigation provided lesser quantities of water and, therefore, required water to be available over longer periods. Hence, farmers opted for flood irrigation, which resulted in flooding in the entire settlement. Not only was the problem with bi-weekly water access, in Sa'yda, the irrigation equipment was reported to be faulty and insufficient for the whole land. More recently, however, in Sa'yda, since the late 2000s, water was distributed in more frequent water rotation system (3 days per week) that comprised of organized opening and closing of certain waters gates.

This is better for the crops, as during the summer salinity is very high, and it is better to get a constant supply of water to leach the salts out of the roots zone, rather than once every two weeks. This new model of irrigation also made water more accessible to farmers, yet not completely, especially during May when many of the sugarcane cultivators upstream are at the peak of water consumption. Note here that water is scarce in Sa'yda and not all the

settlers farm their entire land or any of their land at all. A few left their lands fallow. Few said that they did not plant all of their farms because there was not enough water for planting. Furthermore, about one third of the settlement area is not yet distributed. Others lamented that their lands have no access to water at all. As a result, the MWRI built, and continues to do so, drainage canals, which are used as irrigation canals, thereby double solving the problems of (1) lack of drainage and (2) irrigation water. This water, however, is of lower quality and many farmers complained it burnt their feet (see Barnes 2010).

Water pumps were stolen in many settlements, such as in the Samaha village of Sa'yda and Bangar Al Sukar in Boustan. These motors were guarded by the settlers, sometimes using weapons, but still many areas were theft-stricken. Furthermore, in Sa'yda many settlers did not like sharing the electric or diesel pumps provided by the government, which are provided to four landholders. Sharing the pumps also meant that those at the end of the lines get the least water. Settlers in Sa'yda, instead, depended on small diesel pumps which require expensive oil and diesel, about 80 EL for every two irrigations, compared to 17 EL for the whole month in the case of an electric pump. Few farmers flood irrigate through gravity with no need for pumps at all. The electric pumps had large pressure that through them one can operate sprinkler and drip irrigation. In Sa'yda, during summer time, heat contributes to technical difficulties in the pumping stations often leading to a general shortage in water supply.

In Intilaq, farmers' electric pumps were not stolen but were frequently cut off from the electric grid every time one or more of the pump group members did not pay their electricity bill. Many of the affected farmers opted for reconnecting to the power grid secretly, illegally to save their crops. Areas closer to the water canal have better water access than those at the end. In general though, the Arab Gulf entrepreneurs with large farms are at the beginning of the water lines. In groups of four neighboring farms, the farmers dig artesian wells to supplement the lack of adequate Nile water. Many settlers reported a good life when water was abundant, which then decreased with competitive water use over time. In Intilaq, settlers installed drip irrigation nets at their own expenses, more recently, when they cultivated fruit trees on their farms. A few though took loans from the agricultural bank to cultivate fruit trees.



In both settlements, conflict over water use seems to be commonplace between settlers. Settlers sharing water pumps had to wait to get their turn in irrigation. Many reported fighting with their neighbours for accessing their fair shares of water. Many women settlers who were managing their lands themselves in Sa'yda felt that they were getting less water than their male neighbours. Men often sleep and stay on their lands for long periods of time. Water during nighttime was more abundant. Women, on the other hand, often stayed in their houses at night and thus had access to lower levels of water. Also in both settlements, the distributed aluminum tubes were not convenient because farmers had to stumble across their fields to move the tubes when watering different areas, in Sa'yda, the tubes were shared between four farms. In Sa'yda, no one seemed to like sharing these tubes and many opted for flood irrigation.

### **3.11 'Greening the Land'**

For the land to be cultivated, farmers first had to level the land (especially in Sa'yda where flood irrigation is practiced); leach out the salts in the land; build furrows on the farm for irrigation; buy a diesel pump (relevant to Sa'yda only); remove boulders; and fertilize the land. Optimally, irrigation and fertilization rates should be provided in smaller, more frequent doses than in the Old Lands to leach out the salts and to avoid nutrient loss due to the high porosity of the sandy soils. A few farmers in Sa'yda, however, due to limited finances, neither leached their soils properly nor provided enough fertilizer to their lands. Some lands never 'greened' properly despite attempts at cultivation.

In fact, women in Sa'yda are eager to test whether their lands 'green' or not, with those greened deemed good land, as they would fetch higher rent and sale prices. In Intilaq, land preparation also involved installing a net of drip irrigation tubes, along with cultivating fruit trees. Perhaps, most importantly, 'greening the land'<sup>9</sup>, in both settlements, involved changing the soil texture, or changing the lands' soil to a darker color. The breakdown of

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<sup>9</sup> 'Greening the land' is used throughout this dissertation not as a scientific term but as a term that is used by local people to describe the land reclamation process required to bring desert lands into agricultural production: hence the term green.

organic matter and animal manure darkens the soil and improves its nutrient and water absorbing capacity.

In addition to soil fertility, in Sa'yda wildlife also constitutes a challenge. A few women sit in the field all day scaring birds away from mature wheat crops. Many women reported that birds used to attack them when they first started cultivating their lands. Others reported that there used to be large amounts of scorpions, which decreased as the land became increasingly irrigated. Many also complained about wolves eating their crops, especially on farms that have no neighbours. Most feared is a horned viper, locally called *Tresha*. It is believed that if bitten by a *Tresha* then the affected limb should be removed. Many mothers lamented their sons' exposure to these 'beasts' and lack of available antidotes.

The government provided people in both settlements with money for the first cultivation of the land, and the sum of money provided was based on the assumption that the land is leveled, leached of salts, and ready for farming. However, levelling the land and washing it requires oil, gas, and rental of leveling machinery (an excavator, locally referred to as laser), as well as fertilizer and seeds, all of which cost way more than the money provided. Many of the settlers' parents in Intilaq helped the young couples financially get established in farming. Furthermore, in Intilaq there are numerous loans that farmers can take to cultivate fruit trees on the land, to install drip irrigation, and to fertilize and buy seeds, with an interest rate of 10%.

While most farmers in Intilaq fertilize the land with animal manure, many in Sa'yda do not, as they believe that manure burns the soil and that it is too expensive to move manure from the Old Lands. Those who do in Sa'yda come from farming backgrounds where composted manure is applied to the land. Some well-off farmers in Sa'yda use sugarcane remains from the nearby sugar factory and spread it on the land to enhance soil structure. Also, because the settlement is flooded, some try to bury the land in a thick layer of soil and amendments (such as sugarcane and manure). Those farmers who practice this technique are few, however, and fewer are successful.

### 3.12 Micro-credit

The differences in the availability in micro-credit between Sa'yda and Intilaq are remarkable. Sa'yda got limited access to micro-credit from the LRS and the Italian and Swiss debt swap programs<sup>10</sup>. Loans are accessed through the agricultural cooperatives and are usually limited to 6,000 EL. The Heads of Settlement in Upper Egypt decide on how much money each LAC takes for loans and the Village Engineers decide on which farmers get to have credit. The LACs' Village Engineers and the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit field personnel had decision-making power over how the micro-credit can be used. The interest rate is as low as 3%, to cover administrative costs. The micro-credit provided to farmers in Sa'yda originated from the nominal sale of food aid. The LRS used this money as a rotating micro-credit fund given farmers on a 3-year basis. Yet, many in Sa'yda felt reluctant to take loans, as they did not feel they want to be investors and only wanted to grow food crops, mainly for home consumption. There were other lending groups in the Old Lands that settlers in Sa'yda depended on, such as loans from the Association of Business Men.

In Intilaq, on the other hand, microcredit is provided on a constant basis from the agricultural bank but at a higher interest rate of 10%. On average, far more women landholders in Intilaq took loans than did those in Sa'yda. Many women landholders in Intilaq reported taking loans at least 2-3 times since they have settled in Intilaq. Loans are provided by IFAD and the government and are up to 15,000 EL. Loans are more freely spent by the lender in Intilaq, although the bank does require a proposal and budget for how the money would be used. In both settlements, only the original settlers are allowed to take micro-credit. In both settlements also, a few settlers felt reluctant to take loans due to the presence of an interest rate or due to the unreliable source of the loan money and deemed these loans *haram*, or forbidden in Islam, and worried that the animals they might buy with the loans would die or the crops they planted with the loans would be stunted in growth. The Revolution introduced new promises, including providing micro-credit for smallholder farmers through the LRS. Many farmers were provided in micro-credit in the two settlements.

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<sup>10</sup> The debt swap programs entail debt forgiveness in return for local development projects.

### 3.13 Markets

Due to structural adjustment policies, the agricultural cooperatives gradually became less responsible for marketing crops (Bromley and Bush 1994: 210; Abdel Aal 1998). Nevertheless, in Sa'yda, few agricultural cooperatives in the relatively more inhabited villages still market excess wheat, which is grown, for the most part, for home consumption. This saves the farmers transportation costs to sell wheat in agricultural banks. The bank collected the excess wheat itself from the LACs' buildings. In Intilaq, on the other hand, there was marketing at the individual level, as well as other types, such as *kelalah*, when the buyers come into a land and buy the fruit on the trees. The buyers are responsible for everything, from harvesting to transporting. Another type of marketing gives the farmer far more responsibility. A farmer takes the crop into big outlets in Alexandria, Cairo, or nearby towns. On a smaller scale, a farmer, especially a woman, might decide to sell her agricultural produce during market days in major villages, like Imam Malik.

In Intilaq, marketing is also facilitated by the LDU, IFAD, and a marketing committee comprised of landholders. Most of the marketing occurs by linking farmers to private investors, through tenders, such as a potato chips company or vegetable production investors/companies. In Sa'yda, marketing is not as organized or as profit-oriented (refer to Table 4). In villages close to markets, such as Iman, settlers, including women, take berseem on a daily basis for sale in local markets. More isolated villages in Sa'yda, on the other hand, are at a disadvantage as transport of a few kilograms of pepper or cantaloupe costs more than any profits that might be derived from their sale. Those settlers with a motorcycle in the Sa'yda are far more mobile with respect to selling their produce. The agriculture banks and mills constituted the main market outlet for settlers. As a result, most of them cultivated wheat for sale.

### 3.14 Conclusion

This chapter revealed regional inequalities between the two settlements in their respective access to training, markets, and micro-credit. Bush (2000) and Mitchell (2002) rightfully argue that agricultural production in Egypt is not limited by its natural resources but rather by inequitable access to resources. These differences are crucial for understanding why women's experiences with land access differed between the settlements in the next

chapters. The chapter also provided a detailed description of the settlements and villages. What do these places comprise of; how do they work; and what kind of services and relations (between settlers, development agencies, and government) were in place. This provides background context for the upcoming chapters. The limited access to services in the New Lands is reported elsewhere by Adriansen (2009), NEF (2004), and Longergan and Wolf (2001). Lonergan and Wolf (2001) argue that settlements closer to major cities were more successful in attracting beneficiaries to settle into the New Lands. Adriansen (2009: 670) points to the fact that the lack of services led to separation of family members, whereby only those members who had to stay in the New Lands did. It was clear during this research that settlers in settlements that had profitable agricultural enterprises were able to build these services in these communities, often at their own personal expense. Settlements which were not doing very well were not able to provide these services by themselves. In both types of settlements, settlers felt abandoned due to lack of services and were left to deal with broken promises of better quality of life in the New Lands (Adriansen 2009: 670; personal observation).

## Chapter 4

### 4 Women and Opportunities for Land Access in Egypt's MRS

Because of the pressures associated with international treaties and WFP aid conditionality during the Mubarak era, women gained land access, most notably through the WHHs category in the late 1990s. Previous land distribution schemes had provided mainly men as heads of households with land access (Adriansen 2009). For these reasons, The Mubarak era is known, perhaps ironically as we will see below, for its range of gender progressive policies (Sholkamy 2012). During his rule, in addition to land access, women were given a quota to participate in political life and were given the rights to divorce their husbands without the husbands' consent, in what is called *kholo*<sup>11</sup>. Development agencies, particularly the WFP, are to be largely credited for the provision of women with land access (in the form of both full and joint titles) in the MRS. The WFP policies are part of an international agenda that promotes giving women property rights for their economic and social wellbeing and empowerment.

#### 4.1 Types and Methods of Land Access

In general, women could access land (house and farming land) in the MRS through distribution by the state (formally or informally by requesting land from relevant officials), purchase from the state or original settlers themselves, rent from original settlers, occupation of vacant, undistributed lands, purchase of land in closed auctions, as gifts from influential government officials, and as joint titles with their husbands. Another MRS-specific land access method observed only in Intilaq settlement was acquiring land through land-related projects for settlers in the Graduate category. Although women could have access to land through occupying vacant land, I never saw or heard of a woman in either settlement who accessed land by occupation. In Sa'yda, many of the Land Squatters had weapons that they

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<sup>11</sup> *Kholo* was introduced by Suzan Mubarak, the wife of the former president Hosni Mubarak. *Kholo* allows women to divorce their husbands without needing their approval; however, women lose their rights to a monetary allowance by doing so and need to rely on the courts to get divorced. On the other hand, men can divorce their wives without resorting to the courts.

sometimes used to scare away government officials, who often attempted removing their crops. The use of weapons to keep the government away could explain why women were not Land Squatters in Upper Egypt.

The 55 women landholders met during fieldwork accessed land mostly as Graduates, herein after Graduate Women (GWLs), in Intilaq and as Women Heads of Households, herein after WHHs Landholders (WLs), in Sa'yda (see Table 7, below). In Intilaq, GWLs' access to land which was profitable allowed them additional land access through rent, land sales (in closed auctions and/or from the government or original settlers), and/or Graduate projects, such as a greenhouse distribution project and a 'Land Expansion Project'. Land Expansion Projects entailed providing land up to one or two acres in size to Graduates in Intilaq. These Graduates had to be permanent settlers and in good standing in the LACs (paid all their dues for the land mortgage, loans, and fertilizer purchases). They were entitled to a parcel of land for investment (such as opening vegetable and fruit shops (*shader*), other commercial stores, or mills) or for erecting any structure.

Buying additional land from settlers or the government was uncommon for WLs in Upper Egypt. In Sa'yda, I met some WLs who rented more land but none of the 40 WLs bought land on top of the lands they already had access to. In Intilaq, on the other hand, I met many GWLs who bought or rented more land. At least four of the 15 GWLs purchased or rented land in addition to their own lands. One woman, who was also divorced, registered the purchased land in her name, while the other two, who purchased and were married, registered the purchased lands in the names of their husbands. In Intilaq, I also met two women who were not GWLs but bought land in their own names from a settler using their inheritance money, since land is much cheaper in the New Lands.

In both settlements, many women accessed land that was given to their husbands by senior officials. Because these husbands had jobs, and the land was a means to reduce unemployment, they could not acquire land by law. Therefore, when a husband was rewarded with land, it was often provided to his wife. In Sa'yda, for example, most of the LDU employees had land distributed to their wives by a former Head of Settlement. Furthermore, because officials were not allowed to own land while they retained their jobs, many bought land at lower than market prices in closed auctions (which basically involved government

officials and their friends) and registered the land in their wives' names. These lands were deemed 'unfit for farming'<sup>12</sup> and put up for sale at much lower market prices in closed auctions. I met a Village Engineer and two former Heads of Settlement that had this arrangement for their wives. If their wives also had a job, they opted to register the land in the name of another woman in the family, a sister or a sister-in-law. A few women, who were friends with these officials, were invited to these auctions. Some of these invited women managed to buy land.

**Table 7 Women's means for land access through the MRS in Sa'yda and Intilaq.**

<b>Means of Land Access in the Intilaq Settlement</b>	<b>Means of Land Access in the Sa'yda Settlement</b>	<b>Conditions for Access</b>
Receive land and housing as graduates (15) or wives of Evicted Tenants (joint title) (3)	Receive land and housing as graduates (0), Women Heads of Household (40), or wives of Evicted Tenants (joint title) (5)	Be a graduate with no property or assets or an Evicted Tenant's wife in the settlement where the WFP is involved  Pay a mortgage payment of 400 EL per year over a 30-year period  WLs in Sa'yda had to show proof of having dependent children and their lack of asset ownership. These WLs had to pay 1200 per year over a 30-year period
In closed Auctions (3)	N/A *	Land purchased for lower than market prices in auctions attended by officials of the local LDU and their invited friends
Gifts from officials (3)	Gifts from officials (2)	Be the wife of a rewarded government employer
Occupation of Land (0)	Occupation of Land (0)	Not observed for women, only for

<sup>12</sup> Lands designated as 'unfit for farming', and for sale in closed auctions, were vaguely identified by the LDU. One of the features used to identify this type of land is the presence of large boulders. Yet, all unreclaimed lands initially had large boulders. Perhaps, what is more perplexing is the fact that, to the contrary, the land is fit for farming as most of the land is cultivated with fruit trees.



		men
Buy land and/or housing from settlers (5)	Buy land and/or housing from settlers (0)	Land and/or housing are bought on the black market at cheap prices but legalizing the purchased land also requires purchasing the land again from the state
Graduate Projects (green house and development project on real estate) (5)	N/A*	Land parcels and greenhouses are provided to graduates as a reward for their good standing in the MRS. Some greenhouses were provided to graduates who were supposed to acquire 5 acres but received less, like 4.5 acres or so

N.B. Numbers between brackets represent the respective cases of women landholders encountered during fieldwork.

\*N/A there is a lack of sufficient data from which to draw conclusions.

## 4.2 MRS Point System for Graduate Settlers

There were qualifications for participating in resettlement as there existed a differential point system for qualifying for resettlement (Adriansen 2009). The point system had various categories, including farming background or experience, physical ability, type of education, year of graduation, age, lack of property ownership, and gender (Adriansen 2009: 667; Vice Head of the LRS, 2010, pers. comm.). Since 1987, men were allocated double the points given to women in the gender category. Then, in 1992, the gender category was canceled to create a more gender equitable distribution scheme (Vice Head of the LRS, 2010, pers. comm.). Although after 1992 the gender category was canceled, most of the other evaluation categories are largely socially constructed categories that strongly favor men. Women's social roles as farmers are underappreciated and men are perceived as the real farmers (Saad and Ayeb 2006; FAO, n.d.; Badran 1993: 199). This means that men are likely to score higher than women in the farming experience and physical ability categories.

Education, particularly a diploma (from a high school or technical college) or a university degree, was a third evaluative category for accessing land, and those with agricultural education earned higher points. Women were less likely to be educated than men, especially in Upper Egypt. The GWLs in Sa'yda, for example, constituted seven

women out of hundreds of Graduate settlers. Additionally, educated women were far less likely than men to be graduates from agricultural high schools and universities. More recently in the late 2000s, however, women constituted the majority of students in university agricultural programs, but not technical high schools (Abdallah et al. n.d.). Many informants reported that because farm work is dirty and labour intensive, requiring women to squat and bend over for long periods and expose skin, very few women enroll in agricultural programs of the high schools, which are practical in nature. In one case, an agricultural school student in Intilaq reported that out of 100 students only 3 were women. One could thus argue that women were disadvantaged in the education category that favored agricultural graduates.

During the 1980s, when settlements were mostly located in the Western Delta, women constituted the majority of applicants requesting desert land. Land was announced on local television, especially the agriculture channel, newspapers, and government offices. Men were reluctant to give up their jobs or their chances of finding jobs in order to settle into the desert. The uncertainty about the profitability of desert farming and whether these lands were even arable deterred many men from applying for land access. The late 1980s was a so 'golden era' by MRS officials for women's access to land through the MRS. To gain land access, GWLs had to be unmarried though; it was hoped that they would attract single men to settle and establish families in the New Lands (Vice Head of the LRS; Meyer 1998; Adriansen 2009; USAID 2010: 10). This was often not the case.

The GWLs whom I met in Intilaq, for example, accessed land with the help of their husbands. Although the government forbade married women from accessing land through the MRS because of fear they would be reluctant to relocate, the majority of the 15 GWLs in Intilaq were married at the time of applying for land. Most women reported hiding the fact that they were married during selection interviews. Many women landholders testified that their husbands were instrumental in their access to land. Husbands completed all the required paper work and bureaucratic procedures. Furthermore, many women landholders reported that it was their husbands' idea to apply to land. Many husbands were government employees and could not access land unless they gave up their jobs. A few had their brothers or fathers accompany them for completing the procedures of applying for land. At that time, most villages had a 20% rate of women landholders (MRS Head of Agricultural and Training

Affairs). GWLs sometimes were resettled in women exclusive villages, most notably in the Shohada village in the Intilaq settlement, where GWLs constitute 70% of the settlers.

The officers responsible for settlement affairs in Noubariya (where the MRS headquarters was then located) were not happy to see women gain land access in such large numbers. They strongly believed in a unified household model:

“Women who were provided with land were not settling into the New Lands with their families. Villages with women settlers were empty. Furthermore, every time a woman gets land, it is like a lost opportunity for a man to have found a job through land access. The major purpose of the MRS program is to reduce unemployment for bread winners in the country.” (MRS Head of Agricultural and Training Affairs)

Local Village Engineers and settlers reported that women did not relocate because “their husbands worked elsewhere,” “the schools were absent or not of good quality,” or “some husbands refused to follow their wives who were the landholders.”

Although the gender category was allegedly canceled to allow for more equitable access to land between genders, contradictory policies and practices conflicted with this ‘official’ goal. Since the beginning of 1992, in an effort to limit women’s participation in land access, officials responsible for selection of settlers in Noubariya demanded a 90% score on the qualification exams for women as a minimum qualifier for land access as opposed to a 70% score for men, and only those women who had degrees or diplomas in agriculture were allowed to access land, according to the MRS Head of Agricultural and Training Affairs.

### **4.3 WFP Involvement and the WHHs Category**

The WFP is to be largely credited for providing women with land access in the two settlements, as well as in other settlements. More precisely, the WFP imposed a 25%-50% proportion of women landholders in areas, where it provided settlers with food aid for four years. The WFP pressured the government to provide women with access in the form of both full and joint titles (the latter to be discussed in Chapter 6) in the settlements where the WFP worked. In Upper Egypt, the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit also initiated and facilitated the provision of land access to WHHs (divorced, widowed, abandoned, and married to physically challenged husbands) (WFP 2000). These newly landed WHHs were resettled in groups into what is locally called ‘Widow Villages’ (WFP 2000). Many officials (such as at the WFP-

Assisted Projects Unit Coordinator) stated that the group resettlement approach would create solidarity between WHHs, as opposed to feeling isolated in gender-mixed villages due to the WHHs' unique problems and situation.

The WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator was a member of the National Women's Council and was known to be "kind with women", explained the Head of the Sa'yda settlement. In the late 1990s, she initiated the idea of providing women with land access. With the support from the governor of Aswan, WHHs were given land. The majority of WHHs accessed land as widows. The land was announced for widows at the local Social Assistance Divisions where widows get their monthly government assistance stipend, other government offices, and newspapers. In addition to widows, the WHHs category also included women who were divorced, abandoned, married to disabled husbands, or who were the only adults in a family that had elderly parents in need of support. In general, for accessing land, women were required to be of forty years of age or younger, with young children, and no ownership of property.

The former Head of the Sa'yda settlement during the creation of the WHHs category reported that, "women were given land as WHHs because Upper Egypt has a high rate of WHHs. These women cannot work. In Upper Egypt, women are restricted in their mobility to their households. Land was given to them to farm with their brothers and sons and to raise their children with its income." This plan was reiterated by the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator. Many women reported that the Coordinator told them, "bring your brothers, bring your sons and together with them farm the land. I want to come here and eat bread with you, bread from the land." Many WLs also reported that the Coordinator said that she provided them with land "to become independent from kin assistance, to need no one (a father, a brother, or a brother-in-law) in raising one's children."

Women in Upper Egypt, in particular, had a special relationship with the Coordinator of the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit. The Coordinator met with them often and provided many of them with land access as a result of meeting with them. "I was told to go speak with Dr. Azeeza [the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit Coordinator]. She is known to be kind with women's cases. I met with Dr. Azeeza. I told her how my husband abandoned us. She gave me the land to raise my children with," explained Om Rabab, the youngest WL in Upper

Egypt's Sa'yda. When I met with Dr. Azeeza, she told me that she had the cell numbers for many of these women and, indeed, arranged for a six-month stay for me with one of them. A few women in Sa'yda visited the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator or the Governor of Aswan to ask for land as widows with children and they succeeded. Two women of the 40 WLs I met in Sa'yda accessed land through the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator, and one WL accessed land through a personal request from the Governor of Aswan.

In Upper Egypt, WHHs' access to land was more acceptable to the government in Noubariya since these women fit their criteria of bread winners: "The government gave widows land as sources of livelihood to raise their children," explained the MRS Head of Agricultural and Training Affairs.

#### **4.4 Women and Formal Access to Land**

Table 2 shows the formal categories, as outlined by the MALR, and the respective land shares for women in each category. The bulk of the women recipients belong to the Graduate and Evicted Tenants categories and are far from being equal to their male counterparts (refer to Table 2). On average, women who had access to land in the MRS, in the formal categories (of graduates, beneficiaries, and land buyers from the government) constituted 11.5% of total settlers (MALR Statistical Report 2010), which is twice the national rate of 6% for women landowners' share of property in the Old Lands and six times the 1-2% rate of property ownership in Upper Egypt (USAID 2010). It is important to note here that women with joint titles are not included in this 11.5 percent because although the joint title was a formal category it was cancelled, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

This increase in property shares for Egyptian women in the formal categories to 11.5% is far from being adequate, or more precisely equal to men. In a study conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, Deere et al. (2012) report up to a 50% share of property titles for women in Nicaragua, and, similarly, Deere and Leon in Jacobs (2002: 891) report a 45% share in property titles for women in Costa Rica.

In the MRS, women constituted 11% of the Graduate settlers, 17% of the Evicted Tenants, and 10% of the Beneficiaries (WHHs sub-categories and other poverty- or disaster-

stricken sub-categories). Women accessed property most successfully through inheriting land from their husbands since the highest percentage of women landholders (17%) are Evicted Tenants. Throughout my visit to many Evicted Tenants villages, in both settlements, the majority of the women registered as landholders in the Evicted Tenants category inherited the landholder status from their husbands, who were compensated with desert land due to the Tenancy Law 96 of 1992. In Islamic law, women inherit only one eighth of their husbands' property. In practice, however, the property usually stays with the wife until the sons become adults. In most cases, however, these women had adult sons and were merely registered as the landholders; in reality, their sons managed the land.

#### 4.5 What Limits Women from Accessing Land?

Table 8 describes the factors that limited women's access to land through the MRS. In this section, I turn to the factors that limited women's access to land.

When asked, many officials in Cairo and in the local settlements reported that women were few in number because they did not apply for land due to their limited mobility and fear of the 'desert'. "Women did not access land because they did not apply in the first place. A man can go anywhere and stay anywhere, but a woman's parents would not let her apply to go away to farm the desert. A woman cannot stay in the desert like a man can," explained the former Head of the Intilaq Settlement. "A man is hardier and can tolerate the land," explained a local Village Engineer in Sa'yda. In fact, most of the women who accessed land relocated with their fathers, husbands, or brothers to farm the desert.

**Table 8 Factors that limited women from accessing land.**

<b>Categories of Land Access</b>	<b>Factors limiting land access in Intilaq</b>	<b>Factors limiting land access in Sa'yda</b>
<b>Land occupiers (full title)</b>	N/A	Requires weapons, which women often do not own
<b>Graduates (full title)</b>	Did not know about land distribution opportunities  Not interested in relocating into the desert	Did not know about land distribution opportunities  Not interested in relocating into the desert

	Government imposed high standards for women's access to land as graduates  Women are not as educated as men  Since 2004, only entrepreneurs were provided with land access	Government imposed high standards for women's access to land as graduates  Women are not as educated as men  Since 2004, only entrepreneurs were provided with land access
<b>WHH sub Category (full title)</b>	N/A	Since 2004, only entrepreneurs were provided with land access
<b>Wives of Evicted Tenants (Joint title)</b>	The subsequent Minister of MALR disapproved of joint titles  Local officials felt that women had no right to joint titles  Husbands felt that their wives had no claim to their lands	The subsequent Minister of MALR disapproved of joint titles  Local officials felt that women had no right to joint titles  Husbands felt that their wives had no claim to their lands

The lack of security in the New Lands was perceived by local settlers and officials as particularly dangerous for women. "Some men, when their daughters are older, relocate into the Old Lands for fear of the impacts the lack of security will have on their daughters," explained the Vice Head of the LRS. Most women landholders reported being very scared since they relocated into the New Lands, "there is no police here. We sleep and wake up in fear," explained Om Badawi. "One of the biggest problems here is the lack of security. People here are from all over the place and there is no police. You see, now as I am sitting in the house, I feel scared," explained Basma, wife of a Graduate Landholder in Intlaq.

Fear of being isolated and the lack of security, among other problems, and, perhaps most importantly, the fact that social networks in the Old Lands were lost once these women moved to the New Lands all generated reluctance for women to relocate into desert lands, especially for those unmarried women who have already experienced the New Lands firsthand. In the Sa'yda settlement, I indeed saw many women who refused to apply for land after the Revolution when land access was opened to the masses. "No I did not apply for land. What will I do with the land? I cannot farm it. Of course, I will not go live there by

myself in the desert,” said Amoona, a daughter of a WL in Sa’yda. “No I did not apply; I do not want to live in the desert. I cannot wait to get married and leave this place,” said Fatma, another daughter of WL in Sa’yda. Furthermore, due to the reality that many women who applied for land did so through their brothers, fathers, and husbands points to the possibility that many women might have shied away from the tedious bureaucratic process required for applying to land.

Spending time in the two settlements also revealed other reasons why women did not access land. The fact that these women were unable to access land illustrates (1) the prevailing corruption and resulting inequalities and (2) the focus on entrepreneurs for large-scale land acquisitions since 2004.

Many women in the Intilaq settlement wanted to access land for their own future security but reported that there were no current opportunities: “I would really want to get land, if they are giving more land. Land is security. In case a woman got upset with her husband, she would have something to rely on,” explained Rasmiya, a daughter of a GWL in Intilaq. I met four women (two in Intilaq and two in Sa’yda) who really wanted to access land and who took action to realize that ambition. Three of these women were widows, and one was married but was having trouble with her husband. A woman of Intilaq, Om Adel, wanted the land as a means to raise her young children and reduce her dependence on her brothers. She had the skills to farm desert land. She also experienced firsthand the benefits of being a landholder in the New Lands, as many government and development agencies’ income generation projects were accessible to landholders. Land, however, was not given to smallholders from 2004 until 2011.

Om Adel has a high school diploma in commerce from a technical school. She is widowed and is 37 years old. Om Adel asked her brother to let her farm his land that he acquired as a graduate through the MRS. He did not want to farm the land, and his wife did not want to relocate into desert lands. Relocating and cultivating the land is a condition set by the state to retain the land. Especially during the early stages of resettlement, many landholders who left their lands fallow and houses unoccupied were evicted. Her brother gave her the land to have it cultivated. As a settler and farmer in the New Lands, Om Adel attended many agricultural training sessions at the DDC in Al Khartoum village. Om Adel has two young boys, 9 and 11 years old. She plants peanuts and wheat on her brother’s land. During the summer time, she takes her children to live in the New Lands. “The house is very crowded at my parents’ house. I really like it here in the New Lands. It is quiet and much more spacious,” Om



Adel explained. Because the quality of schools in the Intilaq settlement is inferior, Om Adel chose to stay with her children at her parents' house during school time, she explained. Her father always accompanied her, she stressed, when she relocates into the New Lands with her two boys in the summer time. Om Adel is financially dependent on her brothers, she lamented. Nonetheless, she started working in the past two years as an accountant in a rental place for agricultural machinery in a village also in the New Lands. Her income is very low (equivalent to \$26 per month), she complained, that it barely covers transportation costs. As a result, Om Adel goes to work only for three days per month. She stays in her brother's house in the News Lands to commute to her work. Om Adel's sister is also a widow. "Our burden is heavy on my brothers. They take care of us. I want to increase my income. I wish I could get a piece of land, or start a knitting circle to make decent money," Om Adel explained. She said that one time she was very close to opening a clothing workstation, but a GWL objected. According to Om Adel, the other woman complained to the project officials who considered Om Adel. She complained that Om Adel was not a landholder but a *sister* of a landholder. She did not end up getting the position, as a result, but rather the woman who complained did. She said that there were no opportunities for land applications.

Om Shaheera, similarly, wanted to access land to help her become independent. She wanted to become free of her abusive husband.

Om Shaheera had two girls and one boy. Her husband is a Graduate landholder. He was doing well in the beginning until he decided to look for treasures on his land. This is not uncommon in Egypt. A fortuneteller told him that there is treasure in his land. He had cultivated his land with mangoe trees. He took out the mango trees and excavated his land. He didn't find any treasures but his economic situation went downwards. He stopped supporting his family and abusing his wife by belittling her and threatening to abandon her. Her friend and Om Omar, a GWL, found her a job in the local clinic which IFAD funds. Om Shaheera cleans the clinic. Om Omar also helped Om Shaheera by setting her up to meet with Engineer Kamal, who is responsible for providing Graduate settlers with Land Expansion Projects. Om Shaheera approached him and told him she needs land to raise her children. He promised her he would do the best he could to provide her with land. But when the Revolution happened later, when she asked him again for land, he reported that the Revolution put a block on all decision-making processes at the LRS and the government more generally.

One of the two widows in Sa'yda wanted to access housing, but not land, for herself and her family's upkeep. She knocked on the doors of many officials in the Aswan governorate but did not hear a response yet. The second widowed woman in Sa'yda wanted land, not for farming but as a security for the future of her children.

"Tomorrow or after my children will find land to support them in their future," Om Mostafa said. Om Mostafa has four children. She has a high school diploma in

commerce from a technical school. Her husband died years ago of liver cancer due to Hepatitis C. Her husband worked for years in the local LDU. He was provided with housing in Sa'yda and was living there with his family. Upon his death, Om Mostafa was hired as an accountant in the same LDU. She complained that her income is not enough to raise her children, send them to college, and feed them. Her income is equivalent to \$80 per month. She raises goats and sheep and sells them for a good price. When Om Mostafa's husband passed away her brother-in-law proposed to her, but his wife became furious and the marriage did not happen. Om Mostafa reported that her brother-in-law's wife gave her a very hard time whenever the brother-in-law accompanied Om Mostafa or her children to accomplish important tasks, such as registering her elder son for military college. Om Mostafa was persistent in her attempts to acquire land. She called the Head of the LRS in Cairo on a monthly basis. "He keeps telling me next month. He also told me that providing land is a decision he cannot make. The Minister of MALR himself, he told me, needs to approve such a move," she explained. Additionally, every time the Head of the LRS visits the Sa'yda settlement, Om Mostafa was informed by the employees at the LDU. She prepared herself for meeting with him to request land but without success. "Each time the Head visits they tell us [the government workers at the LDU] to be present in our job posts, when he comes, and be prepared to meet him. But, each time he never visits us, he just visits the villages from the outside without stopping to talk to us at the LDU or at the LAC," complained Om Mostafa.

As mentioned earlier, the government switched its focus away from small holders to entrepreneurs for desert land provision. As a result, many who wanted to acquire land were not given the chance, but the opportunity was left exclusively to rich entrepreneurs.

Another reason for the lack of land access for many women was corruption. In the same time period when Om Mostafa was trying to access land, Dr. Zabadi accessed large pieces of desert land very easily as I learned from the Head of the LDU. Dr. Zabadi had strong connections to a former Prime Minister. By calling the Minister of the MALR, he acquired over 200 acres of land in various settlements and villages in the same settlement. He allegedly took the land to conduct research about medicinal and aromatic plants. He did not conduct research on the land (15 acres) he acquired in Sa'yda. He cultivated wheat and henna by sharecropping with local people in the area. Many local LDU drivers complained that his sharecropping often turned out to be fraudulent. Even after the Revolution, when I met him at the LRS, he was bragging that he recently accessed 30 acres from the Minister of MALR in the desert to cultivate aromatic and medicinal plants. The ease and scale at which this individual acquired land, while other women almost begged for land and housing without success, is mind boggling. Along the same lines, in many cases friends of officials and their wives acquired land in both settlements much easier than the rest of the population.

As mentioned above, the LRS set conditions on female applicants' social status that were not set for men. Women had to be WHHs in Sa'yda and unmarried in Intilaq. Men, on the other hand, were not required to be of a certain social status. In Sa'yda it was reported that WLs were worried about remarrying due to a fear of losing their access to MRS land and housing.

Now that the Revolution introduced new land reclamation projects, it is unclear whether women would gain land access again without the involvement of the WFP due to a general reluctance by development agencies to fund land reclamation projects (Mitchell 2002; Warner 2013) and a general feeling at the LRS that it is not necessary to give women land. "Women are not a formal category in the Law of Land Reclamation. There are no obligations to give them land," explained the Head of Settlers' Affairs at the LRS.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The WFP's gender-progressive policies are largely responsible for providing Egyptian women with land titles. The WFP policy of empowering women with ownership of property was forcefully implemented by imposing access to land for women as a precondition for food aid. The international pressure and WFP policies for achieving equality for women by imposing on the government a requirement to treat "women as equal citizens with men with the same rights and obligations", as reported by a former Head of the LRS, was not realized and women's access to land was restricted. The reality that women were required to score higher than men and be of exclusively agricultural backgrounds is a case in point. Furthermore, perhaps some feminists who believe in women quotas would argue that removing the gender category in the MRS selection criteria does not lead to women's equality, but would instead reproduce their subordination. Another case in point is that, to receive land, a woman had to be single. Why would a single woman all by herself relocate into the desert where she would have limited basic services and transportation, thereby cutting herself off from her family and social support in the Old Lands.

Although the LRS cancelled the gender category in the point system to allow for 'equitable access to land' by both genders, most of the other categories, including type of education and farming background, inherently favored men. Marital status was an additional condition for women to access property but not the case for men. It seems that in future land reclamation

projects women are less likely to access land unless the WFP or other gender-progressive development agencies are involved and a women category is legislated in the Law of Land Reclamation. In Chapters 5 and 6 we will understand better why women are less likely to access land in the future if these two conditions are not met.

While some policies, particularly those of the WFP, helped women access land, other policies restricted women's access to land, particularly those related to the Egyptian state. The MRS headquarters in Nobariya in the early 1990s became reluctant to give more women desert land when many women did not relocate, and made women's access to land, in general, difficult as a punishment. Despite the fact that even male settlers did not relocate into the desert (personal observation, Meyers 1998), women were blamed for the general reluctance to relocate. Official goals of treating women as equal citizens with equal rights contradicted practice. Walker (2003) similarly reports how, in South Africa, a land reform program that officially aimed at providing women with land access failed because, in practice, disinterested and busy bureaucrats and middle managers did not ensure that these women were given land. Perhaps more importantly, a gender bias towards providing male heads of households with land access limited married women's access to land, as has been found in other public land distribution projects, for example in India (Agarwal 2003: 200).

The Graduates and WHHs offer valuable insights into the subject of women and land rights. The Graduates' case provides an example of women being provided with land access on grounds other than those of heads of households, which is often the exclusive category in which women access land in land distribution schemes (Deere and Leon 2001, Varley 2007). The WHHs category also provides valuable insights into cases of land access for women who are relatively independent from patriarchy, which Jackson (2003: 476) predicts is likely to lead to the biggest social changes.

The government imposed the precondition that land access was dependent on actually farming the land. Yet, many of these women wanted land for the future of their children or for their own 'security' and not necessarily for farming. In fact, having to immediately farm the land was, to many women, a deterrent from applying for land. Other local deterrents for women's access to land included fear of insecurity and isolation in the desert, inability to farm the desert, and limited mobility. Most women depended on male relatives to relocate

into the desert. This dependence on male relatives (e.g., spouses, brothers, fathers) had dire consequences on women landholders' ability to control and benefit from their own lands in the short and long term, as we will see in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### 5 “We are men on the land, but in our homes we remain women”: Women, Power, and Land Dynamics

This chapter aims to explore the factors that enable or impede women from benefitting from their land access socially and/or economically, by examining women’s own voices; resources, such as lands and water; and relations, both formal and informal. I also examine other local people’s (officials and settlers) roles in shaping women’s experiences. This chapter presents the experiences of 55 women landholders (40 in Sa’yda and 15 in Intilaq) with access to landed property (farming lands and homesteads). Diverse experiences with land access are presented, women who retained their lands and/or control and/or benefited from their lands (socially and/or economically). Because Egypt, and the Middle East in general, are largely marginalized from the debate on women and land rights, this chapter is pioneering in its attempt to explore women’s experiences with land access in Egypt, with scholarly and practical implications beyond Egypt. The study examines various types of village organization: ‘Widow Villages’, Graduate villages (women exclusive and gender-mixed), and Evicted Tenants villages. In these villages, attention is paid to the local labour organization, opportunities for training, micro-credit, and marketing, and access to services and irrigation water, as well as the level of land productivity. Attention is also paid to how and whether the age, social status, dreams, location, and education of women impacted women’s experiences with land.

I test the hypothesis that land access is the “single most critical entry point for women's empowerment ...” (Agarwal 1994: 2) by (1) describing the experiences of women with land access and (2) examining alternative means for women’s empowerment. For the latter, I compare the cases of women who had access to land to parallel cases of women who did not have access to land using life histories, observation, and interviewing of family members and officials. Throughout my fieldwork and data analysis, I have consistently looked for and consequently used indicators to look at land-related empowerment. These indicators for empowerment thus are derived from women landholders’ own lives, and also from the literature.

The chapter starts with a literature review, examining the significance of land access to women's wellbeing and equality in different parts of the world, and the surrounding controversies. The fieldwork results then describe women's experiences with land and changes in their lives due to land. An examination of what hindered these women from advancing their lives through land access is then presented. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the main findings and a discussion.

## 5.1 Women and Land

Land rights were first introduced as an important topic for women by Agarwal's (1994) research on women in South Asia. The premise for introducing land rights for women is that property determines social status and political power, and shapes relationships in the household, community, and beyond (Agarwal 1994:2). By being excluded from property rights, women are marginalized from the political, economic, and social spheres. Consequently, the entry point according to Agarwal (1994: 15) for women's empowerment is land rights. In short, the lack of independent land rights is a manifestation of women's subordination. By addressing this lack of property rights, easier accomplished collectively, women's subordination could be eliminated (Agarwal 1994: 42). She differentiates between land rights, whereby women gain land but not necessarily control over it, and effective land rights, whereby women gain both land and control. Effective land rights are legally and socially recognizable and enforceable (1994: 19).

Agarwal (1994: 17) argues strongly for women's independent rights to land using four categories of arguments: welfare, efficiency, equality, and empowerment. In short, women's welfare depends on access to resources independent of men, which land rights make possible by acting as collateral for loans, giving women a voice in the household, and guaranteeing a source of livelihood, reducing risk of poverty and destitution, especially after divorce (1994: 32). The efficiency argument for giving women land is that improved farm incomes may result in higher demand for non-farm goods, thereby creating more rural jobs and less urban migration to overburdened cities (1994: 38). She continues to argue that in rural areas the lack of effective land rights for women is the basis of their inequality in the household and beyond. It is therefore crucial for Agarwal that women be granted land rights to gain equality on the social, economic, and political fronts. The equality and empowerment

arguments also focus on women's positions vis-a-vis their husbands. Having equal rights with husbands gives women self confidence and enhances their ability and willingness to challenge oppression in the household and beyond (1994: 42). In 2005, Panda and Agarwal also argued that property rights for women would free them from domestic violence. Property provides a visible physical and economic shelter that prevents domestic violence and allows women to deal with it in case it happens.

Agarwal's (1994) seminal work on land access for women marked a new path, in both fields of theoretical and applied development that are concerned with women's inequality and wellbeing. Agarwal and others (such as, Varley 2007; Razavi 2009; Datta 2006; Deere and Leone 2001) argue that land access for men through land reform, inheritance, or purchase does not equally benefit women in landed households. Land rights for women, particularly, in sub-Saharan Africa can have far reaching effects on food security for women and their families who are responsible for most of the farming and rural families, yet have volatile access to land (Jacobs 2002; Budlender and Alma 2011).

Others argue, nonetheless, that land alone is not enough. Access to resources such as credit, fertilizer, and labour are as important as land access (Jackson 2003; Razavi 2007; Jacobs 2002). Both men and women have limited access to inputs in sub-Saharan Africa not land, which was exacerbated in light of structural adjustment programs (Razavi 2009). In addition to general problems, women face additional problems related to their gender, for example, in being taken seriously by extension workers (Deere and Leon 2001: 72) or in being dependent on male labour to use machinery on their lands (Jacobs 2002: 892). Jackson (2003: 457) argues that as opposed to men, land is not central to women's poverty; women face constraints in access to resources other than land, such as cash and labour.

Some critics have argued that encouraging women to claim their land rights interferes with their well-being (Jackson 2003). By claiming their land rights, women might lose the support of their male kin, which makes them far more vulnerable to poverty and discontent. Jackson (2003) continues to argue that not by defying patriarchy but by playing into it, by being ideal women, that women could access land successfully. Walker (2003) found that women in South Africa were not interested in accessing land as independent landholders when given the chance. She continues to suggest that women need to have equitable access to



household resources not independently of their households. Similarly, Jackson (2003) argues that women's welfare is interdependent with and not independent of their spouses and male kin. Most importantly, Jackson (2003) also argues that land is a scarce resource, meaning it is not possible for all women to be owners. Rather than being a rule of land access for women, it is quite the exception. Jacobs (2002) also argues that land access would not be as transformative to women's lives, as Agarwal (1994) claims, because land is losing its economic importance for rural households.

While some argue that the market is the best chance for women's access to land, others argue that the state, and not the market, is their best chance (Varley 2007). Agarwal (2003) points to progressive NGOs for facilitating collective pooling of resources to purchase land for women in groups. Agarwal (2003) also argues that collective women's labour and efforts facilitate challenging patriarchy and unequal access to resources, as well as allows for overcoming economies of scale. Walker (2003) and Razavi (2007), however, argue that women have far more interests in working within the household rather than opting outside of it for collective labour and land access. There is also evidence that land access for women results in improved household nutrition and increased spending on family health and education (Agarwal 2003).

## **5.2 The Sustained Focus on Women Heads of Households**

Most of the development programs in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and India that provided women with full title to property were particularly focused on WHHs with dependents (Deere and Leon 2001; Varley 2007; Jacobs 2002; Razavi 2009; Agarwal 2003). The single focus on WHHs and not married women is rooted in a single-headed household model. The focus on WHHs, many argue, oversees the exclusion of married women from accessing property in various parts of the world, such as Latin America, India, and sub-Saharan Africa (Agarwal 1994; Jacobs 2002; Varley 2007). In fact, when married women get divorced or widowed in India, South America, Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, they generally lose access to property, and their situation deteriorates markedly (Agarwal 1994: 109; Jacobs 2002: 889; Varley 2007: 1741; Moors 1996: 82).

The focus on WHHs in sub-Saharan Africa and India is also problematic because it excludes the need to focus on men and gender relations (Datta 2006; Jacobs 2002; O’Laughlin 1998). Women’s inequality is embedded within a wider web of relations with kin, society, and the state (Elmhirst and Resurreccion 2008; Agarwal 1994). O’Laughlin (1998: 40) notes that in Botswana men are not only missing from rural households, but also from the research literature and agenda. She explains that she is not against women’s autonomy but focusing exclusively on women is likely insufficient to secure women’s advancement; understanding the relations between men and women is essential (O’Laughlin 1998:41). Datta (2006: 278) similarly argues that in India excluding married women from policy initiatives related to land rights is based on a misunderstanding of the gendered structure and function of families and households, emphasizing a joint household model where members’ interests are independent and interdependent at the same time. It is recognized in Latin America, especially in Peru, that women and men have differing interests and goals for managing household resources, in what is termed a “dual-headed household, where both husband and wife jointly represent the household and manage its common property” (Deere and Leon 2001; Razavi 2007: 1492; Varley 2007: 1741).

### **5.3 Globalization and Land Tenure**

In addition to the type of land title, globalization is another issue that attracted the attention of feminist scholars. Since the 1980s, the IFIs argued that the lack of individual land titles is detrimental to agricultural production and investment more generally (Razavi 2007; Jacobs 2002). Subsequently, the IFIs encouraged individual titling and privatization. IFIs also argued that individual titling provides a better incentive for increasing production and reduces conflict arising from communal access to land, such as tribal warfare (Whitehead and Tsikata 2003: 71). Gendered analysis of globalization and land rights, however, revealed that the commoditization of land further disadvantaged women’s access to land, especially because they lost access to communal land, the individual land titles belonged exclusively to their husbands, and privatization concentrated land in the hands of few elite men (Razavi 2009; Tsikata 2010; Jacobs 2002). Furthermore, women’s ability to purchase land is limited due to marginalization in the workforce and lack of adequate finances (Agarwal 2003).

More recently, counter-globalization measures led to the spread of community-based approaches. However, in the ‘return to’ customary access to land in sub-Saharan Africa, many feminists fear that women’s access to land will be limited as most likely elders, mostly male leaders prevent women from accessing land let alone controlling it (Razavi 2007, 2009; Whitehead and Tsikata 2003: 94). Others argue that even if the women were involved, many are conservative and do not challenge patriarchy. Walker (2003: 136) shows that the involvement of women on local committees in a community-based project was largely formal and unsustainable. Women who left were not replaced and seldom voiced their or other women’s concerns.

With the growing trend of providing titling for women in land reform programs, women, not only WHHs but also those who are married, are increasingly benefitting (Datta 2006; Varley 2007). Governments, furthermore, are turning land rights for women into win-win policies. In India, to prevent men from selling their houses in an urban settlement in Chandigarh, the government imposed joint titles with wives, with the hope that women would prevent men from selling their houses (Datta 2006). The outcomes strengthened women’s decision-making power in the household and increased their capacity to navigate public life. Women’s benefits from their titles led them to becoming vehemently opposed to selling their houses, especially in settlements where services were provided (Datta 2006). Similar efforts were made by the Egyptian government, whereby to attract men to settle into the New Lands, the government created a village offering land titles exclusively to single women in the hopes of attracting men to settle and start families (Meyer 1998: 345). Whether or not women controlled these lands, however, remains uncertain.

## **5.4 MRS Women Landholders and Control Over Land**

Some women lost their control over their lands to their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers. In Intilaq, most of the women who had no control over their lands were married. Their husbands took complete control over the land and its direct benefits. I met five women out of fifteen whose husbands controlled their lands. Om Saydiya, for example, complained to me that her husband does not allow her to go to training sessions like some other GWLs.

Om Saydiya was married in her thirties. She met and married a graduate landholder in the Imam Malik village. She has two young daughters (between the ages of 8 and 12).

“She was a very successful entrepreneur,” Om Omar reported. Together with Om Omar, she used to buy peanut and other planting seeds and sell them to local farmers. “Since she got married,” says Om Omar, “her husband forbade her from interacting with the outside world. When her father was very sick, he did not allow her to go see him. Om Saydiya’s father died without seeing her. ” “Om Saydiya used to manage the land and foresees all its transactions, but since she got married, her husband took over all these tasks,” says Om Abdallah.

Remaining with the children back in town seems to limit women’s involvement on their lands. Many GWLs stayed back in town while their husbands farmed the land due to a lack of proper schooling. In Al Shohada village, Om Amr reported that she is not much involved in managing the land or controlling its benefits. “He [her husband] does everything. He decides on all aspects of the land. I only come here [to the desert] when it is harvesting season to help out. I stay in town with the girls who attend school, and my husband and son oversee the land,” Om Amr explained. “My life did not change because of the land. My freedom is still the same: it is confined to the house. Perhaps, if I had a job, then I would have been freer, but the land made no difference,” Om Amr continued.

Lack of family members and subsequent support in the New Lands seems to increase women’s obedience to their husbands and encourage them to leave land control aspects to the husbands. In Al Safa wal Warwa, Om Hasaballah emphasized that, “I leave everything related to controlling and managing the land to my husband. He sells the products of the land. He decides on what farming practices need to be done. I leave everything to him. I do that because I am here alone. If I became upset with my husband, there is nowhere to go in this desert. Also, if my children saw me dictating orders to my husband, they would tell other people, and this would look bad on me.” The case of Om Hasaballah also shows that the social taboos against a woman being ‘too strong’ over her husband also restrict women’s ability to take control over their lands.

In many cases, husbands’ or male relatives’ assistance in land applications mean that they have a stake in the land. Women landholders themselves and their male kin feel that male kin have a stake in the land whenever they help with the application to land processes. This was the case of Om Hasaballah but also the case of Om Omyan:

Om Omyan is a GWL who was sick since her childhood with a degenerative joint disease. She had a high school diploma in commerce. Om Omyan’s father helped her apply for land by completing extensive paperwork for her and accompanying her to

related interviews. Om Omyan got land. Her father had her sign a paper in which she declared that half the land she accessed was her father's land. She then married a man who worked as a school inspector in the Old Lands. Her husband told Om Omyan that he did not want anything to do with the land, because he did not want to interfere between her and her father. Om Omyan's father cultivated the land for years while she was away in town with her husband and family. Her brother also worked on the land and raised cattle and cultivated fruit trees without her benefitting from the land.

Another case of a father's attempt to take half the land of his daughter was made by the father of Om Abdallah, "Om Abdallah's father at some point told her that he wanted half the land, but that did not happen," explained Om Omar. Along the same lines, many male relatives felt unjustifiably entitled to women's land. Local engineers and other GWLs claimed that a brother in Intilaq resisted the marriage of his sister landholder in fear of losing his benefits from her land. "Every time I get her a suitor, her brother would convince her not to marry him. Now she is past due, but her brother is the reason. He wants her to stay husbandless to benefit from her land alone," explained a local Village Engineer.

In Sa'yda, similarly, staying back in towns also seemed to contribute to a lack of decision-making power for women with regards to their own lands. One Bedouin WL in the Samaha village, Om Mitwali, who was living away in Edfu was not involved in land management aspects of her land. One of her sons was the person farming the land and benefitting from it, his wife reported, because he is the one who labours and pays for the expenses of the land. Another son who works in Saudi Arabia takes care of the WL mother. Om Mitwali begged me one day to convince her sons not to sell the land. Her son who lives in the Sa'yda and farms lost access to water because entrepreneurs, he reported, take all the water. "We had to sell all the cows. There was no more *berseem*. It dried out," his wife lamented. "Just recently, we dug a ditch in our backyard to install a fence. We found the water table not even half a meter below the soil surface. This place will drown sooner or later. My husband and his brother want to sell the land. We are leaving," she told me. The sons decided to sell the land without consulting their mother who does not want to sell the land but feels powerless, as if the land is not even hers.

In addition to sons, in Sa'yda when WHHs are married, some lose control over their lands to their husbands, willingly or unwillingly. Om Mohamad, for example, was quite happy to stay off the land and in her house after marriage. It is considered an honour to be

confined to the household with the husband spoiling the wife by taking care of almost all aspects of the outside world, such as going to the market to get all the groceries himself. There is even a word for this, *satitha*, which essentially means cloistered. Such was the case of Om Mohamad. Although she wanted to sell her land, her husband refused to do so, many settlers reported.

Some women had more, but not complete, control over their lands. Some strategically chose not to have the final word on the management of their lands, as mentioned in the case of Om Hassaballah above and Om Fathi below:

Om Fathi has a high school diploma in agriculture. She feels much respected in the community. She speaks about how hard she worked in the early stages of settling in. The irrigation system provided by the GARPAN was based on portable rods and was laborious. The cold in the morning made irrigation using long, aluminum rods even more difficult. Om Fathi said that she often leaves the final word to her husband to make him more respectful and looking stronger in the community. Om Fathi emphasized that even if she knows she was right and her husband was wrong, she keeps quiet. Her view point of being right would show up with time, she emphasized. She does participate in decision-making related to the land. Especially since her husband is the local school principal and is absent from the house. She participates in all the labour aspects of her land. With the profits she got from the land, she bought another piece of land in her husband's name because again she wants to be prouder of her husband and increase his status in the community.

From the profits of her land, another GWL woman in Intilaq, Om Azeez, bought two more pieces of land and a car all in the name of her husband for the same reason: to feel prouder of her husband. "If you do not write the property you buy in the name of your husband, your husband would suffer. Look, for example, at Om Najib. She bought land in her own name. People speak about her as being selfish and belittling her husband. Her husband is ashamed of that. When you see him, he doesn't feel comfortable," explained Om Azeez.

Om Azeez has three boys and two girls. One boy is married with two young girls, and the two daughters are married as well. The other two boys are engaged to be married. All the boys live in the new lands. Her husband is an agricultural engineer at the local irrigation department. Her four sons work the land under her management. She is bright and has attended many farming training sessions on many topics. She knows how much fertilizer to apply and when and what kind of fertilizer works on which pest. When she goes back to town to see her married daughters and parents, her children are lost, she reported. One time, she had to leave to town for two months and her boys did not fertilize at the proper time: the flowering stage. The harvest that year was thin. Om Azeez is also the only female board member in the local agricultural

cooperative. She is well respected by engineers at the LAC and LDU and in the local community.

Many women in Sa'yda initially enjoyed full control over their lands when their children were young, and they had to farm their lands to avoid eviction. Although some were accompanied by their brothers or fathers, many came into the New Lands only with young sons and daughters. During these years, they developed farming skills that they transferred to their sons. Their sons kept taking advice from their mothers, and the mothers kept giving their advice. The women who had the most control over their lands were those who kept participating in all labour tasks on their lands and dealing with unrelated men even when their sons grew up. Women who participated in only women-related tasks, such as cleaning planting seeds, collecting fallen wheat or hibiscus seeds during harvesting, and cooking on the land during harvesting seasons, were less appreciated by their male sons and thus less able to control their lands. WLs who stopped going to the land due to age, disease, or who were forbidden by the sons who saw that their mother's participation on the land is shameful, had a lesser degree of control over their lands. Om Badee' told me how she is frustrated with her inability to plant onions, garlic, and herbs for home consumption.

Om Badee' has four sons. Only three were involved in farming the land. When her sons were young, and her elder was employed with the government in Edfu, she had to cultivate the land to avoid eviction. She gained a lot of knowledge about farming through farming her land, interacting with other farmers, and involvement as a board member in the LAC, where she was exposed to farming practices. She cultivated hibiscus and bought a donkey cart with the profit of the hibiscus. When her sons grew up, she was prohibited from going to the land. One time her son Nazeer, who had no experience with farming and was known in his family to be stubborn, refused to fertilize the land upon her request. The result was that the hibiscus crop was very light, "as thin as paper," she reported, due to lack of nourishment. She participated in decision-making on the land and her children benefit from her informed opinions. Both she and her children kept saying that "difference in opinion does not mean that people cannot still be cordial". Often, her son Kareem brings her a crop sample from the field. From the size and weight she could tell, for example, whether the crop is ready for harvesting or whether the crop is growing well. She reported, however, that the final decision stays with her sons because they are the ones who farm the land. She rarely goes to the land, only for picnics, she said. Also, when there is not enough labour, she helps on the land. Few farmers knew that the land is hers. The driver and I went asking about her land in the fields with no success. It turned out that the land is locally known as belonging to her son Kareem.

Om Waleed, on the other hand, kept going to the land with her son on a daily basis to collect *berseem*, and she interacted with men on professional grounds, such as the veterinarian and one of her business partners in cattle production. She controlled almost all aspects of her land, what to plant, when to harvest, which labourers to hire, and she reared a dozen goats, which fed on vegetation in the local village.

Om Waleed went everyday to the fields as a young girl with her father. She has three girls and two boys. Two of her girls are married, one in Cairo and another in town. Om Waleed has a grocery store in her house in town. One of her boys has a BA in social work but cannot find a job. He works on the land. Her younger son must serve in the army for another year. Her *dora* (wife of her husband) also received land as a WHH. She managed the land of her *dora* as well. "I manage the lands because I know best," she told me when I asked her who manages the land. She rents out the land of her *dora* to an entrepreneur. "The land [of her *dora*] is not greening. The land is salty. I am thinking about returning the rent money to the man who rented the land. It is bad money if we keep it," Om Waleed said. Her *dora* has one son and two daughters. The son also labours on Om Waleed's land. Because the land could be taken away if there is not permanent residency on that land, Om Waleed and her *dora* switch back and forth staying in the New and Old Lands every six months.

In Sa'yda, many WHHs whose husbands were disabled faced land grabbing attempts by their husbands. These husbands felt that they had put labour into the land to reclaim it and green it and were thus entitled to own it as well. During my stay in Sa'yda, three cases of land grabbing by husbands were reported. One of these cases was that of Om Hadi.

Om Hadi's husband asked her to sign over two acres of land for him. She refused because she worried that he would give her land to his children from a different wife. He hit her and took away the pump, which he claimed to have paid for. He warned Om Hadi that if she planted crops or she rented the land out, he was going to destroy the crop. In fear of his anger, the land was left fallow up until my second visit in January 2013.

In Sa'yda, due to WHHs' poverty, and the nature of the soil profile that had limited drainage, many lands did not produce profitably after the usual three year period of reclamation. Many sons pressured their mothers to sell the land after seeing that the land was not profitable and that their labour was going nowhere. Sons thought that land sales could be a way out of their poverty. Their mothers ended up selling the land due to pressure. Many WLs in Samaha reported that one son went as far as hitting his mother with a *molokhiya* dish demanding she sell her land. Many of these mothers, nonetheless, felt regret for selling their lands. One WL went as far as regaining her land a few months after selling it and paid the



person who bought it an extra 5,000 EL to give it back. Similarly, Om Majid, below, regretted selling her land:

Om Majid had two daughters and one son. She was a widow and in her fifties. She could not read or write. She was described by many WLs as the guardian of the ‘Widow Village’. Many women settlers described her as resourceful, strong, and brave. Om Majid was popular, as she was outgoing and sang in local weddings. “She would even yell at engineers and the Heads of the LDU. Engineers and heads are scared of her,” explained Om Hussien, a WL. Om Majid sold her land and house and left the settlement a couple of years ago. Nonetheless, she still visits ‘her land’, as she called it, and friends, who are women settlers. Many government workers at the LDU told me that her land was of poor quality. It was full of pebbles. She tried to change her land by speaking with the Head of the LDU at that time, but he could not find her an alternative piece of land. Her cousin and many WLs told me that she sold the land because her son wanted to marry, and he did not like farming. Om Majid, however, reported that she did not want to sell her land but felt that someone had used witchcraft to make her sell the land. During the month she sold the land, Om Majid reported, she had no control over her behavior. “I spent a month drinking, sleeping, and eating, without really feeling any willpower. Someone prepared ‘*amal* (a hex) for me. Otherwise, I would not have sold my land.” When someone prepares a hex for you, it means that they hijack your willpower and make you do something that you usually would not agree to do. A hex is done by visiting a sheikh and choosing the deeds that you would want the other person to perform.

This story illustrates that Om Majid did not sell her land of her own free will.

## 5.5 Women’s Empowerment in the MRS through Full Titles

I use indicators to examine women’s empowerment through land access and identify means to achieve empowerment through land access. I draw from four women’s empowerment frameworks: strengthening fallback position (independence) (Agarwal 1994), expanding the realm of what is possible for them (Mosedale 2005), and what the local women themselves identify as desired changes to advance their lives (Deere and Leon 2001). I also draw from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) women’s economic framework that defines women’s economic empowerment as gaining a sustainable means for livelihoods (Carr 2000). I focus on stories from women landholders, especially for 20 women, and stories from their family members, officials, and other local people. I also draw from observations on women’s lands, in households, and in communities to understand how land access has affected these women’s lives.

Women were empowerment through adopting new social roles and responsibilities, gaining knowledge and skills, overcoming hardships, and increasing levels of decision-making. These means for achieving empowerment are not mutually exclusive. Women, for example, were able, through gaining skills and knowledge, to adopt new roles, including in both Sa'yda and Intilaq, and in farm management and irrigating the land at night.

### **Empowerment in the Eyes of Women Landholders, Local Settlers, and Officials**

It is worthwhile to mention here that the word empowerment was previously almost non-existent in the Arabic language. A seminar held at the American University in Cairo attempted to translate the concept into Arabic. The result was *tamkeen*, or enablement in formal Arabic. Even *tamkeen* was not locally familiar. I asked women, other settlers, and officials about which women they thought benefitted the most from the land (socially and/or economically)? And why? I also asked women landholders what did you want from the land? Did you get that? Did the land help you in your life? If so, how? The way that both officials and local settlers perceived empowerment through land access had impacts on the actual empowerment of women landholders. For example, some women landholders gained respect because officials felt that these women were warriors or real men.

What women wanted from the land changed with time and varied depending on their age and marital status (Table 9). For the most part, women landholders wanted the land to provide them with security, source of livelihood for their children and themselves. Most women said that they bought nothing from the land for themselves. Indeed, I noted that they almost all had no perfume or fancy clothing and wore the same 'abaya everyday, and some of their in-house clothing was torn. They wanted their children to marry and all they wanted for themselves was to go on pilgrimage. This suggests that some women in the Egyptian context care more about family than about themselves. Advancement for them through life is equated with the advancement of their children.

When asked who were the most empowered women through land access in Intilaq, GWLs and other local women and men reported that the most empowered GWLs were those who purchased extra property and were able to divorce abusive husbands and were mobile, brave, and sought out for their expert knowledge in mostly agricultural, but also other affairs, like rules and regulations. In Sa'yda women who were reported to be the most empowered

through land access by other WLs, officials, and local settlers were women who were profitably producing from their lands, brave, outspoken, mobile, know a lot about farming and public affairs, and most importantly their children stayed next to them.

**Table 9 Empowerment through land access in the eyes of local settlers and officials.**

<b>Age Group and Social Status</b>	<b>Empowerment Interpretations in Sa'yda</b>	<b>Empowerment Interpretations in Intilaq</b>
Women landholders (between the age of 30-50) who are married and with children	Provide one's children with a source of livelihood House children next to you Marry your children off from land profits	Provide one's children with a source of livelihood House children next to you Marry your children off from land profits
Single, married, divorced, or widowed (mothers or not) Women Landholders (of any age)	Gain increased freedom in mobility  Increase one's ability to be brave/outspoken  Gain expert Knowledge  Land is profitable	Increase ability of being a successful entrepreneur  Purchased more land  Gain increased freedom in mobility  Increase activity in public life  Increase one's ability to be brave/outspoken  Gain expert knowledge
Elderly Women Landholders (above the age of 50)	Go on pilgrimage  Provision of a source of income	Go on pilgrimage
Married Women with Joint Title	Protection against old age and divorce  Prevent divorce  Prevent polygamy	Protection against old age and divorce  Prevent divorce  Prevent polygamy

Engineers in both settlements felt that women who were most empowered were those who economically profited the most from the land and cultivated and participated (to various degrees) in the management of their lands themselves. Many compared the most 'empowered' women landholders to warriors and men. Women felt that empowerment

through land access meant an increase in mobility, courage (irrigating at night), and the ability to house their children next to them. The following quotes illustrate what empowerment for women meant:

“I think the most empowered GWL is Om Omar. Everyone knows her, and she knows everyone. Engineers and farmers seek her help out. She even irrigates her land at night.” (Rasmiya, a school principal in Intilaq)

“Om Nizam is the most empowered GWL. Her children are all next to her. They farm the land very successfully. They own camels and are financially well off.” (Om Sayid, a GL whose sons refuse to farm the land expect for one)

“For me empowerment through land access means that my children are next to me. It means my children do not leave to towns looking for jobs. Our country has high unemployment. Education does not get you anywhere.” (Om Azeez, a GWL in Intilaq)

“I think that the most empowered GWL is Om Omar. She goes everywhere as she pleases. She is involved in many committees and activities. I wish I could become like her.” (Om Saydiya, a wife of a Graduate male settler)

“The most empowered WL is Om Majid. She is brave and fears no one. Engineers were scared from her. She is outspoken and guarded her land with her *toriya* (long stick).” (Om Hussein, a WL in Sa’yda)

“What I want from the land is to marry my children off and go on pilgrimage.” (Om Badawi, a WL in Sa’yda)

There were regional differences in what empowerment through land access meant for women. Becoming entrepreneurial was idealized in Intilaq but in Sa’yda it was perceived as greedy, as illustrated in the following quote. Many women in Sa’yda were ashamed of selling birds in a town market or to local settlers. They would deny that they sold birds but then, because of my participant observation and because I asked neighbors, their bird sales became obvious.

“I told Om Badee’, why do you buy more goats? Just put your money in the *posta* (bank), and you would get money on that. Why the greed? Greed got you here. This is why your goats died.” (Om Nizam to Om Badee’, a WL, who, it then turned out, had a snake in her backyard that killed her three young, newly purchased goats)

In Intilaq, many GWLs felt that their husbands’ salaries were not adequate for covering household expenses and took it upon themselves to generate income for the family from the land.

### 5.5.1 Gaining Skills and Knowledge

Through the land, women in both settlements gained access to skills and knowledge that is usually only accessible to men, such as knowledge related to filing a complaint in a police station, farming the land, managing the land, legal issues about renting and selling property, and dealing with officials. Gaining knowledge was empowering for women landholders, as many felt equal to men through gaining male-related knowledge and skills, and many used this knowledge to make strategic choices in their lives, such as defending one's land rights through an understanding of settler-official relations, returning land wrongfully taken by a father, or protecting a daughter's inheritance from greedy uncles, as illustrated below:

Om Badawi, who did not completely pay her land installments, asserted that no one can take away the land from her. If the land is not hers as a legal settler, then the land is hers as a Land Squatter: "Let them [the government] come and try to take my land because I have not paid the full price of the land. I am a squatter on my land. I laid my hands on it. No one can take the land from me. You are dumb my daughter," asserted Om Badawi when her daughter told her that the land was not really hers and that she needs to pay its price first.

"Now that Om Omyan's children have grown up, she felt that she should own and use all of the land. She told her father that the paper she signed was not formally registered in court, and it is not an official, legitimate agreement. She asked around, and they told her to check if the papers are legitimate. She also told her father that her children want all the land for themselves. Her father was very angry, indicating that he had spent a lot of money on her degenerative disease and that he has rights in the land because he worked on it and originally helped her get the land," explained Om Fareed (a GWL) about Om Omyan (another GWL) in her presence.

"Om Shahala sold the land to her daughter. Her brothers are not good to her. When they knew Om Shahala sold the land to her daughter, they came here and beat her up. She wants to protect her daughter from the uncles. Om Shahala thinks that they will not be fair to her daughter. I also encouraged her to do that," explained Om Azeez, a GWL and LAC board member, about Om Shahala, another GWL, who is also from Om Azeez's home town.

WLs in Sa'yda who farmed their lands depended, for the most part, on their original knowledge of farming and learning through trial and error but also, rarely, on government and development agencies' training to gain skills and information related to farming. The government extension program in Sa'yda was limited and focused on operating electric pumps and, in the early stages of settlement included, oral discussions on which crops do

well in the area and when to plant those crops. Most of the WLs who gained the courage to cultivate their lands had some kind of experience with farming their parents' lands when young. On the other hand, many of the GWLs in Inilaq who farmed their lands had no experience in agriculture but had access to rigorous training, provided by IFAD and the Noubariya Research and Training station. Agricultural training in Intilaq was much more diverse including, poultry, cattle, and crop production (vegetable, orchard, and field crops) and irrigation. This rigorous training that these GWLs had access to had profound consequences on their ability to diversify their sources of income and succeed in the New Lands. Many GWLs became adept in protecting their income from market, biotic, and abiotic shocks.

Because of gaining these skills many women in both settlements felt that they were equal to men, as illustrated by the quotes below:

“As I learned about farming sugarcane, because my husband was jailed, I became proficient in sugarcane planting. I can stand next to men and discuss all aspects of sugarcane. I am a man amongst men.” (Nada, the daughter-in-law of a deceased WL in the Samaha village)

“On the land and in the LACs we are men ...” (Om Azeez, a GWL in the Shohada village)

Skills and information gained through land access were not only limited to farming. In addition to agricultural training, women in both settlements had training access to first aid, tailoring, and food preparation (such as making of crafts, cake, pizza, and pickles) through the WFP and IFAD. Furthermore, all property transactions and land-related matters almost always required the original women landholders' signatures and presence. As a result, women landholders in both settlements gained knowledge about matters related to electricity, loans, and fertilizer from the LACs. WLs in Sa'yda also learned about how to file a police complaint due to the theft of their water pumps. To protect themselves, women landholders learned about making land transactions formal through contracts for land rents and sales. Some women landholders who were also on land-related committees learned about responsibilities and obligations of government bodies and were able to request for these services when absent, such as larger fertilizer rations, cleaning of waterways, security, potable water, and health services. This knowledge was also spread by women landholders to other women:

“Cleaning of waterways in the village is not the responsibility of the Governorate Local Council. It is the responsibility of the LAC,” explained Om Badee’ (a WL in the Samaha village) to Om Tofayli (another WL in the Samaha village).

Gaining knowledge and information is largely linked to adopting new roles and responsibilities. Much of the knowledge and information obtained through land access were obtained as a result of adopting new roles or led to adopting new roles and responsibilities, as we will see in the following section.

### **5.5.2 Adopting New Roles and Responsibilities**

Women landholders had opportunities to obtain new social roles and responsibilities through their access to land. For many women landholders, the fact that they had to immediately ‘green’ or farm their lands and could not legally rent or sell their land meant that they had to adopt new roles: farmers (in Sa’yda) and farm managers (in Sa’yda and Intilaq). Furthermore, as landholders, women were able to participate on committees related to the land. These committees include the Water User Associations, LACs (as members at large and as board members), Marketing Cooperative (exclusive to Intilaq), Local Councils, and Social Development Associations. While the Water User Associations, Marketing Cooperative, and LACs were exclusive to landholders, Local Councils and Social Development Associations were also open to non-landholders. Because women landholders had active political and public roles, they were also involved on the Local Councils and Social Development Associations. Social Development Associations were almost exclusively comprised of women in some villages. Through the Social Development Associations, women opened nurseries, clinics, and cloth decorating workshops, as well as attended training on food preparation, preservation, and first aid training.

It is very unusual in Upper Egypt for a woman to be a member of the board committee in LACs. In two other desert resettlements in Upper Egypt only one woman was a board member. In the Sa’yda settlement, the WLs who were board members in LACs were so because the WFP created women exclusive ‘Widow Villages’ and imposed a quota for women’s participation on LACs in mixed villages. In the Iman village, for example, there are three types of settlers, the WHHs, the Evicted Tenants, and the Graduates. Each of the categories was represented by two board members in the LAC. The LAC of the Samaha village, which is exclusively inhabited by women, has all its board members comprised of



women. Board members of the LACs of both genders were sent for training in various governorates by the WFP. The training was for leadership skills and for exchange of farming skills between provinces.

These male related roles of farming and committee members in both settlements helped women landholders feel that they have achieved equality with men, as illustrated by the quotes below:

“On the land and in the LACs we are exactly like men. When we enter our homes, however, we revert back to being women.” (Om Azeez, a GWL and board member in the local LAC)

“I feel like I am the same as any other male graduate here. In fact, I feel like my land is better than some of the male Graduates in the project. People here talk about me, ‘how come she was able to farm her land and even male Graduates could not and rented their lands out?’ I wanted to prove that I can be a successful farmer, and I did that.” (Om Omar, a GWL and member of the Social Development Association and the Marketing Cooperative in Intilaq)

Similarly, officials and other local men felt that women who adopted male-related roles are men in their communities, as illustrated by the quotes below:

“Om Shareef, the GWL who is on the Water User Association, she is very outspoken and brave. She is like a man. She speaks her mind and contributes to discussions.” (Sayf, a male Graduate settler in Intilaq)

“Om Fareed is a real man. She could do anything. She is outspoken and intelligent,” (Vice Head of the Intilaq settlement about Om Fareed, a GWL who is a member on the Local Council and Water User Association)

Along the same lines many officials and settlers felt respect and admiration towards WLS’ adoption of new roles:

“Here [in the Samaha village] women are very brave, braver than the WHHs in the Old Lands. These WHHs know how to manage their affairs better. They go wherever they want and speak to whomever they want. Honestly, they are much braver here.” (Om Hamada, a newlywed from a nearby town)

“I taught her how to farm? No, I did not. Om Badee’ could teach a country how to farm. She is very smart. She always makes the best of everything. When she harvests the wheat, she collects all the seeds and leaves nothing to waste.” (Lateef, the son of a WL and Om Badee’s neighbor on the land)

“Women in Upper Egypt seldom go outside the house. Their groceries are brought to them by their husbands and/or their sons. Women in Upper Egypt do not work on the land. This is a phenomenon unique to the Sa’yda settlement. You will not see a woman going to the field elsewhere in Upper Egypt. This only happens here.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

With these new roles and responsibilities, women were able to expand their networks in both the local communities and officials’ offices. Agarwal (1994) argues that having social and state support is empowering for women by enhancing their fallback positions (independence) in the household and beyond. Women involved in the aforementioned committees were more assertive in their households and communities. In their households, women landholders were adamant about implementing certain projects on their lands, such as purchasing camels for fattening, cultivating fruit trees, and purchasing cattle for milking or fattening through networks and business partners in the original or new communities. In their communities, many women landholders were able to use their networks with officials for the public good.

Om Badee’ a board member on the LAC felt that women were being pushed too much in the bread lines during early mornings. She suggested to the Village Engineer building a cement structure to separate the women wanting to buy bread from the men. The Village Engineer agreed and told Om Badee’ to collect money from WLs and a son of a WL to collect money from male households. The Village Engineer also told the baker to speak with Om Badee’ if he had problems in the bakery and that *Il hajja* Om Badee’ is a board member with us, and she will help you build this cement structure,” reported Om Badee’.

Om Azeez, a GWL and board member on the LAC, as another example, convinced the local Vice Head of Intilaq settlement to provide an orphaned family from the father’s side with land access. She knew the land prices and which lands were vacant.

Om Majid, a WL in Sa’yda, arranged a meeting for her cousin with the Head of the Sa’yda settlement for the cousin to ask about her husband’s access to land. Om Majid’s cousin explained how Om Majid became more resourceful in helping others since she accessed land: “Since the Samaha, Om Majid became more adept in helping people around her. She was like that from before, but the Samaha introduced her to so many people.” The Head of the Sa’yda settlement later told me that, “Om Majid has a special place in my heart. When I became the Head here, and she saw me, she hugged me and told me that she feels very happy that I am the new Head.” He went on to say that he would do his best in helping her cousin’s husband claim his land. Some officials used the network of some women landholders to gain access to participants in training programs or to gain access to crop buyers. Om Omar for example often got calls from officials at IFAD and LDU asking her to recruit participants for training

programs. Other officials who also had land called Om Omar to ask her about contact information for crop buyers.

Especially after the Revolution, WL board members in the LAC of Samaha demanded an increase in the fertilizer rations, potable water, and access to health care on several occasions. During my return visit in 2013, the Head of the Sa'yda settlement reported that WL board members visited his office a couple of times to ask for more fertilizer and that he gave it to them.

Some of the roles women landholders adopted are normally socially prohibitive for women (see Table 10). It is through these roles that women landholders are able to address inequalities in their communities. This included managing a farm, irrigating at night, and operating diesel water pumps.

Usually men care for their mothers and needy relatives, but many GWLs played major roles in providing for their parents and needy relatives because of the land and its produce, as illustrated by the following quotes:

“Om Fareed [a GWL] bought all my clothing. Om Fareed always gives me money and food from the harvest, such as wheat. I used to attend sessions with her as a fellow Graduate woman and get 25 EL for each session. She is the one who takes care of me in the family.” (Om Fareed’s mother, a widow)

“I always give my nieces and nephews a carload of produce, clothing, and things they need. They are orphans.” (Om Azeez, a GWL)

Many GWLs also gained more power in their extended families through land access. “Om Azeez is the big head in her family. She has the most land and wealth. Her word is always heard,” explained Village Engineer Mahmoud. Om Fareed, similarly, reported that “whenever my siblings have a fight, they call for me to resolve the dispute. They respect my opinion, and I bring them all together. I go to my old town once every year and hold a feast. I feed my family meat and produce from the land.”

**Table 10 Changes in women’s roles and responsibilities through land access in Sa’yda and Intilaq.**

<b>New Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>At Intilaq</b>	<b>At Sa’yda</b>
<b>Participate in Public Life</b>	On land-related committees (such as the LACs, Social Development Associations <sup>13</sup> , and Water User Associations)  In legal matters related to the land, such as electricity stations and police stations to report theft of water pumps	On land-related committees (such as the LACs and Water User Associations)  In legal matters related to the land, such as electricity stations and police stations to report theft of water pumps
<b>Interact with Men</b>	In public roles and training	As had to deal with called them ‘sons’
<b>Participate in labour on the land</b>	N/A	Common, especially in the ‘Widow Village’
<b>Increase mobility</b>	Attend training and meetings outside the local communities	Carry on legal matters as landholders outside the local communities
<b>Operate Water Pumps</b>	N/A	Operate the <i>baytar</i> (diesel pump) machine
<b>Irrigate the land</b>	At night	At night
<b>Manage a farm</b>	Through training and support from male peers and/or husbands  Husbands sometimes resist and divorce might occur	Common, especially during the early stages of settlement when government policies were rigid and sons were young  Rarely the case when sons grow up but there are two cases
<b>Adopt male-related roles</b>	Conflict resolution in family and settler and hometown villages  Financial support of family members in need	Farm the land for fear of eviction and to make a living out of it

<sup>13</sup> These associations are currently not active in Upper Egypt but used to be when the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit was working in the area.

It was also clear that women landholders in the women exclusive villages were more likely to adopt socially prohibitive roles than women landholders in mixed villages. Together they gained more courage to do so.

### 5.5.3 Direct Gains from the Land

Profits from the land were more pronounced in Intilaq and, most notably, included buying extra property, cars, and apartments. Direct benefits in Intilaq for GWLs also included an increased ability to save money and increase the quality of family's diet from the products of the land, as articulated by Om Fathi, "I worked very hard on the land, but when I saw cheese on my table, milk, eggs, ghee, and sour cream. I was proud. I was happy. My family did not need anything. All was available from the house, from the products of the land. We did not need to buy anything from outside."

In Sa'yda profits from the land, when present, were modest and included saving up on the price of *berseem* for fattening animals; saving up on the price of herbs and greens for home consumption; gaining a source of cash money from the sale of *berseem*; gaining a spacious backyard for raising an increased number of birds for home consumption and sale; and in few cases gaining money to purchase bridalware and/or grow vegetables and fruits. Few WLs in Sa'yda profited from the desert land, many more WLs farmed their lands on a small scale to retain the land for the future of their children and grandchildren and for a source of property, as illustrated by the quotes below.

"Our country has a lot of unemployment. Who knows my children or grandchildren might not find jobs, and the land will be here for them to farm it." (Om Tofayli)

"I always tell my children, our country has a lot of unemployment. Tomorrow or after, you will find the land to farm it as a source of livelihood." (Om Badee')

"My children have nothing from their fathers. This is the land of orphans. I could never sell it." (Om Hussein)

"I am attached to the land because we have nothing. We have no property. This is why I could never sell the land." (Om Abdel Aal, a WL in the Samha village)

"Women here [in the Samaha village] are proud they have got land. Most had no property before. Even though some of this land is full of boulders and does not work

for farming, you would see them attached to land and unwilling to let it go.” (Ibrahim, the elder son of a WL in the Samha village)

After the incidents of pump theft, in fear of having the land taken away, Om Waleed reported rotating a newly bought diesel pump between her *dora*'s (her husband's second wife) and her land. Om Waleed and her daughters also carried water on their heads to irrigate the palm trees. Om Waleed reported that she and her *dora* had to work hard for the future of their children.

Many women reported that their neighbor WLs are waiting for their sons to finish from the military service to relocate and farm the land. Many were initially accompanied by their brothers and fathers until their sons grew up to farm the land. A few WLs in Sa'yda, nonetheless, left their lands fallow because of their inability to farm the land also because they were unable to find someone to rent their lands. The further the villages were from town, the more difficult it was to find a renter. Furthermore, women exclusive villages had a hard time finding renters, who are often men. The theft of water pumps led many WLs to flee the Samaha village. Theft of water pumps was disastrous to the crops on the ground which dried out. Not all WLs could afford buying new diesel pumps. The diesel pump is many-fold more costly than an electric pump. While some WLs rented out their lands to generate revenue for purchasing the pumps and related expenses, others opted for selling half their lands to buy a new diesel pump.

Another reason why the land was retained in Sa'yda was to keep the house. The house, especially in the Iman sub-‘Widow Village’ was very important for women. If land was not planted, it would be taken away. Some women rented their lands for free or planted one tenth of their lands to retain their homes.

“I was desperate. I could not farm the land. It required gasoline and oil [for the water pump]. I found this man. I told him I will rent the land to you for free, just plant it. He planted it and did not tell me the land was producing. He kept saying that the land is not producing, and he did not pay me anything when it really was producing. But, honestly, all I wanted was for the land to be planted.” (Om Mahmoud, a WL in the Iman village)

“I only planted half an acre on my land. Just so I can get some *berseem* for my goats and could keep the house. We did not benefit anything from the land, only from the house.” (Om Taher, a WL in Iman village)

Some lands were provided without water. As a result, their prices were lower than other lands with water access. The benefits they provided to settlers were also negligible.

“I told you before; we bought the land for acquiring the house so that my brother and his family could live in it. The woman refused to sell us the house without selling us the land as well. The land is just sitting there without water.” (Son of Om Nizam who fattens camels together with his other two brothers)

“Our land has no water in it. The water comes and goes. We tried planting it before. The crops got thirsty and died. The land has no water.” (Om Mortada, the daughter of a WL in the Iman village)

Although many WLs regretted selling their lands, land sales were not necessarily a losing situation. Quite to the contrary, when I asked women in Samaha “who do you think are the most empowered women through land access?” One of the examples that was often repeated was that of Om Shahala.

Om Shahala sold her land and homestead for 90,000 EL (about CAD \$16,000 at the time). Now after flooding of the area, land prices had decreased. With the land money, she paid her debts and married her daughters and bought them gold, as well as went on pilgrimage, many reported. Om Shahala has four girls, and she farmed the land very well with her girls. Many in the Samaha village reported that Om Shahala’s land was some of the best, but she had to sell the land because she had no sons. Diabetes also took its toll on her health, and she could no longer farm her land. She was a brave woman: she used to irrigate at night and operate the diesel pump, many reported.

Land sale is also not necessarily a loss because land in the Sa’yda was becoming increasingly waterlogged. One family tried to sell their mother’s land, but one brother objected. The rest of his family told him, “if we do not sell the land and the land drowns, you will pay us the price of the land.” So he ended up agreeing with them to sell the land. When I came back in 2013, many new parcels of land had drowned. Even the Head of the Sa’yda settlement at that time jokingly said: “We are doing very well in the Sa’yda. Everyone is farming their lands. Much more lands drowned, thank God.” The more lands are irrigated, the higher the water table becomes, and the more lands flood.

Many WLs who sold their lands bought another property with the money, opened a business for a livelihood source, went on pilgrimage, and married off their children. As mentioned in Table 8, these outcomes are exactly what women hope for through their access to land. One WL in Iman, sold her land and bought a house in Edfu town, went on

pilgrimage, and bought an excavator and hired an operator to generate income. The land for her was not generating profit, and her daughter needed to go to school in town after she completed elementary school. Another WL, Om Fahmi, in the Samaha village, sold her land, and bought two houses for her sons, gold for her daughters, and sheep for fattening, for which she bought berseem.

In Intilaq, on the other hand, some GWLs who chose to sell their lands, especially in the beginning of resettlement when lands were not known to be profitable and when there were no shops, transportation, schools, or potable water in the area. These people sold their lands at a loss with prices as low as 30,000 EL for the land and the house. Now the price of the land is 350,000 EL with the house, and the rent per year for a fruit orchard on a five-acre plot is 40,000 EL.

Women landholders who benefitted from the land had to be very patient and hardworking, were relatively well-off, and/or had access to credit. Many women landholders in both settlements complained about having to wait for a long time for their lands to start producing. Also many complained that they lost money in their farming activities. In Intilaq such was the case during early stages of cultivating the land, i.e., during the land reclamation phase. The land requires about three years to start producing at a profit. During these three years, many farmed at a loss. Money to invest in the land came from multiple sources in Intilaq: micro-credit, parents, sale of inheritance, and savings that came from, for example, the sale of a wife or sister's gold. In Sa'yda money to invest in the land came from inheritance, sale of a wife or sister's gold, and from renting the land out to entrepreneurs. Land reclamation in Sa'yda is much slower. Most WLs reclaimed their lands on a small scale, an acre after an acre (as captured by the quotes below). In Intilaq, on the other hand, many reclaimed their lands all at once. Reclaiming the land requires washing the salts out (which requires oil and diesel for the pumps), digging irrigation furrows, and fertilization. Many WLs could not afford these processes. A few rented out their lands to others to get their lands reclaimed:

“My brother and the Professors who used to come here told me, ‘You reclaim your land one acre at a time. It is better to focus on one acre than on the entire plot.’ My brother told me to rent my land out. He told me ‘you will get your land back cold (reclaimed)’. This is what I did.” (Om Bayoumi, Iman Village)



“I will neither rent nor sell my land. I will plant it each year by an increased area as big as this door. Little by little, I will have planted all of it.” (Om Nazeer, a WL in the Iman village)

In Intilaq, access to micro-credit from IFAD and MALR made it easier for GWLs to invest in their lands. Their lands were of better soil quality and reached marginal productivity (when output becomes more than input) within a few years of reclamation. Access to micro-credit was constant and reliable. After a few years of selling peanuts and cattle (fattened by *berseem*) many took a loan to grow fruit trees on their lands. By 2010, most GWLs have had fruit orchards on their lands. When given the correct amount of fertilizer, a five acre orchard could lead to a net annual profit of 60,000 EL. On the other hand, by 2010 in Sa’yda most WLs cultivated at best only three acres of their lands, and some gained an annual net profit of 2,000 EL for renting out two acres of *berseem* to cattle producers. Note that both settlements started around the same time.

Available markets in Sa’yda mostly comprise government mills and banks that only buy wheat and a local market for the sale of *berseem*, animals, and vegetables (especially okra). The Intilaq, on the other hand, had an export-oriented production market and a tourist market in nearby towns of Alexandria and Cairo. These markets absorbed farmers’ produce in Intilaq, mainly fruits. All these differences led to a focus on wheat, forage, and animal production in Sa’yda and on many times more profitable fruit production in Intilaq.

The fact that there were no basic services in the New Lands made the time it took to reach production for many women landholders in both settlements more difficult. All settlers reported having to bring everything, including bread, matches, and potable water, from the Old Lands due to the lack of shops in the New Lands. In the Sa’yda there was no electricity in the early stages of settlement, and many used candles and kerosene lamps for light. Many landholders complained that they looked much older than their real age due to their hard work on the land. All women landholders spoke about how the area was all desert when they first got here and how they ‘greened’ it by planting shade and fruit trees in their backyards.

In addition to financial resources and patience, many women landholders in Sa’yda succeeded due to having a reliable network of investors, labourers, and other groups that could provide them with services for their agricultural enterprises, such as the government offices and Land Squatters. One WL visited the Governorate Local Council office in the

Iman village to gain permission to break the asphalt across the road and place her water pump on the main water source, which is usually illegal. Informal settlers who planted sugarcane provided many legal settlers with sugarcane remnants as feed for their animals.

Investors provided the WLs with tree seedlings, cattle for fattening, camels for fattening, and funds for sharecropping. Some WLs, through their sons, accessed loans in the Old Lands for purchasing water pumps or carrying out a certain activity on the land. Labour for the land was mainly provided by two to four sons and, during the high season, by other local settlers and labourers from the Old Lands through the mothers' social network. Labourers from the Old Lands are recently being replaced by the local Bedouins who rented out land and housing in the Sa'yda.

Labour in Intilaq, on the other hand, was provided by the women themselves in the early stages of settlement until their sons grew into adults. Sons provide the labour. More recently labour became more accessible from nearby towns and increasingly populated nearby villages. During high season, GWLs often hire these groups. Sometimes due to old age, many GWLs and their husbands need hired labour and cannot depend on themselves anymore to carry out required daily labour on the land, especially when their sons are young or in the military that can last up to three years.

WLs with good relations with the LACs in the Iman village had access to micro-credit on a sporadic basis. Loans involved milking cows and cheese and butter production for women and cattle fattening for men. Some WLs accessed loans for cattle fattening as well. Most WLs were not happy with the repayment period of two years. Many complained that they had to sell their animals before they started to produce profit because of the short loan period. A few WLs complained that they did not like to sponsor another WL's loan because they felt that they should not be punished for other people's lack of payment.

#### **5.5.4 Overcoming Hardships**

Land access was most crucial for those women who used land and housing to escape difficulties in their lives. The ability to exit hardships is congruent with how Kabeer (2000) describes empowerment as an ability to make strategic life choices. Agarwal (1994) argues that a fallback position is dependent on social support, state support, access to jobs, and

owning property, especially land. In many cases GWLs turned to the land for breaking free from and divorcing abusive husbands. The land also helped both GWLs and WLs become independent from controlling kin and brothers, as well as abusive daughters-in-law. The following evidence comes from six women in both settlements who had sons and were victims of abuse and turned to the land for financial and/or social independence. The land provided these women with a choice; without the land, they might have been unable to break free from such relationships.

“Without the land, some women here would have been lost due to their divorces.” (A local Village Engineer in Intilaq)

“I encouraged my mother to come here. I didn’t want my brother’s wife to mistreat me and my mother anymore. My brother’s wife created so many problems between my mother and brother. My mother now is very relaxed for the first time in her life. My mother has never relaxed until now. My father used to hit her. He opened her head once. I was young, but I can still remember,” explained Fatma, the only daughter of Om Badawi, a WL in the Samaha village. Om Badawi and her daughter Fatma moved to the New Lands and rented out *berseem* from their neighbor to fatten goats. Om Badawi reported selling those goats and buying gold earrings for loved ones, her daughter Fatma and sister.

“My mother-in-law was very controlling. We did not get along. I like it here because the house is my own.” (Om Samah in Intilaq)

“My husband took a loan on my land and used only a little portion of it for ‘treeing the land’<sup>14</sup>. He used the other part to marry another woman. He used to control my land. He put all the profits in his bank account. I told him I want to get divorced. I had my land and house and needed no one. He said that I had to give up on all my rights for furniture. I did. He told me that I will not be able to make it here in the desert, but I raised my children in the best upbringing. My son just finished the army. I killed a sheep for him.” (Om Ashraf, a GWL in the Safa wal Marwa village)

“My husband wanted to marry a second wife. I divorced him. My children stood next to me. I let him go.” (Om Rasheed, a GWL in the Shohada village)

“He told me, either me or the land. He did not approve of all my training trips. He used to beat me up and disrespect me. I told him, ‘I pick the land’, and we got divorced.” (Om Omar, a GWL in the Ali Mubarak village).

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Treeing the land’ is a term used by local people to describe the entire process of growing fruits, from planting tree seedlings to cultivation of mature fruit trees.

“My brother was very difficult. He would not let me go anywhere or do anything. I told him that I wanted to relocate into my house in the New Lands and that my mother would accompany me. I feel freer now. I am grateful my mom relocated with me.” (Om Abdel Wahab, a WL in the Iman village who was also a board member in both the LAC and Social Development Association in Samaha and Iman villages)

For WLs of Sa’yda in Upper Egypt, their land access provided shelter to their families and a source of fodder, which was not available to them before, and helped some overcome their poverty:

“I used to wash clothing and dishes, as well as cook all outside. We used to live in a one room house. Passersby used to ask me, ‘aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’ I am grateful that we have a house now.” (Om Nazeer, a WL in the Iman village)

“The best thing about here is the fodder; we can get it for free. We used to pay for it in the Old Lands. Now we can raise more cattle and sell it for profit. We can also raise more birds for food and for profit. The house here is very spacious.” (Om Badwan, a WL in the Samaha village)

‘Free fodder’ as some women called it had enormous implications for raising small ruminants, poultry, and cattle, as well as increasing WLs’ food security. Men had control over cattle. Women in Sa’yda, on the other hand, had control over poultry and small ruminants. They often sold their birds in the market and bought their needs of vegetables and fruits for the week. In the Iman village which is nearby to a market called Alhajjir, selling fodder on donkey carts provided some women with an instant cash source: “My pocket now is never empty [revealing her purse to me], as opposed to before,” explained Om Bayoumi, a WL in the Iman village. Om Bayoumi had three sons and two daughters. Her two sons were not helping her farm the land, and were drug addicts, many locals reported. She kicked them out of her house and lived in it with her two daughters. Her two daughters are both engaged and rarely go to the land. Both daughters work in a shop as sales persons. Om Bayoumi was waiting for her younger son to complete his military service and to come farm the land with her. He used to help her turn the water pump when he comes back home on vacations. She passed away in 2013, and her son completed his service and now oversees the land.

In Upper Egypt, WLs who sold their lands and the few who profited from their lands or sold it were able to marry off their children. Marriage in Upper Egypt is a problem for the poor. Many people of both genders are still unmarried well into their 30s due to the lack of

finances. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement was reluctant to give loans to settlers in fear of using the loans on marrying their children and not farming the land. Women who sold their lands were able to buy their daughters' bridalware and provide their sons with a marriage ceremony and housing. A quote by Om Fahmi (below) captures how she was able to achieve equality with Men Heads of Households by giving her son a decent wedding. Om Fahmi, a WL in Sa'yda, sold her land and married her two sons and one daughter. She emphasized that she is proud of providing for her children just like a man.

“I wear my ‘*abaya* and sit among men. I prepare the list of stuff that the groom got and another list for what the bride got. I get everything for the wedding, the meat, the refreshments, I bought my daughters gold. I do not want people to be saying, ‘She is a woman. She did not provide for her children well’.”

For the most impoverished WHHs in the Samaha village. The WFP food aid provided by WFP helped them raise their children. These WLs women sold their food aid and gave that money as pocket money to their children.

### **5.5.5 Increased Levels of Decision-Making Power**

Women's gain of land and related knowledge and information provided them with leadership roles in using micro-credit, other entrepreneurial activities, and day-to-day activities related to the land (such as hiring of labour and sale of crops and animals) that had ripple effects on other sides of their lives. Women were able to define goals and projects through access to land and not all but some succeeded in their realization, such as going on pilgrimage and marrying off one's children. The extent of profit from and success of these projects, however, differed between Sa'yda and Intilaq. Women landholders in both settlements spearheaded entrepreneurial projects, such as camel fattening and cultivating fruit trees, through access to micro-credit or in partnership with entrepreneurs, usually from the original hometowns.

As mentioned in the control over property section, many women participated in decision-making related to their lands due to their knowledge of farming and their network base. In many land interactions, women landholders were the sole representatives and as such participated in decision-making related to sale of fertilizer rations in the black market, renting of new spaces in the settlements, and obtaining micro-credit. During my stay in Sa'yda, I

witnessed firsthand how women landholders initiated projects for their sons from micro-credit opportunities. I convinced the Head of the Sa'yda settlement to provide twelve women landholders with micro-credit, who were previously thought of as unsuccessful farmers. Om Badawi took the micro-credit for her sons to cultivate her original land that recently gained access to water. She initiated the project and her sons followed her lead. During my visit in 2013, one of her sons told me that they could have repaid the entire loan amount but that his mother refused to do so and decided to use the money on a new project instead. This confirms that Om Badawi has an important role in decision-making related to the profit of the land and its activities.

Almost all WLs who stayed in Sa'yda played an instrumental role in the hibiscus, *karkadeh*, summer crop. WLs had the final say in the timing and the price of the hibiscus sale. WLs are mainly responsible for plucking the flowers and in collecting leftovers during the harvest season. Om Badee', for example, often keeps her hibiscus crop until the end of the season to fetch a higher price. "Last year we all sold the *karkadeh* at 17 EL per kilo, but Om Badee' sold at 20 EL. She waited until the end of the season, when the price of *karkadeh* went up," explained Fatma, the daughter of Om Badawi.

WLs in Sa'yda preferred interacting with men from their home towns and men in official positions, such as the local Village Engineer and the fertilizer keeper. Most often, these WLs called unrelated men 'sons'. They do so to avoid being talked about in a malicious way. It is not customary for women to interact with unrelated men. Older WLs were more likely to get away with interacting with unrelated men than younger WLs, as we will see below. GWLs had more freedom in interacting with unrelated men on both professional grounds and as friends. GWLs, as opposed to WLs, joked and spent time with male friends on a regular basis. Few GWLs refused to interact with unrelated men. On the other hand, many WLs refused to sit with unrelated men to discuss land or village issues. Men who approached WLs for such discussions were accused by WLs as gossipers, 'talkers to women', and unemployed.

Land access and its associated roles and responsibilities provided women with decision-making abilities in other aspects of their lives, such as relations with marriage partners and domestic violence. For some WLs and GWLs, the land provided them with

access to husbands, which would otherwise be difficult due to their poverty or old age. Om Mahmoud in Sa'yda and Om Saydiya in Intilaq, for example, were older in age when they got married. In their societies they would be described as past due for marriage. Om Mahmoud's parents wanted her to marry her cousins, but Om Mahmoud refused to do so. Om Mahmoud met her husband through renting of the land. She rented the land to him. Along the same lines, Om Abdallah and Om Na'im were both older and divorced when they got married. Being divorced and middle aged usually reduce the marriage prospects of a woman dramatically in both areas. Om Na'im got married to a man who is younger than her by ten years, which is very unusual in Egypt. Om Na'im also met her current husband through the land. He rented out parts of her land in the Sa'yda. "I married him. He was renting two acres of my land. It is not appropriate for a man to come in and out of my house without being related to me," explained Om Na'im about how she married her husband.

WLs in the Sa'yda and GWLs in Intilaq in comparison to non-landholders seemed to have more choice over the selection of husbands and wives for their sons and daughters. As opposed to the norm in Upper Egypt, where men and women usually marry their paternal cousins, most of the WLs' sons and daughters were married to their maternal cousins. In many cases, the WLs, especially the divorced ones, refused to let their sons and daughters marry paternal cousins and preferred maternal cousins. The choice of the future daughter-in-law is strategic for a WL or GWL. A daughter-in-law would be expected to help her mother-in-law with daily house chores and take care of her in old age. WLs seemed to trust their sisters' daughters more in these tasks.

As mentioned earlier, the land allowed women to defy oppressive relations with their in-laws and husbands, thereby gaining more control and decision-making power over their lives. As opposed to non-landholders, women with land access in both settlements believed that domestic (partner) violence is abusive and should be stopped. Also many women felt that it is possible for them to be equal to men. It is clear then that the land initiated an awareness raising process against domestic violence and towards equality between genders.

## **5.6 Factors that Impeded Empowerment for Women through Full Title Access to Land**

In this section, I examine what impeded women from socially and economically benefitting from their land access through the MRS. Both settlements suffered from a lack of services provision; unequal distribution of irrigation water; and oppressive patriarchal attitudes from Village Engineers, distant planners, family members, and the society in general. It was clear that Sa'yda had far more problems than Intilaq. In addition to the common problems between the two settlements, Sa'yda's WLs had zero to limited access to training and micro-credit. In Sa'yda in many cases the land was a burden, a white elephant, an expensive enterprise that did not generate profit.

### **5.6.1 Others' Benefits from the Land**

In both settlements, as described in the women and control over property section above, a few husbands took complete control over the land and its benefits. Other male family members, such as brothers and fathers, were also reported to have exploited their sisters, mothers, and daughters. It was reported many times by the WFP Assisted Projects Coordinator and local settlers on the ground that brothers refuse to marry off their affluent sisters in fear of losing their benefits from their land. Some brothers, on the other hand, adapted to their sisters' marriages.

In one case in Sa'yda, Waleed, a brother of a WL, told me that his sister's new husband "tried to interfere with the land matters. I came up to him and told him, 'between me, the land, and my sister you have no place. Stay away.' Since that time and I haven't seen him interfering with land matters." Waleed farms the land of his sister who lives in Aswan with henna, a cash crop. He takes two thirds of the profit, and she takes one third of the profit, as is the usual sharecropping pattern in the settlement.

In another case of male profiteering in Sa'yda, a brother signed a rent contract with an entrepreneur who leases his divorced sister's land without her permission for five years. His sister, Om Rabab, reported that it took her more than a year to settle the problem and reclaim her land. Om Rabab is a young, savvy, and brave woman; many Heads of Settlement reported that to me.



With time, however, many Women landholders learn how to better control their relations with greedy kin and relatives, as illustrated by the case of Om Abdallah. “Om Abdallah’s brothers took a lot of money from her,” reported Om Omar. “Eventually, Om Abdallah smartened up. Now, she is not as before. She does not let her brothers take her profits anymore, but she gave her brothers a lot in the beginning. Now, she saves up for her son. She saves up her money for an apartment in Sadat city. I told her stop letting your money go away like that. Save up and buy other property,” continued Om Omar.

In Sa’yda, some sons took their mothers’ loans. Their mothers did not benefit from the profits of the loans.

“Don’t ask Om Shahata what happened to her micro-credit of six sheeps and a ram. Her son took them and never told her what happened to them. Up to this day, she does not know what happened to her loan.” (Om Waleed)

“I took the loan of six sheeps and a ram. I married my son with the money from its sale. I spent two years doing *jam’iyat* [marry-go-rounds] to pay for that loan. That loan tired me so much. I am never going to take a loan again.” (Om Nizam)

Also WLs who have limited experience in farming and property rent and sale and had no husbands were prone to manipulation from a third party. Four WLs reported that they were subject to fraudulent land transactions. One, Om Mahmoud, mentioned earlier rented her land for free to a man who hid his profits from Om Mahmoud. Another, WL, Om Hussein, is famous in the Samha village for being deceived by a leveling machinery-operating man, who charged for many more hours than he really worked on her land. Om Hussein is bitter about that even after years have passed: “Even until now. Sometimes when I pray, I pray for God to forgive him for what he did to me. For all the money that he took from me and shouldn’t have.”

Another WL, Om Mazen, reported that she sold her land because she does not know how to farm and that people, as a result, took advantage of that and often stole her money. In another case, a son took fertilizer from the LAC and lied to his mother by telling her that the LAC had no fertilizer on that day. Women take fertilizer from the LAC and sell it in the black market for a profit. The mother visits the New Lands on a sporadic basis and wanted some pocket money from the sale of fertilizer. The son deceived his mother in order to profit from the sale of fertilizer himself.

### 5.6.2 ‘The Last Lands God Created’: Lack of Basic Services

The lack of public services, including health care, potable water, security (police stations), transport, and proper schooling, was the single main deterrent for resettling into the New Lands. As mentioned in the control over land section, women who did not relocate into the New Lands were less likely to experience the adoption of new roles and responsibilities or to gain new knowledge beyond the household. Along the same lines, the theft of water pumps in Sa’yda also led many women to flee the area due to lack of means for irrigation. Only five percent of the WLs who got land currently live in the Samha village.

Those women who stayed in the New Lands reported that their families have kidney ailments due to the quality of the potable water that they had to drink in the New Lands. Most of the settlers currently buy their potable water from the Old Lands. Most settlers, initially, however, when buying potable water was still not an option, opted for drinking salty, poorly treated, and polluted water. Currently, the few who could not afford buying their potable water still drink this salty water. Many of the settlers suffer from kidney ailments.

Many GWLs in Intilaq and a few daughters-in-law in Sa’yda also complained about the lack of proper schooling. Few sons and fewer daughters were able to gain admission to universities due to low GPAs. Many girls are prohibited from getting enrolled in schooling outside the local settlements, as illustrated below. This meant that most girls stop their education upon the completion of elementary school because secondary schools were located in other settlements.

“We had to sacrifice our children’s education by staying here.” (Om Azeez in Intilaq)

“Imagine I am a graduate of commerce, and my daughter is less educated than me because of living here.” (Nada, a daughter-in-law of a WL in the Samaha village)  
Nada’s daughter often cries and complains about living in Samaha. She wants to continue her education, but because of a lack of reliable transport, she cannot. Her father was in prison for two years, and she could not go stay with her grandmother and leave her mother and brothers until her father gets out of jail.

It was also clear that both the women exclusive villages of Al Samaha in Sa’yda and Al Shoahda during early stages of settlement in Intilaq had the least access to shops, smallest population count, and consequently least access to transport.

### 5.6.3 Limitations to Adopting New Roles and Responsibilities

Participation in public life is an important aspect of achieving empowerment for women. Through opportunities to participate in public life, women could address and challenge inequalities that limit their roles and responsibilities. While some women landholders succeeded in expanding their public roles, others did not or could not. Even the women who participated in public life were challenged to succeed in their new roles.

In Sa'yda many WLs distrusted the government in general and refused to be members in official committees even if they were modestly literate, as illustrated by the quote below:

“I can read and write, but I do not want to be a member in the LAC. I do not even take fertilizer from there. We do not get along with the Village Engineers. We have a history with them.” (Om Badran, a WL in Sa'yda) (More about the dynamics of this relationship will follow in Chapter 7.)

In addition to mistrust, the cancellation of women's quota to participate in local LACs also limited WLs' ability to become active in public life. When the WFP left, the quota imposed for women's participation in LACs got canceled. The WHHs category is absent from the Iman board committee nowadays. Only the Samaha village retained its women members in the board committee of the LAC.

Women's participation on public committees in Sa'yda is hindered by women's lack of knowledge about their roles, men (engineers, sons, and Heads of the Sa'yda settlement) not taking the women's roles seriously, or women members' lack of interest to fulfill their roles. It was clear that many women who are board members in the Samaha village were uninformed about their roles on the committees. When I read the Law of Agricultural Cooperation which defines the relationship between the Village Engineer and the board members and members at large, I noted that very little of the Law is applied on the ground.

Female board members rarely met with the Village Engineer to discuss village problems and very rarely interfered in the cooperative's budgets or daily activities, which according to the Law they should be running. The WL president often signs blank cheques for the Village Engineer to use. Most of the board members lived in their original towns and had no interest in visiting the New Lands, which could take up to a day on the road and cost

about 30 EL. One board member who lives in town did not know who the Village Engineer was at that time and thought he was the same engineer two times before the current one.

Their limited literacy, at best up to third grade elementary, meant that they would not, for example, be able to read the Law of Agricultural Cooperation manual to understand their roles and responsibilities. Board members were not briefed about their roles and responsibilities. They were treated in the LAC like any other member at large. They were not told what is being done with the surplus fertilizer which arrived for 303 households when only 50 households stayed in the village. In the gender-mixed village of Iman, the former female board member complained to me that, “the engineer never listened to me. He would do this with his hand, and say, ‘later, later,’ whenever I spoke,” complained Om Hilal. Another former member of the LAC and the Social Development Association told me that since she got married, her husband forbade her from participating in committees. “One time, I had the members here in my house. We were having a meeting. My husband wanted to kick them all out of the house. He was very difficult. I had to leave the LAC. He did not want me to be part of it,” explained Om Abdel Wahab.

In Lower Egypt, similarly, women’s participation in local committees was hindered by the husbands’ controlling attitude. “We [the women] were managing the local development committee very well, much better than the men. The men say so themselves. They have to irrigate and stay on the land day and night, but we are freer than them. We created a childcare facility. But the men grew unhappy with their wives going places and eventually took the committee away from the women,” explained Om Ashraf, a GWL in the Safa wal Marwa village.

Since most WLs, were illiterate, board members, not only in Samaha but also other villages, were not elected but appointed because only few could run for elections. The number of those willing to run for election is often less than seven members and, as a result, no elections happen. In elections for the president, engineers chose who they wanted to be the president. This literacy rule is unfortunate because some of the illiterate women are very outspoken and adept in public matters. Take Om Majid, for example. “Engineers and even Heads of Settlement are scared of her. She is a strong woman,” explained a LDU driver. “Om Majid is the only woman who used to get us our rights; she knows how to speak,” explained

Om Hussein, another WL is the Samaha village. “Women used to sleep safely here when they know I am present. No one knows Om Badee’ [the current board member]. Women and other settlers used to come to me to complain about electricity going off or about the theft of the motors [pumps]. I know how to demand things. Do not ask the women about me, ask the engineers,” explained Om Majid.

Unfortunately, Om Majid is illiterate, and she cannot participate in the board committee. In fact, the engineer would probably not want her to be there. Engineers and not the board members, as the Law of Agricultural Cooperation stipulates, are the ones who chose the LAC president. “Shadia, Shadia, Shadia, [a name of a woman board member] engineer Badawi went around telling us, the board members, to write down [when voting for the LAC president],” explained Om Badee’. The current board members are not very approachable or outgoing. Om Badee’ keeps her social ties to a minimum. She does not like to visit others or to be visited. She is not generally motivated to solve problems for the public good, as is the role of board members. Om badee’ often turns people down when they request simple favors, such as feeding chickens for one morning or sitting for a literacy test as a favor for a local girl.

Similarly, another woman on the Water User Association told people “those who come to me to complain about water issues, I will beat them up with a boot.” “She [the Water User Association member] does not have time to go to the irrigation unit [which is far and transport is enormously difficult in the isolated village of Samaha],” continued Om Badee’. Om Badee’ was not liked by the settlers, who should be able to confide in her. “She rarely stands up for what is right,” explained Om Hussein. Om Hussein was upset that Om Badee’ concealed the identity of who stole the aluminum rods despite seeing who stole them. “We do not want Om Badee’: she did nothing for us,” complained Om Farouq in Samaha.

Another board member who stays in the New Lands, Om Badran, is distant and prefers not to socialize with the local women. She mentioned many times that most of the WLs here are of lower class. She also thinks that she is better than others in the village. “Most of these women are illiterate and loud. In the beginning, they [settlers and officials] did not know who is who but now they do. They respect me around here. They leave me a chair to sit in a meeting. In the Bakery, they give me bread straight away because they know

I do not feed it to the chicken and dogs.” Another WL board member in the Iman village was also unapproachable and unaware of others’ problems in the village. Many settlers reported that she never goes to weddings or funerals. She keeps to herself and is arrogant.

Men (engineers and sons) did not think that a woman can handle being a board committee member. “The ladies have their house chores and are busy. And the long, difficult commute to come here and to go to the bank [most of the committee members have left the settlement] does not suit them. We send them cheques to their houses for them to sign and spare them all the hard work,” explained the Village Engineer at that time. Throughout my stay in Upper Egypt, I never saw a farmer seeking a female board member to complain about a problem on the land for members to pass it on to the officials or to do something about it in the cooperative.

The sons requested many times to take over the women's roles because they felt that gender is to be blamed for their mothers’ ineffectiveness as board members. “We keep telling the women, ‘let us, the sons, take over the committee’,” explained Foad, a son of a WL. “The women do not know how to do anything. They are illiterate. They do not understand. Even if they do, the Village Engineer would not trust that the women could do things and would not let them do anything,” explained Ibrahim, another son of a WL. Even the WL board members themselves wanted the sons to take over the board committee: “Take the committee. I told you many times to do so,” replied Om Badee’ to Foad’s request for sons to become board members. Engineers and Heads, however, refused to deal with sons. “We only speak with the original landholders,” was often reiterated by engineers and Heads alike.

Many board members felt that their roles are a hassle and wanted to grant their jobs to their sons. Women found it difficult to leave their birds and go on trips outside the settlement and even in their own village to the LAC. WL members seldom went to the LDU to meet with the Head. Their roles, however, were enhanced after the Revolution. Two of the women board members in the Samaha gained the courage to demand fertilizer and water but they complained that the trip to the LDU is tedious. These two women also mobilized other WLs to visit the local LDU and demand potable water, health care, and a flood free village.

It is not only women’s fault that they did not realize their roles and responsibilities. Engineers, Heads, and other local officials (such as the Governorate Local Council in the

Iman village) felt the WLs are whiny and too demanding. Although men also demanded fertilizer and irrigation water, women were the only ones perceived as whiny. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement rarely met with the board members of the Samaha village. On the other hand, he met with male members in other villages on a monthly basis. He often held the meetings late at night making it difficult for female members to attend. The Head reiterated on many occasions that WLs are annoying and too strong:

“I cannot meet with the women board members; they are too strong. In one meeting, the WLs held me by my shirt. They almost ripped my shirt off. They are too strong. I had had to stand on the table and scream so that they stop screaming and hear me. There is a reason why their husbands died, or divorced them: they are unbearable.” (Head of the Sa'yda settlement). It turned out that the WLs in that meeting were quite upset that the land is not producing and yet the Head was asking them to pay their mortgage dues, which also increased three-fold.

Even the accountant in the local LAC thought that WLs were annoying: “Do not bring WLs with you when you come here. Come alone. They are very loud and trouble makers, especially Om Badee' [who is a board member and supposedly a work partner]. Next time you come here, do not bring her with you.”

In Lower Egypt, there were many more opportunities to be on committees than in Sa'yda. In Sa'yda the Water User Associations and the Social Development Associations were inactive. Women members were challenged by their small number on committees. Om Azeez complained that because she was the only women on the committee, what she often suggested did not pass because men had different priorities. The following quote suggests that Om Azeez's projects did not appeal to male members:

I wish if there were two or three other women with men, then what I suggest would have a better chance to work out. I wanted to get a minibus for transport (especially for the children who go to school outside the villages) and also start paper work for the building of a secondary school. I suggested to the rest of the committee members contributing 50,000 EL from the LAC for the school. The men, however, refused [who might have their children living in the Old Lands], and I was alone. So nothing got done. There has to be balance in the cooperative. There should be enough representatives from each group: the women Graduates, the male Graduates, and the Evicted Tenants and the Destitute [who are mostly illiterate, which is probably why they were not able to be board members]. You see, each group thinks in a certain way. But male Graduates alone will steer projects and decision-making in a way that only suits them.

Women landholders adopted other new roles of farmers and farm managers, which were, similarly, resisted by Village Engineers, other officials, and sons in the local settlements. While some officials felt respect towards “warrior women” who cultivated their lands, others felt that a woman’s role is not farming and as a result gave women who farmed their lands a hard time.

“Where are your sons? Why do you irrigate the land? You do not have men to do that for you?” an engineer asked Om Badee’.

Om Badee’ told him angrily that her children will only farm the land when it becomes fertile enough, and that she is preparing it for them. Similarly, sons and husbands resisted women’s involvement in farming. Along the same lines, Om Badran wanted to file a lawsuit as the landholder against herders who fed Om Badran’s wheat crop to cattle. Her sons forbade her from doing so, “They [my sons] told me no. You cannot stand in courts and go here and there. That would not be acceptable for women,” Om Badran explained.

I observed that in both settlements none of the engineers or heads were women, all were men. I also observed that women employers were rare and, when present, were, for the most part, in low decision-making positions, such as secretaries and LAC accountants who are assistants to engineers. Women accountants could have the same degrees and education as men but often get lower posts. Along the same lines, at the LRS headquarters in Cairo only one woman occupied a decision-making post but is currently retired. Women occupying such positions at the local and national levels would encourage a more effective role for women in public life and in contributing to the local agriculture.

GWLs in Intilaq were freer to farm and manage their lands than WLs in Sa’yda.

Table 11 outlines the roles that were still a taboo for women to carry out in both settlements.

**Table 11 Roles and social prohibitions that remained unchanged for women in Sa’yda and Intilaq.**

<b>Roles and Taboos Unchanged in Sa’yda</b>	<b>Roles and Taboos Unchanged in Intilaq</b>
Going to the animal market	N/A
Social acceptance of friendships with men (result in bad reputation)	More accepted but could also result in bad reputation



Social acceptance of increased mobility (result in bad reputation)	More accepted but could result in bad reputation
Participation on committees resisted by sons, husbands, and Village Engineers	Participation on committees resisted by husbands and male members and Village Engineers
Filing lawsuits against family members or other people	N/A
Village Engineers or Heads of Settlement	Village Engineers or Heads of Settlement

#### 5.6.4 “The land betrayed us; it takes and takes but never gives back”: Unproductive Lands

In this section, I will focus on why the lands were mostly unproductive in Sa’yda. In Intilaq lands were productive but suffered from inequitable distribution of water, as we will see in another section below.

The Sa’yda settlement has a very shallow *tafla* layer (an impervious layer). Within a few years of farming, waterlogging problems started to appear. “Wet, flooded, damp, and oozing,” are words used to describe stages of waterlogging in Sa’yda. Houses in the Samaha village and other villages are flooded. WLs used to benefit from planting spices, leafy greens, and fruit trees in their backyards. Due to flooding, many WLs reported that their access to green vegetables decreased. They could only house cattle and small ruminants in their backyards.

The differences in elevation of an average of 8 m (in some places 13 m) between different parts of the settlement also contributed to the water logging problem. Irrigation water in lands of higher elevations drains into lower areas. Although WLs with high elevation lands felt more secure about their lands staying dry, irrigating lands of higher elevations was expensive. Water pumps often broke down, increasing the financial burden on the mostly poor WLs. To add insult to injury, settlers believed that the drip and sprinkler<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sprinkler irrigation is the “overhead application of water in simulated rainfall” (Miller and Gardiner 2001: 466). Drip irrigation is believed to be the most efficient method of irrigation by the Egyptian government,

kit distributed by the government was, (1) inadequate for the entire land or even for half the land, and (2) malfunctioning or faulty. Settlers opted for using flood irrigation, especially after the water pumps got stolen. The GARP and MWRI built the settlement without any drainage believing that sprinkler and drip irrigation would not require drainage. As a result, flood irrigation speeded up the waterlogging problem in Sa'yda.

When WLs first got their lands, they were told by the government that the land would be ready for farming. The land, however, required a long process of reclamation in both settlements. The elevation differences made reclamation more expensive in Sa'yda. Leveling the land was a costly process, and most WLs could only afford to level one or two acres of their lands at a time. Even then they leveled the low areas together and high areas together. Due to significant elevation differences, the entire land could not be leveled into one level. Soils had to be washed several times to leach salts out. Salt tolerant crops had to be planted in the initial phases of reclamation, such as pumpkin for seed production. Because of the elevation differences between lands, water drained into lower areas making it difficult to leach salts out.

The land also needed furrows for irrigation, as well as water pumps when the government pumps were stolen. Some lands were too rocky. To reclaim their lands, many WLs had to sell their inheritance shares, gold, and/or houses in the Old Lands, while others left their lands fallow, sold it, or rented it out. Sale of gold and inheritance is equivalent to a loss of security in case the land was not productive, as is the case of many WLs, "When I go to the land and see how it has no water, my stomach hurts. I sold my gold bracelet for my brothers to fix the land and farm it. It did not produce profit. A lot of money was lost on this land," lamented Om Mortada. Gold is only sold in emergencies and is used for very important causes, such as treating illness. Om Badee', for example, sold her gold earrings to educate her son Kareem in Aswan for two years.

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although this has been contested by international experts (see Barnes 2013), and is "the frequent and slow application of dripping water to soil through small outlets (emitters) located along small plastic delivery lines" (Miller and Gardiner 2001: 470). Electrical pumps would have had enough pressure to allow for sprinkler and drip irrigation, as opposed to the diesel pumps that the settlers purchased.

A WL returned her land and house back to the government in fear of losing her welfare salary of 120 EL as a WHH; when WHHs got land, their welfare salaries were canceled. Cultivating the land was an almost impossible task for many women. Hasaballah, a son of a WL, explained how women are not able to invest in planting desert lands but are rather in a position to receive aid instead:

The women here are poor. They look for food aid and not for planting the land. The land needs money. They cannot afford doing that. A woman makes 120 EL per month. How is she going to reclaim the land and plant it, which requires thousands of EL? Entrepreneurs do a much better job in reclaiming and planting their lands.

Because many WLs lacked the money and knowledge on how to adequately reclaim their lands, salinity problems and inadequate fertilization often stunted the growth of their crops. Om Tofayli, for example, planted her land for the first time with wheat, but she was not able to harvest wheat. She planted late, applied inadequate quantities of fertilizer, and did not wash her land well from salts. She harvested animal fodder instead. Many WLs complained about planting wheat and not seeing a crop, planting hibiscus and not seeing a crop, planting leafy vegetables and not seeing a crop:

“I tried growing spinach, onions, *molokhieh*, *jarjeer*, nothing ‘greened’. The hibiscus grew a few cms and then dies. The land is too salty. We are trying but the land is not helping us. The land takes but does not give back.” (Om Waleed)

“The fertilizer is too expensive, and we do not give the land enough fertilizer. The land does not give back well either.” (Om Nazeer)

“The oil and gas for the pumps are expensive. The pump breaks down at least twice per year and that costs a lot of money too.” (Om Badran)

Many WLs showed me that their lands were patchy. Some areas on their lands had no vegetation due to high salt content. Salinity problems made it difficult for salt intolerant crops, such as hibiscus and wheat, to grow well. *Berseem*, dates, and barley, however, did well in these soils. Many WLs wanted to plant wheat, their main food crop. They valued clean wheat. Subsidized bread was of low quality and often fed to animals. Clean flour was expensive in the free market, and each family was entitled to inadequate quantities of subsidized flour. Some were not able to harvest their wheat in 2010 due to lack of irrigation water and uncharacteristically high temperatures.

The lack of adequate investment money meant that the lands were white elephants, a burden to reclaim many WLs reported.

“Each crop provides the funds for the consecutive crop, but to get a surplus in money to do this or that. No, this does not happen. Each crop makes just enough money for the coming one. No surplus. The land takes but does not give back.” (Om Waleed)

Many WLs of Sa’yda, as opposed to GWLs in Intilaq, cultivated one crop or enterprise per season. This dependence on one crop often meant that they had to sell their product for immediate cash for investing in the upcoming crop. Many WLs’ families could not wait until the market prices for their produce become optimal, as illustrated by Fatma, a daughter of a WL:

“We know that *karkadeh* [hibiscus tea] price would be 25 and 30 EL by the end of the season, but we had to sell for 20 EL because we needed the money instantly. The land needs money. We had to plant the next crop.”

Most WLs still have more areas of their lands to reclaim. They would need years to reclaim their entire lands. The lack of profitable farming led many sons to fight with each other and leave their mothers to Lybia, Cairo, Sharam El Sheikh, and Sudan. This was devastating for most WLs. Sons also carried out the labour needed for cultivating the land. Many women complained that the land is tedious and that their health deteriorated as a result. Many sons and daughters were unmarried due to lack of money and investing their money on the land.

“The land is the worst thing that ever happened to me. It took away my health, gave me vertebra. It took our money away. It separated my sons from me<sup>16</sup>. It put my children against each other. I did not want my middle son to go to Libya. The youth left here due to the lack of opportunities and money. I have four children, and none of them is married; I want to be happy; I want to see grandchildren.” (Om Badee’)

“How can I say other than that the land betrayed me? When we first got it, we danced and sang like we were going on pilgrimage. My son planted the land, there was water, and then there was no water. He gave up on here and refused to come back and farm again with his brother. Now another son came to farm the land. We heard they built a

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<sup>16</sup> Sons leaving to cities and other countries for work due to unproductive lands also mean that the land was disempowering for mother landholders. This phenomenon of sons leaving, however, is not necessarily gender-specific and falls within broader aversion of young people to farming and their aspiration for migration into urban areas.

drainage canal, and we came to try our luck. My younger son, however, still refuses to come here.” (Om Sayid)

Om Badee’s and Om Sayid tell stories about the land that show that they are not profiting from it. When asked many times, why do you stay here? They, among other WLs, would answer, “because we have hope that the land will give us something someday.” The younger generation had less hope than their parents and were more aware about the threat of flooding to their lands. Many sons were farming their mothers’ lands unhappily and hoping to leave the area. Yet, when the Revolution happened and many lost their jobs in tourism, they returned to their mothers’ lands for farming. Daughters also wanted to leave the settlement and marry outside the settlement in towns and more resource friendly areas.

Some WLs’ poverty and debts increased due to unprofitable lands. Because the land was not producing profits, many women fell deep into debt. Om Tofayli, for example, asked her son-in-law for 15,000 EL to buy a water pump and level her land. Her son-in-law wrote a laon paper with the amount. She cannot pay him back his money. Her land is not producing yet. Om Badee’ as mentioned could not marry off her children and her sons’ money went into the land. Even if women now try to sell their lands, the economic value of their lands is decreasing, and many foreigners to the area fear the local flooding and refrain from buying land.

The land also had little social value in the original and local communities due to waterlogging and lack of services issues.

“No one envies us for the land that we got here. They know this land is desert land. They pity us for living here, and tell us to come back live in town.” (Tareq, a lawyer and the second son of Om Badee’)

“You still live in the Sa’yda. Why do you do this to yourself? Come back to town. Leave the Sa’yda.” (A former Samaha inhabitant and a WL told Om Badee’)

“My sons do not want to put 1 EL on the land here. They do not want to fix the wall that fell in our backyard. They would say, ‘the land is going to drown, and all of our money would go to a loss’.” (Om Badee’)

Although WLs were in dire need of financial resources to cultivate their lands, there were limited opportunities to access micro-credit. The agricultural bank is reluctant to provide farmers of the Sa’yda settlement with loans: “The bank itself has drowned there. I

am not assured that I will get my money back,” explained the bank manager of Edfu, the municipality to which Sa’yda settlement belongs. Fatma, the daughter of Om Badawi, who is also an agricultural engineer, went to the Edfu bank asking for a loan for her brothers to buy a car. The bank refused to give her a loan saying that the land is not ownership but ‘right to use’. In Intilaq, on the other hand, the land is also ‘right to use’ and not ownership but there exists an agricultural bank in the village of Naguib Mahfouz which lends farmers loans on a continuous basis up to 15,000 EL.

In Sa’yda farmers could access micro-credit through the LACs on a sporadic basis. Because WLs were perceived by the Head of Sa’yda and other engineers as inadequate farmers, WLs were not given the opportunity of micro-credit. Some accessed loans through other means in the Old Lands. Many WLs were risk-averse. They did not want to take loans to develop their lands or to start a profit-generating project.

“We do not take loans. As big as your carpet, stretch your legs. I cannot take a loan. Where would I repay it back from?” (Om Nazeer)

Many women were terrified about not repaying their loans and ending up in jail, and, consequently, refused to take loans. Others were not fond of the government:

“We do not come close to what is of the government. I would never take loans from the LACs. I would share profits with an entrepreneur who would give me cattle, but not the government money, we do not like that.” (Om Waleed)

Others worried that the source of the government’s loan money is forbidden “*haram*” and refused to take loans:

“If the money is *haram*, your goats or crops would die. Your enterprise would fall apart, and you would lose your money.” (Om Badee’)

Another important problem which made the land unproductive is the lack of markets and reliable transport. Ibrahim, a son of a WL, planted cantaloupe but was not able to market it in town because the transport expense was high. He ended up selling the produce locally for lower prices. Lack of markets encouraged planting of wheat, which does not do very well in newly reclaimed lands. Wheat was the only marketable crop. The agricultural mills and banks buy wheat from farmers and are a guaranteed market for wheat. Many settlers, including WLs, expressed interest in planting sugarcane after the Revolution. Sugarcane is

also another guaranteed market crop. The sugarcane factory provides farmers with loans to cultivate their lands and then pays farmers the difference when the crop is harvested. The sugarcane factory, however, requires a ‘white ownership contract’, or a title deed to the land. The land contract provided by the MRS is referred to as ‘a green and yellow contract’. This contract does not entail ownership over the land but only usufruct rights.

### **5.6.5 Inadequate and Inequitable Water Supply**

The settlements are built in a way that settlers (Graduates, Evicted Tenants, WHHs, and the Destitute) are left with lands at the end of the water canals. The idea is to sell land nearer the canals to the entrepreneurs for higher prices – as much as 22 times more than prices of land provided to Graduates, Evicted Tenants, and the Beneficiaries (which includes the WHHs sub-category). In Sa’yda, the GARPAN was unable to attract entrepreneurs. The land was left fallow and susceptible to land grabbing. Land Squatters picked lands closest to water and planted sugarcane. Sugarcane is an illegal crop in the New Lands because it requires a lot of water. There is a village which is entirely taken over by the Land Squatters. The LDU left this village for the land grabbers who also had guns. Some Heads of Settlement and GARPAN officials are accused of accepting bribes to turn a blind eye to many of the Land Squatters.

The bottom line is that Land Squatters use the water earmarked for original settlers. During the month of March, when the water requirement for sugarcane is at its peak, many farmers downstream opt for breaking water gates to direct water into their lands. This act is an exclusively male act. The Sa’yda village is the second last village to the end of the water line. There are rumours in Edfu that the WHHs who got land in Sayda got land that was unwanted by the Graduates. The rumour states that Graduates refused to take this village, and, then, the social assistance unit in Edfu was contacted by the LDU to give the unwanted village to the widows.

The legal settlers compete over water not only with land grabbers but also with farmers who are ahead of them in other villages and on the same irrigation line. Conflicts over water use are commonplace. “I went there to my land, and they [Haj Bilal’s labourers] are directing all the irrigation water to Haj Bilal’s land. They have been irrigating since last night. I am going to close the opening that is directing my water to his land with a little

cement,” emphasized Om Hussein. Many men complained in the LDU and LACs about the shortage of irrigation water. Over the years, the water distribution scheme changed to closing and opening of water gates in three sub-canal over a two-day period in each canal for a more equal distribution of water. Yet, those farmers in the end of the sub-canal, including in Samaha, get the least water. One of the solutions would be to irrigate at night when there is less pressure over water use. Many men in the Samaha have beds in the fields. This is something difficult for women to do.

In Lower Egypt’s settlement of Intilaq, entrepreneurs, similarly, compete over water use with settlers’ villages that are also located at the end of water canals. Farmers believe that the irrigation engineers are often bribed to give the water to the entrepreneurs.

“I regret coming here, the biggest regret. When I used to work at the museum, I often wore nice clothes and changed my gold every day, like accessories. Now, because of the land, my dignity is violated. Maids are better than us. My grapes dried out, and I am unable to pay back my loan...They sell the water to the entrepreneurs. God is my savior, and in him I confide.” (Om Shareef)

In both settlements, it is clear that as more farmers farmed their lands, the water quantity got reduced, leaving less and less water to those downstream. Those with little water opt for digging artesian wells<sup>17</sup>. Finding an acceptable well that is low in salt content may take a couple of burrowing attempts. In groups of four farmers, each team shares the costs and digs a well. In the meantime, some farmers are harvesting little to no yield from their citrus trees or grapes. This lack of water also led to an inability to repay government loans. Many are very bitter about their situation, as illustrated above by Om Shareef.

When I inquired about the irrigation problem with the Head of Intilaq at the time, he told me that “If there is no irrigation water, dig an artesian well. Where is the problem?” The problem is that irrigating from these artesian wells, which have a high salt content, could reduce the yield of crops and over time could lead to soil salinization. Many farmers using

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<sup>17</sup> While the literature indicates that aquifer water in the Western Desert is fossil water (Biswas 1993b: 64; Abu-Zeid 1993: 73), many farmers and officials have commented that since cultivation started in the area, the water table depth at which artesian wells are found is rising. More research needs to shed light on the impact of irrigation on water quantity and quality in these aquifers.



artesian wells in Intilaq emphasized that the Nile water is pure and is essential to wash off salts from the water of artesian wells.

It seemed that the water problem in Sa'yda was more acute. Some lands were provided without access to water. Other lands have no water during the summer time. Farmers in Sa'yda did not rely on artesian wells for irrigation. Some opted to irrigate from drainage canals, and, similarly, complained that the water is too salty, as illustrated below:

“We are happy now that we irrigate from the drainage canal, but tomorrow our lands are going to become salty and get ruined.” (Om Shahata)

“This drainage canal saved us. We would have left if it was not here. This water, however, burns our feet. Who knows what is in this water, and what its impacts on the land are?” (Om Badwan)

### 5.6.6 Lack of Adequate Farming Knowledge

In Sa'yda, the knowledge required for desert land farming was absent not only from settlers but from Village Engineers alike. Om Waleed reported that her brothers left her land because they did not know how to plant it. Om Waleed's story is an example of many stories of people trying to farm the land but then had to leave because they did not know how. Extension services for land reclamation were limited to several visits during the early stages of resettlement. Government engineers in Sa'yda providing extension advice to farmers at the LDU and LACs were far less knowledgeable about desert farming than those located at Intilaq. Some WLs reported that they refrained from farming using sprinkler and drip irrigation because they did not know how to do that and that “even engineers themselves do not know how to irrigate using these methods.” Even though some WLs learned from engineers to plant barley and *berseem*, which are salt tolerant, on their lands, some WLs reported that peer pressure led them to plant wheat instead, as illustrated by Om Badran below:

“I know that planting *berseem* and barley does best here because engineers told us so, and I feel it is the best decision to plant barley. But, when I saw everybody planting wheat, I felt like I had to plant wheat as well.”

Many WLs reported not understanding the language used by Professors who came from Lower Egypt for training. The WFP sent leader women to workshops and to farmer-to-farmer extension trips. Om Badee' reported that she learned “nothing, absolutely nothing”

from a workshop she attended in Aswan. She showed me the brochures she got from Aswan. The workshop was about entrepreneurship and was technical in nature. Women who went on field trips funded by WFP in hope of convincing WLs to irrigate using sprinkler and drip irrigation left the settlement to their original hometowns and did not spread their acquired knowledge, as was the intention of the WFP.

In Intilaq, things were quite different. The land was very profitable and settlers had excellent extension services that taught them how to reclaim desert land. In the first season, almost all settlers planted *lib jermah* a pumpkin for its seeds that can tolerate and ‘absorb’ salinity. After that, farmers planted peanuts and eventually cultivated fruit trees on their lands. The neighboring desert reclaimed province of Modiriyat Al Tahrir, created in the early 1950s, and the past resettlement projects in nearby areas provided Village Engineers and settlers with the knowledge and experience about desert farming.

Lack of knowledge in Sa’yda is not only limited to cultivating the wrong crop during reclamation period but also to inadequate fertilization. Most engineers reported that WLs in the Samaha and Iman do not apply enough fertilizer to their lands. A few WLs knew that they were not applying enough fertilizer but attribute that to expensive fertilizers. Many farmers were, similarly, unable to afford certified wheat seeds on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. As a result, some lamented wheat yield to have decreased due to recycling of seeds. Yet, many WLs and their sons do not apply free manure from their animals on the land because of a widely held belief that manure burns the crops. Few WLs added composted manure to their farms. Manure addition could profoundly improve the structure of the infertile desert soils enhancing their water holding capacity.

### **5.6.7 Labour Complications**

Labour was a problem for many women in both settlements. In Intilaq, women complained that labour is too expensive, and many opted to do weeding themselves. Some GWLs in Intilaq did not even need to labour on their lands. Many hired seasonal labour to harvest or weed their lands. Their lands were profitable and afforded them hired labour. In Sa’yda, women’s adoption of farming practices was more difficult. Women depended on their sons for labour. Even when women farmed their lands by themselves, they only farmed an acre or a half. Even if the WLs had money, they could not hire labour. “It is not

appropriate for us here to go to the land with unrelated men. Sons are fine, but unrelated men, it is not appropriate,” explained Om Shafeeq, a WL in the Samaha village.

Many WLs had a hard time convincing their sons to farm the land. Om Badee’ complained that her elder son Tamer never worked on the land, “If a grain of sand came on Tamer’s shirt, he would tell it go away. Tamer has never set foot in the New Lands.” Along the same lines, Om Tofayli had a hard time convincing her sons, son-in-law, or grandsons to help her farm the land.

Om Tofayli had two sons and two daughters. One son worked in Sharam El Sheikh in tourism and the other one is installing tile. They both are not into farming. Her daughter is widowed, and the other one is not married yet. She had hope that her son-in-law would farm her land, but he changed his mind on the last minute. She even had *karkadeh* seeds prepared for him and bought him a water pump. Om Tofayli ended up farming the land all by herself. She was not able to find willing labour to irrigate her land. The lack of sufficient local labour was another limiting characteristic of women exclusive villages. She also had hard time convincing her sons to give her money to cultivate the land. She spent long hours in transport to commute from the Old Lands. She had to irrigate the land by herself: “I am very sad but glad I did not get diabetes or low blood pressure from how sad I am. I have spent a whole week here and cannot find water to irrigate my land. I offered money to the men farming nearby farms, but they still refused to irrigate my land.”

Sons did not approve of their mothers’ participation in labour on the land. It was consider shameful for women, let alone elderly women, to work in the presence of men breadwinners in the household. Om Tofayli, for example, was locked up by her children. They did not want her to go farm her land. As mentioned earlier, many sons forbade their mothers from going to the land. As a result, household crops were lost. Participating in labour, however, is important for gaining a better control over the land and its profit. Many of the WLs who still worked the land claimed rights to small ruminants which they personally fed. This allowed them access to instant cash especially in cases of emergency. Small ruminants in the Sa’yda settlement was the most disposable property available to the WLs.

Along the same lines, many GWLs managed their farms when they first arrived to the settlement with their fathers. But when they got married, their husbands forbade them from going to the land. This phenomenon was also observed in Sa’yda. While some women liked

that, others felt oppressed by their husbands. Again, participating in farm labour is important for women to gain control over their lands and protect them from husbands' greed.

Women collected the wheat and *karkadeh* leftovers and also selected, prepared, and cleaned seeds for corn, wheat, hibiscus, okra, and other crops. These tasks were not considered real work and as a result, women's contribution to agriculture was not appreciated by their children. Some sons also reported that money needed for cultivating their mothers' land was creating problems for them with their wives.

With time, women become even more dependent on their sons for labour as old age leaves its effects on their health. Om Nazeer, for example, goes with her sons to plant *berseem* and harvest it, but now she suffers from low blood pressure. So, she does not go to the land as much anymore. Labouring on the land led many women to grow dark in color and lose weight. Relatives, officials, and village members in the Old and New Lands often complained to these women about how dark and thin they looked. "I do not go to town anymore. Every time I go there, people start telling me, 'Oh you look so black, oh you look so skinny.' People even ask my sons, 'Why is your mother so black?' Every time I go to town, I get feelings of despair. I do not go there anymore," emphasized Om Badee'.

To further illustrate WLs' dependence on their sons' labour, two WLs had to leave the settlement because their health deteriorated, and they had no sons to farm their lands. Daughters were protected from the sun to increase their marriage prospects, as skin colour determined beauty worth. During the Revolution, many men were recalled to the army. WLs were quite worried about their sons leaving them: "I worry if Kareem had to leave: he is my arm and my leg. I cannot farm the land without him. I will have to rent it if he leaves," lamented Om Badee'. Some jobs could only be done by men, such as breaking of the water gates during March, purchasing and selling cattle, irrigating at night, and operating water pumps. Women who did some of these tasks faced enormous difficulties. Om Badee' and Om Fayiz illustrate, respectively, their fear when walking in the fields alone:

"I used to recite Quranic verses on my way to the land and back home at night. I prayed until I saw the light from my neighbors. I knew I was safe then."

“One time I encountered a *sol* [a genie that appears to you only when you are alone] on my way back from the land. I got so scared. I put my head down and continued walking.”

Because of their dress and long *hijab*, operating the water pump is dangerous for women. “The pump swallowed [killed] a woman in Shahama. Her hijab got caught in the pump and pulled her head into the pump’s motor,” narrated Om Badee’. Along the same lines, I met Om Tofayli once, and she showed me how the pump tore apart her *hijab* that got caught in the pump while she was trying to turn it on. She also complained that she fell off a wet cliff on her way to the pump and hurt her back.

In Intilaq, sons provided single GWLs with a sense of security. Om Abdallah reported that when she could not find a good price for her cactus produce, she took her son and hired a driver to take them and the produce to Alexandria to fetch higher prices. Along the same lines, a widowed GWL, took her young son with her when irrigating her land at night.

Many sons did not know how to farm and profit from the land. “I am not a farmer. There are a lot of things that I do not know about. I cannot depend on the land that much,” explained Fahim, son of one of the WL in the Samaha village. Fahim does not solely depend on the land to support his newborn and wife. He also builds houses and cuts sugarcane on a seasonal basis. The lack of production or adequate production often resulted in reluctance to invest money or labour on the land which often also led to violent conflict between brothers.

One time, I waited for Om Badee’ to come to a wedding that we both were invited to. She was usually reliable but, surprisingly, did not show up to the wedding. It turned out that her boys had a huge fight so that the local men around had to separate them from each other. Zabadi has been refusing to cultivate the land with his brother Kareem and is focused on working in the cafeteria he opened recently. The elder brother Tareq warned Zabadi that the cafeteria is secondary, and the land is what comes first. Zabadi was sleeping in and escaping going to the land with Kareem. On that day the labour conflict climaxed between Kareem and Zabadi.

As a result of inter-brothers conflict, some women opted for selling the land but regretted doing so afterwards. “I regret selling the land, the biggest regret. But I did not find anyone to farm my land, and the land got me trouble amongst my sons. They did not know how to farm it,” complained Om Fahmi.

Many women landholders in Sa'yda helped each other spread *berseem* seeds or *karkadeh* seeds, taught each other how to ride donkeys, and explained to others the role and obligations of specific government bodies. Along the same line, in Intilaq many GWLs helped each other collect vegetables from greenhouses and collectively marketed their produce. One of the reasons why I chose working in women exclusive villages is to explore the potential of collective women's labour. Women worked together occasionally, but their main choice was to collaborate with their sons for labour. The strategic choice to work with sons is based on the high dependency of women on male labour and entrepreneurial capabilities, as well as on male finances for expanding the area of land cultivated. Sons provided finances for investing in the land through casual labour and/or permanent jobs. What worked best for the WLs is the presence of sons, some of whom have jobs for providing money for farming and some of whom can labour on the land.

Women in Sa'yda initially helped each other plant and harvest small areas of land with wheat. WLs moved away from group or collective labour because they were competing for limited development agencies' projects. Such competition fostered rivalry between WLs. Furthermore, women collaborated only for a limited time because they feared being envied. Envy of one's land or animals is taken seriously, as envy is considered to bring enormous harm to the envied person and loved ones. Envy has religious roots; it is mentioned in both the Quran and the Bible as harmful. Fear of envy and rivalries impeded collaboration between women landholders in labour issues.

Unlike the situation of WLs in Sa'yda, in Intilaq sons were not necessarily the primary labourers or financers on GWL's land. Many sons were still attending schools. GWLs initially depended on their parents and micro-credit, for the most part, to 'green' their lands. Even when sons were not financing the lands, when given the chance, GWLs in women exclusive villages of Intilaq did not collaborate together to farm their lands and opted to farm them with their sons when they grew older.

### **5.6.8 Negative Impacts on Spousal Relations**

The land itself and its implications created strains on spousal relationships that in many cases led to divorce. "The land could bring problems to women. It led to the divorce of two women here, Om Abdallah and Om Omar," explained Om Amr, a GWL in the Imam

Malek village. In this section I mostly focus on Intilaq settlement since it contained married women, as opposed to S'ayda where women landholders were mostly widowed. Many men, in Intilaq felt jealous and threatened by their wives going to many places, and some forbade their wives from going to training. While some women complied, sometimes strategically, with their husbands' demands to refrain from attending training or participating in committees and acted in non-threatening ways, others challenged their husbands in both settlements, especially when the husband wanted parts of the land signed to his name.

“I keep quiet about the fact that I own land, like me like any other mother who does not have land.” (Om Fathi)

“A woman should not tell her husband this land is mine. In the end, it is all going for the children.” (Om Azeez)

Some women worried more about saving or sustaining their marriages than their control over the land.

“He divorced me twice. A third time a divorce happens, and it becomes difficult for us to go back. I left the land to my son. My husband tells me this is your land, and I am a servant here. So I left the land and granted all its management to my son. I also wrote the mill and its land in my husband's name. I signed for him a selling and buying contact on the mill's land. I do that for the children's sake. People do not believe me, but he beats me up. One time behind the LAC, he hit me with irrigation pipes.” (Om Fareed)

Other women ended their marriages and chose the land, as explained below:

“He told me either me or the land. I picked the land.” (Om Omar)

“He wanted me to sell the land. He got me the contract, and I was supposed to sign it. I refused to sell it. We had a big fight because of that. He kept insisting on selling it, but we are divorced now.” (Om Abdallah)

Many men felt inferior and reluctantly provided labour on their wives' farms.

“I went to training and came back. My husband left the beans on the ground without harvesting them. It was too late for harvesting them by the time I got back, and the beans shed their seeds on the ground. He kept telling me, ‘this is your land. What am I getting from this labouring?’” (Om Fareed)

Om Alaa', another married woman landholder in Intilaq, similarly, reported that her husband tells her “this is your land. What am I getting from it? I am a labourer in this family.

He kept beating me up. I have seen dark days because of this man. I saw much humiliation and degradation in my lifetime. My husband dragged me on the streets and beat me up. ”

## 5.7 Women without Land Titles in Comparative Perspective

Women without land and of poor backgrounds had fewer chances for expanding their life choices and challenging and addressing gender inequalities. In this section, I compare the quality of life for women who had jobs and/or obtained education to women who acquired land. To do that, I will first, based on the 18 cases of landless women I encountered and the literature, diagnose the status of poor women in Egypt in general with particular attention paid to differences between divorced, single, and widowed women.

Poor women in Egypt have difficulty accessing both a good quality education and good jobs. The two are interdependent. In general, jobs are limited in Egypt and youth unemployment rate in 2011 reached more than 40% (Zurayk 2011). Women graduates experience more difficulty in accessing jobs, especially for women of poor backgrounds, which constitute the majority of Egyptian women (Barsoum 2002). Out of 85 million Egyptian people, 60 million are poor. Women of poorer backgrounds gain an inferior type of education<sup>18</sup>. Their parents lack finances necessary for private education and as a result achieve low GPAs to get them into technical schools and not universities. Lack of good training in foreign languages, which is costly to acquire, and lack of expensive clothing also limits the choices that poor women can get in the job market (Barsoum 2002). The private sector offers good paying jobs exclusively to women with foreign language skills and a stylish wardrobe.

Jobs available to this social class of women are limited, for the most part, to secretaries, cleaning maids, and cashiers. These positions pay little and are deemed

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<sup>18</sup> Men of poor backgrounds are also poorly educated and have less access to private education after school sessions, which are necessary to achieve higher GPAs. Furthermore, due to the fact that teachers are underpaid, they often depend on after school private education for income, and as such do not focus enough on teaching during regular school hours. So the quality of education at private after hour sessions is actually higher than that provided during regular school hours.



inappropriate because girls in these positions interact with unrelated men on a constant basis and are susceptible to sexual harassment (Barsoum 2002). Women in these positions are often a target for sexual harassment. Chastity is highly valued and anything that compromises it is stigmatized and carries punishment to the victim, most notably, of reducing her marriage prospects.

Government jobs are respectable but are scarce and require nepotism, and strong connections with senior officials. Unfortunately, women in government offices with similar training as their male counterparts occupy inferior posts, such as secretarial and clerical work (personal observation). The benefits of government jobs are good, but the pay is low (Barsoum 2002). Government employees are entitled to housing, land or other entrepreneurial projects as a reward for leaving the job voluntarily before the retirement age, and a pension plan (personal observation).

In Upper Egypt, the issue is further complicated. Women are less likely to be educated than in Lower Egypt and rarely work outside their houses, except for Bedouin women who work on family farms. The WFP-Assisted Projects Unit Coordinator offered jobs to several women whom she met during training sessions or who approached the Coordinator for land. These women refused the job offer saying that, “for us in Upper Egypt, women do not work outside the house. It is not appropriate.”

Divorced and widowed women had a difficult life in both Upper and Lower Egypt. In Lower Egypt, the very poor widowed or divorced women who were uneducated had to generate income for their families all by themselves in low paying jobs such as selling of vegetables and tailoring. “My head often had blisters from carrying the vegetable tray of parsley and cilantro ... Everyday for years, I carried greens on my head. I have seen dark days to raise my children,” explained Om Nasir, Om Fared’s, a GWL, mother. In Lower Egypt, widowed and divorced women in better off families and no land title were more likely to be dependent on their brothers for survival. This dependence created feelings of burden for many women, such as Om Adel, a widowed woman. Although Om Adel was educated in a technical school for commerce, her job as accountant paid very little (see Chapter 4 for more details about Om Adel).

In Upper Egypt, on the other hand, due to increased poverty, many widowed women had to mostly depend on themselves for income generation. For making a living, these mostly uneducated women opted for baking bread, opening small kiosks for selling groceries, and selling of vegetables and birds in markets. Poor widowed women were pitied and given *sadaqa* (charity) money, or money that will bring a Muslim credit with God. “The poor woman [a widowed woman next door] her face is red from baking bread. I gave her extra money for the bread. I told her take this for the children and left,” said Shadia, the sister of the Head of the Sa’yda settlement.

Many reported that they seldom asked for money from their in-laws or brothers out of pride. Others reported that when they did, they were turned down and never asked again. Some were modestly supported by their relatives, through the purchase of clothing gifts, for example. Most were socially prohibited to ask for their inheritance shares from their families. One widowed WL in Upper Egypt, Om Badran, long before gaining land, worked as a seamstress for years to raise her children. She was not able to ask her brothers for her inheritance share in her father’s land in Wadi Abadi (a land reclamation project in Upper Egypt). Her brothers sold the land, and she got her share. “I was so happy my brothers decided to sell the land. It was a huge relief. I needed money very badly and could have never asked for them to sell the land,” explained Om Badran.

In comparison, widowed women who had land in the Samaha village were not pitied but described as warriors and admired in their communities for their bravery. They had wider options to generate income through their access to land through *berseem* sale and small ruminant rearing compared to women in the Old Lands. Also, perhaps more importantly, through the sale of the land, many WLs opened businesses to sustain them and bought a house in town. WLs in comparison to their counterparts in the Old Lands were also more likely to be involved in public life, such as through the LACs and other committees.

Although many women settlers (landholders or not) were cut off from their kin due to the distance and transport expenses, many were able to break free from controlling mothers-in-law. Mothers-in-law can be very abusive. One WL reported that her mother-in-law used to beat her up regularly. A sister of a married woman in the Iman village told me that, “my sister is very relaxed now. She is really happy in the New Lands. She had a very difficult

mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law used to hide food from her, like tomatoes, for example. She used to argue about almost everything with my sister. Honestly, my sister is more relaxed and happy in the New Lands,” explained Om Hamaha. This example illustrates that an independent marriage house is important for married women’s independence and dignity. A GWL in the Shohada village relocated into the New Lands to escape conflict with her mother-in-law.

Three young women who held jobs in the local LAC complained that they were underemployed, their jobs paid little, and they faced mistreatment by male colleagues, such as yelling and scolding for trivial reasons. Even their work in clerical and secretarial jobs was resisted by the employers. “I do not like hiring women. You train them, you teach them what is going on, and, then, they get married and leave you. I, for example, did not want to hire Ismail’s [a driver at the LDU] daughter. They started working behind my back and tricked me into hiring her,” explained the Head of the Sa’yda settlement. Upon marriage, many women leave their jobs. They work mainly to contribute to the purchase of their bridalware. One pair of sisters who worked in a shop in Edfu as salespersons were criticized in their local village of Iman for interacting and joking with unrelated men every day. Another woman who had a master’s degree in fisheries management and lived in Aswan complained that her salary is 80 EL when transport to get to work costs her more than that. She was unable to find a better job and opted for continuing her graduate studies.

In Lower Egypt, I met a woman who was a school principal. Her husband helped her open an Azhar school in the Ali Mubarak village. She was also completing a master’s degree in education in Alexandria University. She was highly respected in the community, but she did not adopt socially defiant roles. She was submissive to her husband and dependent on him. Along the same lines, the wife of the Head of the Sa’yda settlement was respected in the community for coming from a good family and marrying a man in a senior position. She was outgoing but not socially defiant. She refused to interact with men and often sought permission from her husband to do things or go to places. These two women reproduced gender norms and relations.

When a married woman is upset with her husband, she goes back to her brothers’ house if her parents are deceased. This puts her in a rivalry situation with her sister-in-law

who would not welcome her stay, often in subtle ways. I observed in Sa'yda the situation of the sister-in-law of Rola, a Bedouin woman. Hoda left her husband due to marital tensions and went to live with her brother. Rola complained behind Hoda's back that Hoda used soap and ate food with them and still wanted her brother to pay her for harvesting the land with him. The sister-in-law was also trying hard to convince Hoda to go back to her husband despite the fact that her husband was severely beating Hoda almost every day, Hoda reported. Along the same lines, Hanadi, a daughter of a WL in Samaha, complained many times that her brother beat her son up to discipline him when Hanadi did not really agree with her brother's methods. Hanadi faced challenges with decision-making related to raising her own child.

Another life history of a divorced woman called Om Ali highlights the status of divorced women and their vulnerabilities in Upper Egypt and perhaps more generally in Egypt.

I used to have a restaurant, a very successful one. I used to cook many trays of béchamel pasta per day. Once I was bathing and cooking at the same time. I almost fainted in the bath, and the *molohkiya* got burnt. My cow husband arrived and beat me up so bad and threw me out of the house. He beat me so many times. I can never forget those days. He threw me out without any clothing. I only had my 'abaya on. My sister-in-law took me in and gave me clothing. He divorced me and took my children away. He told my children bad things about me. My children testified in court that I am an "unfit mother." How can a child know how to say "unfit mother" without being trained to say so? I had two children: a boy and a girl. I was only allowed to see my children twice a week. My son and daughter never ask about me. My in-laws made them hate me. I talk to my boy, but my daughter, who is married now, refuses to speak with me. You do not want to see me during Mother's Day. I get very, very depressed on that day. I spent a whole year injecting morphine into myself, unaware about the world and what was happening in it. The Dr. prescribed morphine injections for me to combat pain. I then married my current husband [as a second wife in a 'orfi (unregistered) marriage<sup>19</sup>]. He is very jealous. He does not let me go anywhere. He beats me up too, but I cannot stay alone. That is not good for me. My friend Nabila here and her husband keep telling me to leave him, but I do not want to stay alone.

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<sup>19</sup> *Orfi* marriage is common in Egypt. Girls below 18 years old are not allowed to legally wed. As a result, girls below 18 years old are married in *Orfi* marriages. Their rights upon divorce are not recognized.

Om Ali's story highlights the problems that many divorced women face in the Middle East, more generally, that of depriving a divorced mother of her children (Moors 1996). Om Ali's story illustrates husbands' cruelty and domestic violence.

On the other hand, women with land titles were more proactive and successful in ending abusive marriages and avoided controlling brothers upon widowhood or divorce, as mentioned in the overcoming hardships section. This is true especially in Intilaq where the lands were quite profitable but also in Sa'yda where the house provided shelter from domestic dispute. WHHs with land titles in Intilaq were also more independent and capable of raising their children than other WHHs without land. "My brother told me to come join him in his house and raise sheep there. I told him here is my house, and here is my land. I do not want to be a burden on anyone," explained Om Ashraf. It was also clear that women who had land were less tolerant of domestic violence, as mentioned in the overcoming hardship and increased decision-making sections. Most women who did not have land, believed that domestic violence is '*aadi*, a normal part of everyday life.

## 5.8 Conclusion

Many factors contributed to why women retained or sold their lands. The land lacked basic services, required money to 'green', and at least three years of reclamation. During this three-year period, especially in the first year, no profit to minimal profit is generated. For the most part, WLs in Upper Egypt retained their lands for the future of their children and did not benefit immediately from farming their lands, as opposed to GWLs who generally benefitted very much economically from their lands.

Women landholders controlled their lands to varying degrees depending on where they lived, whether they contributed to labour on their lands, and their marital status. For succeeding in the New Lands, networking was crucial. For those who farmed their lands, the land led to forming new networks and strengthening older ones. Microcredit or seed money was crucial to lead the land into production in Lower Egypt, but in Upper Egypt not very effective due to the bad quality of the land and lack of knowledge and training in reclamation.

In both settlements, the land resulted in the rearrangement of household decision-making into an egalitarian model that involves women landholders (see Deere and Twyman 2012). Women landholders, most notably, were involved in the choice of brides and grooms for their children and in entrepreneurial activities related to their lands. An egalitarian model of decision-making was crucial for WLs' plans to work on their lands because they often did not labour on their lands due to age and social taboos. This study also demonstrates an egalitarian household model which is based on mothers and sons and not only married couples as most studies focus solely on married couples (see Deere and Twyman 2012).

Similar findings of land access providing women with better marriage prospects are reported by Deere and Leon (2001) in Latin America. Datta (2006) are also reported similar findings in India where women with land title accessed knowledge previously only available to men, and as a result gained self confidence and decision-making power in the household. Perhaps most importantly women were empowered through land access by a new or sharpened ability to make plans and carry them out. Some women were able to provide not necessarily for themselves but for their children, husbands, kin, and/or communities through their access to land.

Findings for GWLs and WLs illustrate that women are interdependent in the household (Walker 2003; Jackson 2003; Razavi 2007). Many GWLs chose to purchase property in the name of their husbands and leave decision-making power with their husbands. These women felt that the status of their husbands in the local community directly affected them. Furthermore, women wanted the land for their children's benefit too. All they wanted for themselves<sup>20</sup>, for the most part, was to go on pilgrimage. Along these same lines, when given the chance to work together on the land in women exclusive villages, women benefitted far more from working with their sons, and this reality contradicts Agarwal's (2003) advocacy of women's collective labour. This shows that women indeed do not want

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<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy, however, to mention that most of the women who accessed land were married with children. Younger, unmarried women would have differing hopes and dreams for the land, such as buying their bridalware and attracting good marriage partners.

to opt outside the household independently, as also argued by Walker (2003), Jackson (2003), and Razavi (2007).

In considering alternative means to women's empowerment, education and jobs, it was clear that jobs and education alone are not nearly as empowering as land. Women with jobs were paid very little and hired for unimportant jobs, despite their education being of a similar quality to their male peers. Education neither provided women with economic security nor means to break free from domestic violence or controlling relatives, especially brothers. Many single, divorced, and widowed women were unable to find jobs and were subjected to domestic violence and control. The land provided women with means to defy social norms by adopting new roles, including managing land, and to break free from oppressive kin and spousal relations in both settlements. Women in both settlements felt that they were equal to men through their access to land.

In Intilaq, GWLs were able to use their education to benefit from training and devise adaptive strategies. In Sa'yda, WLs who were the most empowered had access to labour from an ample number of sons and/or brothers who had previous experience in farming. Sons and brothers with no experience in farming were unable to economically benefit from the land. Women who had extensive networks were far more successful in benefitting economically from the land. Many of these women reported that the land made them more outgoing and increased their knowledge in public life, which in turn helped them become successful entrepreneurs and more adept in public life.

To answer the question of whether land is the single most important means for women's empowerment, as has been found in other studies conducted in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa: land on its own is not enough for bettering women's lives (Razavi 2007, 2009; Jackson 2003; Jacobs 2002; Whitehead and Tsikata 2003). Settlers need housing, potable water, police stations, doctors, drainage, and proper schooling. Inequality in access to water is embedded in a wider government policy that favors entrepreneurs over smallholders (Bush 2007; Barnes 2012). Lack of control over labour, lack of access to farming knowledge, and inadequate finances to purchase fertilizer and other farm inputs have also limited women in their ability to make productive use of their lands (Whitehead and Tsikata 2003). In particular, lack of access to markets and market information have made women vulnerable in

both settlements to exploitation by middle men, who have often taken advantage of their isolation.

In a few cases, such as the cases of Om Badee', Om Sayid, and Om Tofayli, the land was disempowering in Sa'yda. The land for these women was a white elephant, expensive and laborious to maintain. Many women initially sold their gold for fixing the land, and a few sold their houses in the Old Lands. The land made these women poorer and less able to absorb shocks (such as ill health) and unable to come out of poverty (Deere et al. 2012).

These cases have important implications for using land access as a poverty alleviation strategy, as has been argued by, for example, Agarwal (1994, 2003) and the World Bank, most notably in the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty. Although the land is not profitable, women did not want to sell because it was more socially empowering<sup>21</sup>. The land gave many WLs a sense of pride. Also many WLs, whether or not their farms were profitable, overcame inequalities in gender roles and adopted tasks such irrigating at night and managing their farms.

In Intilaq and in some cases of land sales in Sa'yda the land was also economically empowering, as it provided long-term and sustainable means of income generation (Carr 2000). In Sa'yda, when the land was economically empowering, some women sold their lands and were able to secure their livelihoods in the long-term through purchasing houses or machinery for rent. In Intilaq, when the land was economically empowering, many GWLs felt that the land had changed their lives and provided them and their children with a decent source of income.

Many women in both settlements wanted their lands as a family farm to keep their sons, especially, and daughters close to them. Even socially, however, there were limitations to empowerment. Women who grew darker skin due to farming were stigmatized by their families and local communities. Furthermore, as we will also see in Chapter 7, women who

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<sup>21</sup> I differentiate between social and economic empowerment because the two are not necessarily mutually-inclusive results of land access.



roamed more freely as a result of gaining land were perceived as sinners and were forbidden from accessing micro-credit and training. Because women in Upper Egypt were not perceived as real farmers, they were neither given micro-credit nor taken seriously in their public roles. Chapter 7 will make these points clearer. Many women themselves did not feel it was necessary to address their general lack of participation in public life although they were given the chance to do so in various land-related committees. Similar findings are reported in South Africa by Walker (2003) whereby women's seats on local committees were not sustainable and neither were women members interested in contributing to public life. This is problematic for the general goal of achieving equality and empowerment for women. Varley (2007) argues that women need to be proactive in the acquisition of their equality and rights. As we will see in Chapter 7, the lack of involvement of female board members in public life limited settlers' gains from the Revolution in the Samaha village.

Putting women in one village to allow them to participate in public life and access special services is a failed experiment. In both settlements, villages with mostly women landholders, as opposed to predominantly male-inhabited villages, were the most underdeveloped villages with shortages in labour, shops, transportation, and population in general. To be fair, in these villages, women landholders were more likely to adopt previously forbidden practices and roles. Yet, the negative consequences of women exclusive villages were greater than the benefits. This village model led to increased insecurity, theft, malicious gossip, as we will see in Chapter 7, and made it easier for the government and people alike to punish women for their gender.

On the front of domestic violence, the land did provide an escape route from conflict at home and for breaking free from abusive and unwanted relations, not only spousal but also kin, as argued by Panda and Agarwal (2005) and Agarwal and Panda (2007). For some married women landholders, however, the land itself resulted in domestic dispute. Many husbands felt uncomfortable with their wives' increased mobility and knowledge. Husbands reacted violently by beating up their wives, forbade them from attending training, and/or passively refused to participate in labour on the land. Land grabbing attempts by husbands were also reported for many women landholders. These findings suggest that land access does not keep domestic violence or dispute at bay, as argued by Panda and Agarwal (2005), Agarwal and Panda (2007), and Jacobs (2002: 893). To the contrary, land access for married

women was a source of conflict, as similarly reported by Deere and Leon (2001: 31) in Latin America.

All of these findings suggest that women's empowerment and equality cannot be reduced to land access as a kind of instrumental fix or panacea (Cornwall et al. 2007; Jackson 2003; Kabeer 2000). More attention clearly needs to be paid to the provision of basic services, local social values, impacts on gender relations, and the biophysical qualities of the land, as well as government's relations with women.

In the next chapter, we will explore another type of land access for women, joint titles. We will examine which type of land titles is a more viable option for Egyptian women.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Joint Titling in the MRS: A Failed Attempt at Local and National Scales

In addition to shedding light on the impacts of providing full title access to Egyptian women, the MRS provides a trial for understanding whether joint title for women and men is a viable option. In this chapter, I examine the case of joint title in the MRS by considering the cases of 8 women with joint titles (3 in Lower Egypt and 5 in Upper Egypt) in interaction with local settlers and officials (Village Engineers, Heads of Settlement, and other officials in the LDUs), and national officials in Cairo (at the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit and the LRS). I will compare the impacts of providing full land title to women to joint title, as there is considerable debate in the literature about which type is better for women (Agarwal 2003; Deere and Leon 2001; Razavi 2007, 2009; Varley 2007). The chapter begins with a literature review, after which the experiences of joint titles in the MRS are introduced from the perspectives of women, husbands, and officials. I then consider whether or not joint titles are better suited in comparison to full titles.

#### 6.1 Joint Titles and Land Reforms

When land reforms allocated land to the landless in most parts of the world, married women's wellbeing was assumed to depend on the wellbeing of their husbands. The assumption was that a household is unitary in its desires, decisions, and practices (Razavi 2007, 2009; Varley 2007: 1741). Land reforms in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, for example, gave men individual and exclusive titles to land, increasing their control over women, confining them more to the role of housewives (Jacobs 2002: 889, Razavi 2007; Yong and Lin 2008). Jacobs (2002) observes in Zimbabwe that the importance of women's labour in land resettlements was significant owing to the agrarian lifestyle, which required more children to work the land, imposing greater child-bearing responsibilities on women.

Deere and Leon were largely influenced by Agarwal's framework and studied joint titling in Latin America, which they argued would address the inequality between men and women (in Datta 2006). Joint titling is widely adopted in Latin America and is based on a joint household model. Joint titling is also increasingly being adopted in India and Egypt

(Datta 2006, WFP 2004). Some research in India and Latin America confirms the importance of joint titling in giving women a decision-making voice in the household and public life: due to partially owning the property, these women were obliged to make decisions about it, which often led to increased knowledge about bureaucratic and banking matters (Datta 2006; Deere and Leon 2001). Others who conducted research in India, Latin America, and Africa have argued that joint-titling could lead to coercion in cases of divorce, bequeathing, and other land transfer transactions and could impede a woman's ability to obtain micro-credit (Agarwal 2003; Jacobs 2002: 895; Varley 2007). Agarwal (2003) and Scott et al. (2010) argue that joint titles also limit women's abilities in asserting their preferences for using the land, which differ in priorities between the spouses. So far, very limited research has been conducted around the impacts of joint titling on women's lives (Razavi 2007; Varley 2007). This chapter explores the prospects of providing women or more correctly married couples with joint titles in the MRS.

## **6.2 Women with Joint Titles in the MRS**

The WFP-Assisted Projects Unit imposed a 20% land share for wives (whose husbands accessed land in the Evicted Tenants category) on the LDUs of the settlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq. The WFP-Assisted Projects coordinator initiated joint titles to provide married women with security in cases of divorce and abandonment and to reduce polygamy in rural Egypt. "These societies are governed by backwardness and illiteracy. I introduced joint titles to limit polygamy and to protect women from polygamy and divorce. I gained an award from the UN for introducing joint titles to Egypt. I was told that a wife with joint title prevented her husband from marrying a second wife. She threatened to take her portion of the land away," explained the Former WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator. Women with joint-title in the Sa'yda settlement believed that they acquired land to achieve equality with their husbands in eternal marriages. "Dr. Azeza [The WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator] gave us joint titles to stand equally, head-to-head, next our husbands and farm the land. Dr. Azeza gave us joint titles to keep the wife and husband intertwined together," explained Om Ashraf, a woman with joint title in Al Shahama.

In Intilaq, Evicted Tenants were given areas of land of two and a half acres, which is half the size of land provided to Graduates of five acres. The purpose was to provide as much

Evicted Tenants as possible with alternative source of land, which they lost due to Law 96 of 1992, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Because the original land size was divided into two, every two families were placed in the same house, initially designated to house one family. This arrangement was problematic for women who had to share a two-room house with unrelated men. Eventually, the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit funded the building of a second set of houses to solve the problem of women forced to live with unrelated men. Wives of evicted tenants were provided with a green and yellow title deed of half an acre. In Sa'yda, on the other hand, Evicted Tenants were provided with land equal to the Graduates' allocation of 6 acres and a house in a nearby village. Each woman was provided with a yellow and green title deed of 2 acres. A title deed allows a woman to buy fertilizers, seeds, apply for loans, rent farming equipment, and seek farming advice from the LACs.

### **6.3 Women's Empowerment in the MRS through Joint Titles**

Many women in both settlements felt that joint titles are important and a good idea to protect women in cases of divorce, widowhood, and polygamy. Many women thought that the land would provide the women with a source of income by renting the land, for example. Some women also felt that joint titles are important for women whose husbands have sons from a different wife. "In case the sons of the husband were not supportive of their father's wife, the land will be there for her," explained Om Adawiya, whose husband has sons from a different wife.

Furthermore, if joint titles indeed prevent husbands from taking second wives, then joint titles are very empowering for married women. Many women encountered from all social classes were insecure and worried about their husbands taking another wife:

"I worry he takes another wife. His cousin did that. It is common in their family. He mentions that every now and then too." (Wife of an official)

"A woman who married a Christian is always a winner. She does not have to worry about her husband taking a second wife besides her." (Alia, a daughter-in-law of a WL in Samaha)

The ability and willingness to take second wives increased husbands' control over their wives and led wives to being obedient to their husbands, especially if the husband threatened

taking a second wife. If joint titles keep polygamy at bay, then women with joint titles could become more assertive and secure in their lives. A Head of Settlement reported that when women wanted to assert their opinions with their husbands: they would remind their husbands that they have two acres of land and their opinions should be taken into consideration.

Women whose husbands had second wives were quite upset about that. A driver told me that his brother-in-law took a second wife and reduced his spending on the driver's sister's household. "Of course, I am upset he took another wife. How can I say other than that," complained the sister. Another wife of a driver who took a second wife and lived in an adjacent house was similarly upset. Many fights erupted between the two households, the news of which was spread in the LDU.

In Intilaq one woman with joint title reported that she was included in decision-making related to the land. "I convinced my husband not to leave the desert and sell the land. I wanted to stay in the New Lands and generate income to raise my family. I did not want sell and leave," Om Hassan reported. As opposed to many women without land title, Om Hassan participated in decision-making related to the land.

In many cases women claimed their joint title in times of hardship. Engineers in Sa'yda reported many cases of women who divorced their husbands having claimed their shares of the land in court. They reported knowing that the court often contacted the LACs for confirmation of a title deed. Standing in court for these women meant that social norms were defied, as it is not acceptable for women in Upper Egypt to resort to courts to resolve their problems.

Another case of claiming land in cases of hardship was reported to me by the driver in the Sa'yda settlement.

Om Ashraf had a joint title of two acres with her husband. Her husband was accused of planting marijuana on his land. The government canceled his land title as a punishment. But because his wife had two acres in the land, the government was not able to take the land away from her family. Om Ashraf reported filing a lawsuit against the government to keep all the land for the sake of her children. She reported that her husband never comes here because he worries if seen here, the government would take away the land. He stays away and lets Om Ashraf take care of the

situation. She lamented the fact that they had to sell all their inheritance in the Old Lands to reclaim and cultivate the land, and, now, the government wants to take the land from them. Thus far, however, she was able to keep the land with her claim to two acres, and her sons work on the land. They plant *berseem* to fatten cattle and work as seasonal labour. Om Ashraf has cancer and goes to Aswan for treatment. She is not happy with her current situation. She was more relaxed when her husband was around. Now, she complained, she has to sell birds and rabbits in the local market to make money.

## 6.4 Factors that Impeded Empowerment for Women through Joint Titles in the MRS

Initially, the highest proportion of women landholders who accessed land through the MRS belonged to the joint title category. Joint title implementation, however, failed at many scales, the national, local, and household. A new Minister for MALR was appointed and rejected the idea of joint titles: “this is clowning [rediculous], ‘the new Minister referred to joint titles’,” explained Dr. Azeeza of the WFP (although the former Minister at then Yousof Wali approved of joint titles). The Vice Head of the LRS complained on many occasions that joint titles interfere with a man’s Islamic and constitutional rights:

“Islam allows a man to marry four wives. This is his right. Joint titles jeopardize his rights to four wives. If he gave each wife 20% of his land, then what would be left for him? You cannot bring into Egypt foreign ideas that conflict with our local religion and values.”

The GRPAR refused to deal with two landholders to the same piece of land. Furthermore, joint titles were not in sync with the Law of Land Reclamation, which only acknowledges full titles.

“The GARPAN worried that they will not be able to collect their money from the women who are not ‘legal’ landholders. So they refused to deal with two landholders for the same land. Only the men were recognized as legal. Really, they are the original landholders.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

“The joint titles failed because there is no such a thing as joint titles in the Law of Land Reclamation. There are only full titles. The Law of Land Reclamation does not stipulate that a wife is entitled to 20% of her husband’s land.” (Legal Advisor of the Sa’yda settlement)

“There is no joint title category in Law 43 of Land Reclamation.” (Head of Horizontal Expansion at the LRS when asked why were joint titles cancelled)

The WFP reported that the Egyptian state rejected joint titles because officials and policy makers do not use ‘empowerment’ language in their planning and policies. They are not interested in empowering women. When asked why they did not enforce and follow up on the implementation of joint titles, the WFP replied that their role is advisory and that the WFP cannot impose rules and regulations on the Egyptian state.

Officials in the LDU also rejected the idea of joint titles, but initially welcomed them to access food aid, as illustrated below. Then, the LDUs in both settlements cancelled joint titles for women within a year of receiving food aid.

“The story of joint title is that the WFP coordinator came back to us and told us that there are not enough women gaining land. And then we only distributed land to WHHs. We sat together and said, ‘what do we do now, what do we do now?’ She suggested we give joint titles to wives of Evicted Tenants. We did that. She was happy, we met her condition, and she gave us food aid. The joint title is only talk, though. We got food aid for the settlement, and then tore apart the wives’ titles. We threw away the paper work. It is all over now,” (Head of Sa’yda settlement)

“When we don’t like an imposed idea from international donors, we simply ignore it, like we did with the joint title issue.” (Marketing Engineer in the Intilaq settlement)

Women were perceived as a threat to their households by officials:

“When you give land to women, they will betray all those around them.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

“Giving land to women is a very bad idea. We have *kholo*’ [a type of divorce carried on by the wife that does not need her husband’s approval] here. A wife can take the land and *tikhla*’ [(perform *kholo*’) divorce a husband without a need for his approval] her husband. Children have priority over the land and not the mother.” (Vice Head of the Intilaq settlement)

In any case, however, many women with joint titles refrained from using their lands or claiming them. Women knew that *kholo*’, although legal, is punishable in their communities and not a viable option for women, and, therefore, *kholo*’ is not really a threat as perceived by officials:

“Only if you were still married to your husband, you are entitled to a land share,” explained Om Alawiya who has a joint title with her husband in Shahama.

“A woman who *khal’it* [(performed *kholo*’) divorced her husband without his approval out of her own will] her husband was denied a welfare salary. The official



she spoke with dismissed her and told her, 'you have nothing with us.' Women who do *kohlo* get nothing from their husbands, no salary, no monthly allotment, nothing." (Cousin of Om Majid)

Another WL wanted to *tikhla* her husband but was convinced by the Village Engineer not to do so due to its negative consequences. "I convinced Om Aseer not to divorce her husband by *kholo*'. In our society this is a shame, and she still has two daughters to marry off. She was convinced and did not divorce him by *kholo*,'" explained Village Engineer Fahmi.

None of the women with joint titles reported participating in farming the land or in decision-making related to it. One woman said that she did not farm the land because she did not know where it was: "I had no idea where exactly was my land. They did not tell me from here to here is yours."

Many women with joint titles were afraid to ask their husbands for land. A focus group with three married women with joint titles, for example, reported that they did not ask for land. Their husbands would beat and divorce them if they asked for land. Others were too scared, even after the death of the husband, to ask for the land. "My husband died, and the land is in the hands of his sons now. I did not ask for the two acres. The big son is aggressive and rude. Would you ask for me if I could get the two acres of land?" asked Om Adawiya in the Iman village. Her sons from a different wife were farming the land and not giving her any money from it, Om Adawiya complained to me. Many women with joint titles reported that they were not aware that joint titles were cancelled in the LAC. This could point to the fact that women with joint titles rarely discussed joint titles publicly.

Some women with joint titles reported that they saw no need to claim their land:

"As long as I am happy with my husband and children, I do not care if I owned land or not. Perhaps if my husband did not treat me well or if my children did not treat me well, then I will stand up and say, 'I have land. Give it to me.' It does not matter. In the end, it is all going to the children." (Om Najuib in Shahama)

"My mother does not like to say this land is mine. Say it is mine and the man will not give the land to her. The most important thing is that she is happy with her husband. The children are happy and well, and that would be enough." (Daughter of a woman with a joint title in Shodada)

The latter quote reveals that in this case joint title did not enhance the woman's fallback position to become more independent outside the household or to help her face hardships. She knew that the land was not hers and that she would not get it if she asked for it.

Joint titles were also a nuisance for local Village Engineers and officials, as illustrated by the following quote:

“Domestic disputes were on the rise due to joint titles. Joint title made a ‘story’ [an excuse for trouble] for women. Every time a wife had an argument with her husband, the wife would threaten, ‘waaaaaah, I have two acres’. The engineers were overwhelmed with spousal fights. It created many domestic disputes.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

Having spoken with women with joint titles, however, I doubt that many women claimed their lands in domestic fights with their husbands.

Another two engineers reported that women with joint titles claimed their lands upon divorce. Instead of recognizing the injustices of the government that cancelled what it had initially provided to its citizen, a Village Engineer blamed the women for claiming their land rights and the WFP for promising them:

“For me, the WFP would have done far better job, if it had given the wives food aid only without the land. Giving women joint titles created problems between couples, which I think would have been avoided were it not for the joint title issue. There is this story where a woman who got divorced thought that she would rent out the two acres and live from the rent money with her children. Usually a third party would try to negotiate ending the divorce ordeal. If the third party saw that the two do not want each other anymore, they would still continue their job. They would try to resolve the issue without courts and arrange for a settlement between the two, a *nafaqa* [an allowance]. When the husband knew that the wife went to court and came to the LAC to get land, however, he told the third party, ‘between me and her is the court.’ Divorce through courts is a long and tedious process, which can take up to two years. Now where will she and her children get money from to live over the two years? In court, he could also lie and bring papers saying he only makes 100 EL, and the settlement would be very little. She ruined her chances of getting a good settlement with her husband by claiming land.” (Adham, a Village Engineer)

Along the same lines, the Head of the Sa’yda settlement reported that the court would call the LDU and ask whether this or that woman had a land title: “We would say they have

nothing with us because they do not,” he continued. If the LDU and the Minister of the MALR had maintained joint titles, these women would indeed have gotten two acres of land.

Joint titles were also resisted at the household level by the husbands who originally owned the land but then were told that their wives had 20% of the land. Husbands strongly refused to give their wives land because they saw their wives as assistants to them and not equals:

“My wife serves me at home. Now, she wants to stand as my equal with me in the LAC and on my land. This joint title issue went from this ear and then straight out from the other one as if it never happened.” (A landholder at the Iman LAC)

Husbands also felt that wives cannot inherit from a husband while he was still living. Furthermore, wives gain only one eighth of their husbands’ inheritance, and often inherit nothing. Children get all the inheritance. If there were no adult sons, wives usually keep the land in custodianship until their children become adults. Therefore, it is difficult for men to accept a joint title on their lands with their wives:

“From the end: a woman will never inherit from her husband when he is still alive. Maybe she can get inheritance from her father, but never her husband.” (Another male landholder in Intilaq with a joint title with his wife)

Finally, the nature of the MRS land titles, which are renewed every year until all land installments were paid, allowed for the cancellation of land tenure for women after receiving food aid. Joint titles for women were not renewed and their joint title deed is only valid for that one year.

## **6.5 Women with Full Titles in Comparative Perspective**

Table 12 illustrates the difference between advantages and disadvantages of joint titles compared to full titles for women. In comparison with women who had full titles, women with joint titles had less secure access to land. Joint titles were not legally binding and were an exotic idea that got easily dismissed. Full titles were sustainable, on the other hand, and customary. As opposed to full titles, women with joint titles did not farm their land parcels, increase their mobility, participate in public life, or acquire new knowledge and information through the land. Full titles, on the other hand, provided women with opportunities to participate in public life through land-related committees. Women with joint

title were also not forced to farm the land or face evictions and thus adopt roles of farmers and farm managers.

**Table 12 Comparing women’s experiences with full and joint titles in the MRS.**

<b>Joint Titles Impacts on Respective Women</b>	<b>Full Titles Impacts on Respective Women</b>
Did not participate in farming the land	Able to farm the land
Limited ability to participate in decision-making related to the land	Able to participate in decision-making related to the land
Felt more secure with land access	Felt more secure with land access
No impact on women’s ability to participate in public life	Increased ability to participate in public life
Officials unwilling to accept joint titles for women	Officials more willing to accept full titles for women, especially for WHHs
Husbands unwilling to accept joint titles for women	Husbands more willing to accept wives as landholders with full titles, especially if they were benefitting from the land
Women did not benefit economically from the land	Women could benefit economically from the land
The land was not considered theirs	The land was considered theirs especially when they were involved in farming it
The land could provide security against polygamy	The land could provide security against polygamy

Women with joint titles also did not benefit economically from the land as they were not as involved with their land as women with full titles. As mentioned in Chapter 5, farming the land was important for women to participate on a higher decision-making level (such as matters related to spending), which is usually only occupied by men, on and beyond the land. Joint titles could only provide women with some security against polygamy and divorce. Perhaps joint titles could do a better job with preventing polygamy or divorce since, as we saw in Chapter 5, husbands of women with full titles felt inferior to their wives and retaliated

on their wives. Husbands, however, were unlikely to accept the provision of joint titles from their own lands to their wives.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Stakeholders' experiences with joint titles indicate that the project failed in securing women's access to land. Perhaps the biggest problem was that the WFP's involvement with joint titles came *after* the distribution of land to the Evicted Tenants. Due to this late involvement, land title for women was framed as 20% shares of the husbands' lands – an approach which inevitably aroused male opposition. Joint titles were also not legally viable as the GARPAN would only deal with single landholders. Similar findings are also reported by Baruah (2007) whereby the legal implications of two landholders for the same property were incompatible with Indian tenure laws.

Men felt that conferring joint title to the husband's land was unfair. For their part, wives were also afraid to ask for their land shares, and many knew that they would be punished instead of gaining land. In fact, however, under certain circumstances conferring joint titles of a couples' land might become a win-win policy for the government and for the women. In India, husbands *given joint titles as members of a couple* did not resist their wives' access to land: they accepted their wives' joint title (Datta 2006). What Datta found was that these husbands had no problem in sharing property with their wives as long as they acquired property. Similarly, Baruah (2007), also in India, found that, due to resource deprivation, men did not mind that their wives gained joint titles to urban housing.

The experiences of providing women with joint title in the MRS were similar to those in a South African land reform program: land access for women remained merely 'a piety in the sky' with no effective impact (Walker 2003). Along the same lines, Sholkamy (2012) argues the the Egyptian government's commitment to gender equality was limited to treaties and international agreements and did not extend to practice. This raises questions about the ability of IFIs to facilitate changes in land rights for women, as Agarwal has argued (2003).

Joint titles were not only introduced by the WFP but were also imported by the local officials in the LDUs as instrtumental measures to gain food aid and funding. Meeting the WFP's requirements also allowed local settlements to access loans, machinery, and, in some

cases, electricity, extra housing, and, in Upper Egypt, funded drainage projects. But the granting of joint titles was revoked after WFP's entrance into the area and the acquisition of food aid and funding. Similar findings are reported by Everett (1997), whereby the Mexican government imported 'sustainable development' for many projects to achieve gains not necessarily related to sustainable development. In view of these findings, full title is clearly a better option for women's empowerment.

## Chapter 7

### **7 Planning, Unfulfilled Promises, and Resistance: Women Landholders and their Relationship to the State in the ‘Last Lands God Created’**

Many scholars have argued that providing women with land access is not enough to allow them to improve their lives. Broader state and international forces shape women’s experiences with land access and could adversely impact women’s experiences with the land (Razavi 2007; Walker 2003; Jackson 2003). In this chapter, I examine the changing relationship between 55 women landholders in the MRS, the state, and the WFP in the past 20 years. I use specific events or cases (such as theft of water pumps and the Revolution of January 25) to understand the changing relations between government officials and the women landholders. The chapter will focus, for the most part, on Sa’yda in Upper Egypt. When relevant, however, and to provide a richer context, reference will be made to Intilaq in Lower Egypt.

I will first describe the relationship among land, the government, and rural Egyptians, with a focus on women landholders in the two settlements. How did the government perceive and understand women settlers? What did the government see as its obligations towards the women, and the settlers more generally? On the other hand, how did the women landholders and settlers in general perceive and understand the government? I analyze state planning and its methods of governance. Afterwards, I consider women’s and, more generally, settlers’ reactions to state planning in its various forms, including improvisation as well as overt and covert resistance. I also consider informal strategies within state agencies and policy changes incurred by the Revolution. Finally, I summarize key findings and consider their implications for the debate on women and access to land.

#### **7.1 How the Local Government Perceived Settlers**

One cannot proceed into examining how the LACs and LDU perceived WLs in Sa’yda before first looking at how WHHs (landholders or not) are perceived in their societies. Single women, and for the most part WHHs, are stigmatized by their societies in

the both Intilaq and Sa'yda. They are viewed by government officials and local people as potential sinners (lecherous), untrustworthy, and in urgent need of husbands.

“If a single, divorced, or widowed woman went out of her house to the market, people would say ‘look she went out to ‘I do not know where’’. But if a married woman went out of her house to ‘I do not know where’, people would say ‘oh look this woman went out to the market’.” (WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator).

“I do not like to mingle with women who have no husbands. You can never trust a woman that has no man in the house. A woman who goes and comes as she pleases cannot be trusted.” (Om Fareed, a GWL )

“I do not like the way Om Abdallah treats you. This is not surprising: she has been divorced twice.” (Former Head of the Intilaq settlement)

The Head of the Sa'yda settlement was particularly outspoken about the women there:

“Why did you choose to work in the Samaha village? They are all divorced and widowed women. They are unbearable women. They led their husbands to their deaths and/or to divorce them.”

“You are not allowed to visit Om Majid [a WL in Samaha] in her house. She is not a respectful woman. She will come here to see you.”

Such views were common among men in the area:

“You know Om Nawahid [WL in Samaha] walked a sinner’s path,” explained a Sa'yda LDU driver to me.

“You mentioned many solutions to the problems of the ‘Widow Villages’ in Upper Egypt, but you missed a big, important solution. You should have recommended their marriage,” explained a former Head of the Sa'yda settlement.

“They [WLs in Sa'yda] did not tell you this, but they all want to get married,” explained the Head of the Land Enhancement Unit.

The way the WHHs are perceived in their societies had far reaching consequences for WLs in the Sa'yda settlement. WLs in Samaha had many opportunities to participate in public life, through committees, because they had no men competitors. Yet, only ‘properly-behaved’ women were allowed to be members in the LAC and Social Development Associations. “Our job is to see which woman is respectful and which is not. We only allow respectful women to be members,” explained the Head of the Sa'yda settlement.



The way WHHs are perceived in their societies (local officials, settlers, and people in original hometowns) might have made them vulnerable to rape or a target of men's desires, or perhaps to just rumours and gossip. Regardless, the Samaha village came to be known as a whorehouse, according to the Head of the settlement:

“They [WLs in Samaha] made a very bad reputation for our project. Drivers and passers-by in nearby cities were reporting to other people that they were in the Samaha last night, and that they realized their needs there. Former Heads refused to give these women loans or training. They have no God. You are Christian, and I am Muslim. Them, they have no God, they chose debauchery instead.”

“The daughters who are farming the land with their mothers are not farming with respect. They go to the land to find boys. The Samaha was a hotbed of prostitution. The women there are aggressive and rude. I used to be the Head of Training. I used to be scared from them. They sit there with their chests wide open [skin showing]. I used to pass by them running, calling names without looking, quickly to get out of there. Rahima Abdel Fatah, she would say here, Sherwat Makhsoumi, she would say here.”

Engineers and trainers, as a result, were not allowed to enter the village after dark.

“The Head of the Sa'yda settlement at that point then forbade engineers or us trainers to enter the Samaha in the evening or at night. We were not allowed to do our jobs,” explained a training official in the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit, also called the Comprehensive Rural Development Unit.

The lack of officials at night have left women vulnerable to theft and reduced their chances of acquiring proper training. As explained in Chapter 5, also women were not perceived as real farmers and as such had no access to training. For the most part, only Graduate settlers had training since they were perceived by the LRS and LDU as educated and worthy of information.

The Revolution brought many positive changes into the settlement of Sa'yda but not into the Samaha village. Settlers in Samaha still have no access to a doctor, potable water, or gasoline. When I asked the Head why these women still have no access to services as opposed to the other villages, he answered:

“These women are cursed. In Islam there is something called *riba*, punishment for doing something that angers God. Maybe 20% of these women are lecherous. The rest, nonetheless, would pay for it too [the rest are sinners by association]. If a person

is passing by a sinner who happened to be punished by smog (Carbon Monoxide), the passer-by will also suffocate.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

The Head of the Sa’yda settlement also blamed the flooding of Samaha on these women’s ‘curse’. As we will see below, however, the flooding had little to do with a curse and largely to do with the government’s bad planning and lack of coordination between various departments.

Many other unrelated to gender problems were blamed on women. For example, both genders could not farm the land due to poverty, both asked for services, both asked for fertilizer, both refused to pay payments, but the Head was particularly annoyed with the women, whom he perceived as whiney and needy, bad farmers, and, in general, weak and incapable of doing anything right. Although many settlers did not pay their land installments, only WLs were punished and refused loans. Most engineers felt that giving women land was a mistake, that women could not farm, and when they did, they farmed traditional crops that are not profitable.

In the words of the Head of Sa’yda settlement:

“Tell them to sell their lands and leave. The land needs money. They can’t afford farming.”

“I have money with the WLs [land installment money]. I need my money. I will not give the WLs loans until I get my money back.”

"The women should not get land: they will oppress and marginalize everyone around them. Take my wife for example. She makes money, but we use all my money on house expenses. When we reach the end of the month my salary runs out, I end up begging her for money. Women oppress and marginalize those around them.”

These views were reinforced by other officials with the project:

“Women are not raised to be able to manage a farm. They do not have enough self confidence to do so.” (Legal Advisor of the Say’da settlement)

“I think it was a mistake and a big mistake to give land to WHHs. Maybe give them two acres but not the entire six acres [the standard area of distributed land]. They are not able to plant all of it.” (Village Engineer of Shahama)

Even in Intilaq, despite GWLs’ success in farming, sometimes even outcompeting men colleagues, the head of the Intilaq settlement himself said that “what will a woman do

with the land alone? Why would she need the land? She will not be able to farm it by herself.” In reality, however, even men do not farm the land by themselves. They hire labour and their wives help them, especially when there is a lack of labour, or they want to save up money.

Along the same lines local officials majorly blamed the WLs for the theft of their electric pumps: “These are women and have their own conditions. They could not protect the pumps which got stolen,” explained the Head of the Sa’yda settlement. “When we went to report in the police station about the stealing of our water pump, the police officer told us you wasted the government money. You lost government property worth thousands of Egyptian Pounds,” said Om Tofayli. While the fact that the village was exclusively given to women and thus making it vulnerable to theft, the lack of security in the New Lands is also largely to be blamed. As the MRS Head of Training and Agricultural Affairs puts it, “the government should provide police rotations on water pumps. If you left your laptop in the field, it will definitely get stolen, right?” In Lower Egypt in the Bangar Al Sokar Settlement and in another settlement in Upper Egypt called the Wadi Al Noqra Settlement, electric pumps were stolen on a massive scale due to lack of enforced security.

Faheema, a woman official who used to be the Head of Training in the Sa’yda, and is the wife of a former Head of Sa’yda, felt that the women were used to get food aid: “The reality, unfortunately, is that the government used the ‘Widow Village’ of Samaha as a showpiece to please funding agencies, particularly the WFP.”

Many local officials felt that farmers are too demanding: “A farmer never gets enough. No matter how much you provide. They always want more and more,” said the Head of the Sa’yda settlement. Similarly, for the Governorate Local Council in the Iman village, who is responsible for providing basic services in both the New and Old Lands, the MRS settlers of Graduates, Evicted Tenants, and Beneficiaries (including WLs), especially the poorest, are a burden, stubborn, with inadequate or no agricultural production, many complaints, and a general overwhelming tendency to “depend on the government for everything.”

“These women are tiring us. They are tired, and they tire us with them,” I was told by the Head of Legal Affairs in the Governorate Local Council when Om Badee’s

requested permission from him to break the asphalt, which is the road flooring. Many settlers removed it to bury the tubes of the water pumps under the road and reach the main water canal.

“They want the government to give them everything. Settlers, however, are the ones who polluted their own potable water, and now they want another source of potable water. They irrigated using flood irrigation. The place is not designed for flood irrigation. Farmers refused to use drip and sprinkler irrigation and flooded the whole place out. Now they complain the water is too salty.” (Head of the Governorate Local Council in Sa’yda)

Land Squatters who had money and skills in S’yda were doing far better than the official settlers, as illustrated below.

“If the entrepreneurs’ land [as Land Squatters are known locally as entrepreneurs<sup>22</sup>] had no water, then that is not a problem. They have the money and the knowledge to get water into their lands.” (Abdel Kareem, a son of a WL in Sa’yda)

By comparison to Land Squatters, settlers looked incompetent in the eyes of local officials:

“I feel like this is funny. I am supposed to remove the crops of the Land Squatters, but they are doing far better than the actual settlers. The actual settlers are poor and cannot invest in the land properly. They plant traditional and unprofitable crops.” (Member of the enforcement committee in GARPAR)

## 7.2 How the National Government Perceived Settlers

Graduate settlers were perceived as the primary participants of the MRS program. The price of the same land in the same area for the Beneficiaries of both genders (36,000 EL) is almost triple the price for the Graduates (11,000 EL) of both genders. WLs in Sa’yda were given land in the beginning at the price of Graduates’ land but then the price for WLs’ land increased to the price of land for the Beneficiaries, as captured in the following quote:

“The Minister decided to increase the price of land for women. A person whose parents paid money on his education and who worked hard to earn that education cannot be treated the same as the uneducated WHHs or other Beneficiaries [women are in the Beneficiaries category]. After all, the program belongs to the Graduates and is called the Mubarak National Project for Resettling Graduates.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

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<sup>22</sup> Many of the Land Squatters in Sa’yda worked in the Arab Gulf and hired workers, some of whom lived on the land, for cultivating, for the most part, fruit crops and sugarcane.

As we will see below the price change in land for women led to very negative feelings on the part of the women towards the state.

GWLs also experienced changes to conditions of their land access. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the MRS Headquarters in Nobariya felt that women landholders are a burden because most of the women did not stay in the New Lands due to lack of schooling, potable water, other basic needs, and husbands' jobs. As a result, in order to access land, women as graduates were required to score 90% instead of 70% on exams and be exclusively holders of agricultural degrees or diplomas. Men, also, however, left their houses and lands fallow (Meyer 1998), but only women were punished for that.

Along the same lines, the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator was disappointed with the WHHs in Sa'yda. She felt that they left the land and led the project to failure. "The WFP coordinator gave the women so much. She gave them an additional year of food aid. Then, they all left and sold their lands. She was upset. Only very few houses are inhabited in the Samaha," explained Ibrahim, the current Head of the Sa'yda area at the WFP-Assisted Projects.

In general, the LRS felt that settlers were able to cultivate areas that are very hostile and felt that together with the settlers, as a team, they could bring these barren areas into production, as illustrated below:

"We produced crops in a place that no one expected us to produce ... Together with settlers we build the new lands. We try to solve flooding problems, fertiliser needs, housing needs, and irrigation needs, together. If a settler has a problem he comes to us. We are a settler's mommy and daddy." (Vice Head of the LRS)

The LRS officials felt paternalistic towards the settlers. Settlers are sons and daughters, more precisely infants in need of care.

"We are a pro-poor department in the MALR ... A settler requires you to feed him just like an infant, in a baby bottle drop by drop. We are the mother and father of the settlers. They run to us whenever they need anything." (Vice Head of the LRS on a different occasion)

Officials at the LRS also felt that the MRS is doing settlers a great favour of providing them with cheap land which is only offered to the selected original settlers.

“Each settler pays only 1 EL per day. We need some money to recover the reclamation expenses.” (Vice Head of the LRS)

Another official, the Head of Settlement Issues at the LRS, explained that “the real price of reclaiming each acre of land is 22,000 EL. That [22,000 EL] is the price we ask for those who bought land from settlers. We are taking only 1000-3000 EL per acre from the original settlers, a very symbolic value that does not cover reclamation expenses. The project is for the original settlers, but we are not responsible for those who buy the land from the original settlers.”

There were regional differences to how settlers were perceived. Upper Egyptians were often blamed for their underdevelopment plight due to being too stubborn, uneducated, and mentally lazy. “Upper Egyptians need to feel water at their knees, otherwise an Upper Egyptian would not feel that he has irrigated his land,” complained a plant pathology Extension Professor at the MRS training and research unit about the lack of Upper Egyptians’ adherence to modern irrigation techniques. Jokes about being stubborn and incapable were regularly made by the LRS officials about Upper Egyptian Heads of Settlement who visit the LRS at least once per month.

Land Squatters were perceived as parasites and generally not liked by the LRS or the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit and were blamed for the flooding of Sa’yda.

“It is not our farmers that led to drowning of the area. It is the Land Squatters who led the whole settlement to drown. They are higher than the villages and they plant sugarcane and flood their lands lower to them, which belongs to the farmers [MRS settlers].” (Head of the Sa’yda area at the WFP- Assisted Projects Unit)

This same story of Land Squatters in Sa’yda cultivating sugarcane on higher land and the settlers’ lands was reiterated at the LRS. Land Squatters at the LRS were also blamed for taking water ear-marked for the LRS settlers. Yet, Land Squatters were at the same time perceived as “equal citizens who have the right to legalize their land access,” as explained by the former Head of the LRS. Registering their land title was also seen as a solution to legalize the Land Squatters’ water use, thereby providing larger quantities of water to suffice both the settlers and the legalized Land Squatters.

### 7.3 How Settlers Perceived the Government

In Sa'yda WLs' perceptions of their government dramatically changed with time from gratitude to resentment. Even after the Revolution, very few WLs in Sa'yda had hope that their situation would change. This pessimism is attributed to abundant negative experiences with the government as we will see below.

#### **“Our silos are full”: Feelings of Gratitude**

The WFP provided settlers for three to four years with generous food rations. Many of the women landholders, especially those in Upper Egypt, most of which gained welfare assistance from the government, were largely grateful for the rations, as captured in the following quote:

“I used to sit down and worry: where will I get the money to give to my children. I was getting paid 35 EL per month from the social assistance program. It was not enough to raise four sons. I did not want my children to be different from other children. In a shop from my house, I sold the food aid: the wheat, the lentils, the oil, the rice, everything. I did not bake with the WFP flour. My children prefer bakery bread, anyways. When my son is leaving to college, he asks me, ‘my mom do you have something on you?’ I would tell my son take this my dear: our silos are full.” (Om Badee', one of the poorest WLs I met in Upper Egypt's Sa'yda)

“I wish those days would come back. They gave us rice, flour, lentils, dates, and oil. They made us full. I used to prepare rice all the time.” (Om Nazeer)

When the land was not producing yet, women contacted the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator and asked her to give them more food aid. The Coordinator agreed to give women food rations for an extra year.

The women of Upper Egypt deeply loved Dr. Azeza, the Coordinator who initiated providing them land titles. Even after the Revolution, when she was dismissed for being accused with corruption, women still felt grateful to her. “No, I will go and defend her. I will say this is my doctor. She gave us food aid until we got full and she gave us land. We owe this woman a lot,” said Om Nizam.

In addition to food aid, the WLs were also grateful for the house they got, especially WLs who accessed housing close to towns, and also the land that they could bequest to their propertyless children, as illustrated in Chapter 5.

## **Growing Mistrust towards the Government**

“When women first got the land here they partied day and night like they were going on pilgrimage. They danced and sang till dawn. They played the drums. Eventually, however, they came to realize that the lands are not productive and that the government’s day is a year.” (Om Nizam)

As explained by Om Nizam, the WLs were surprised with their land access. Their astonishment is rooted in their experience of unfulfilled promises made by the government, consequently feeling abandoned by the government, and the obvious inequality in privileges and resources. When the settlers were first given the land, they felt ecstatic. The settlers (both men and women) described getting the land as though it was like going on pilgrimage. They believed the land was an answer to their parents’ prayers and a good government initiative. Many WLs described the government as better than their parents. They mentioned that their own parents provided them with no inheritance but that their government did.

### **“They made us grow hope for nothing”: Unfulfilled Promises and Underperformance**

Women were initially very hopeful from their access to land. They were told by the WFP and LDU officials that their lands are productive and would help them raise their ‘orphaned’ children. Children with either parent deceased are called orphans in Egypt. Then reality hits hard. According to Om Badee’, “They told us that the land will be ready for planting. But the land requires a mountain of money to fix it and plant it.”

When I confronted the Head of the Sa’yda settlement about this, he told me, “we still tell people that the land is ready for planting,” when in reality the land needs reclamation, leveling, and water furrows first. Some WLs thought that their lands were free, while others knew that the land had mortgage payment of 11,000 EL leased over a 30 year period. The land price was set at 400-500 per year, but was afterwards raised to 1000-1200 per year. Most WLs were completely shocked by such an increase in property price, as they had thought that the land was provided to them “to raise orphans”.

“They gave us the land to raise orphans. They, then, told us we have to pay 36,000 EL. Where do I get that from?” (Om Badawi)



“In the beginning, they told us the land's price is 11,000, and now they want 36,000. Where do we get that from? Especially since the land does not produce well. We want them to reduce the price of the land.” (Om Badran)

The LDU Head held a general meeting in Samaha to request land installments from the WLs. In that meeting, the WLs tried to rip off the Head's shirt. The WLs were so angry about the change in the price of the land and the demand for land installments when the land is not productive. Many women complained and sent faxes to the WFP Coordinator and to the Governor of Aswan, but there was no response. “Then we were told that the WFP Coordinator was upset that the women sold the land and left. She wanted nothing to do with us anymore. Why do we [women who resettled] get punished? We stayed here. We did not sell our lands,” explained Om Badee’.

On another occasion, WLs in the Samaha were promised extra land by the LAC and Governorate Local Council provided that the WLs with their sons guarded and defended public vacant land from encroachment or from Land Squatters. The Village Engineer and a representative from the Governorate Local Council held a meeting with the WLs promising land in return for manning the areas of vacant land, mostly close to the LAC. But, the LAC and Governorate Local Council did not keep their promise of providing women with extra land.

“They wanted us to protect their lands with our children. Our children would be under fire [land grabbers had weapons], and the Village Engineer and Governorate Local Council people would be eating meat in their homes. I said, ‘no, we do not want your land when our children will be in danger’. We, the women, ended up guarding the land during day time, and the Governorate Local Council and LAC guarded the land at the night. In the end, the officials gave us no land. Who knows they might sell the land to the land grabbers and make money from it, while we get nothing from all of our work. They made us grow hopes for nothing.” (Om Badee’)

Many more promises were made but not kept. “The Village Engineer told us, come and move here. Tomorrow, they will build you an Azhar school [a more prestigious and religious school] for your children and grandchildren to attend,” explained Fatma. Many WLs did not believe the officials at the LAC and LDU anymore. In one meeting, I held at the LAC with WLs, the LAC Engineer promised providing potable water to the local villagers at

a fee. Nothing materialized in two years, and the WLs did not believe anything would change: "... I do not think anything will change here in the Samaha. It is flooded, and it will stay flooded with no potable water or any kind of proper services," complained Hanadi.

In another occasion at the LDU, the Head promised to provide the WLs with a doctor and drainage. Again nothing materialized after two years. It is unclear why many promises were made on the part of the government and then unfulfilled. Maybe the government hoped and thought that development agencies would provide much more support to the widowed women. "The WFP loved those women in the 'Widow Villages'. They attracted a lot of attention from the Coordinator," explained the Head of the Sa'yda settlement.

In fact, the Village Engineer of the 'Widow Village' prepared a proposal before the Revolution for the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit Coordinator to fund draining excess water from the Samaha village. Perhaps officials wanted to convince women to stay in the New Land villages and be quiet and patient. Perhaps the LDU was promising what is outside of its jurisdiction. In the policy meeting on February 17 2013, the Head of Horizontal Expansion at the LRS explained that, "our role is not to provide water and basic services, our role is to provide fertilizer and agriculture matters. We are really doing much more than our roles."

It could also be that the promises made by the government for these women were not fulfilled due to fraud and corruption. After the Revolution, many officials in high posts were dismissed due to such allegations related to fraud and corruption. In fact, one Head of Settlement reported to be corrupt took 500 EL from each WL promising to provide palm trees on their lands. The money was only taken and no date trees were provided. This story is not a rumour. Many WLs reported giving 500 EL to the LDU for date plantations and no date plantations were delivered.

Women landholders in Upper Egypt, by comparison, are poor, like many of their male counterparts, and cannot afford to cultivate the land. The women were promised land that is ready for cultivation, with a EL 2,500 grant for the farming of the first crop. However, before the first crop, the land needed to be leveled and irrigated at a cost of at least EL 10,000. Many women complained to the government that the land given to them is hilly and rocky.

In addition to unfulfilled promised, the LDU and LAC failed to fulfill their roles. The agricultural cooperatives, which are operated by the LDU, frequently fail to perform their roles:

“The LAC does not clean the water canals. This is supposed to be its job, but settlers end up paying from their own pockets to clean the water canals.” (Om Tofayli)

“Every time we ask the LAC for machinery to remove sewage or to plow the land, the LAC staff tell us that the machinery is in Amr [a nearby village] or in need of fixing. One can never use the cooperative's machinery; these are always taken to Amr or in need of fixing.” (Fatma)

The agricultural cooperatives in Lower and Upper Egypt are not responsive to the local farmers' needs and seldom provide farmers with adequate fertilizer shares. “We always have to buy extra fertilizer from outside,” explained Om Azeez, a GWL in Shoahda, “what the LAC provides us with is not enough. They only give us one kind of fertilizer, we often trade it for the kind that we need,” she continued. “In the Old Lands they provide the farmers with much more of everything,” explained Om Badran.

Furthermore in both settlements, especially in Sa'yda, Village Engineers seldom provided women landholders or settlers more generally with extension advice. On the front of agricultural matters, the Village Engineers' roles were limited to fertilizer distribution and resolving land boundary disputes between landholders.

Women exclusive villages in Upper Egypt in the early stages of resettlement had a special treatment. The WFP and LDU provided settlers in the Samaha with transport and potable water to stay in the settlements during the early stages of settlement when inspection visits were still operating.

“Engineers would stay and live in the Samaha to provide women with transport in case they needed to go get their medication. In case the electricity went out, we were also there to reassure them. These are widowed women with small children.” (Abdel Aal, the first Village Engineer for Samaha)

To please the inspection committees, (especially the WFP ones which were done every two years) the LDU provided women with a movable health care unit, potable water, transport, and facilitated women's access to electricity by mediating links with the electricity company and sparing women the hassle of forms and long rides. Many women refer to this

age as a golden era. When the WFP inspection period was over, after 5 years from resettlement, all services stopped, and women felt abandoned.

Women in Samaha have nostalgic feelings towards this golden era. Om Badran, for example, emphasized that, “we want the government to look back at us like it did in the beginning. We ask the government to become like it was in the beginning. In the beginning, there were potable water trucks and a movable first aid van.” Many women reported being taken good care of in this movable van.

People felt that they were provided with the worst quality of housing by the government. Many complained that electric sockets in their houses malfunctioned even before the first use. More importantly, women in the ‘Widow Village’ felt very unsafe and exposed to thieves with a lack of protection from their government. When the local police chief came to visit me every day, for unknown reasons, Om Badawi of Samaha approached him and said, “Now you come, we sleep and wake up in fear here and now you come here. In the night we are scared because people here are stealing doors and windows, even bricks and pebbles.” Not only were the LACs not doing their jobs; neither was the Governorate, which did not provide adequate security, schooling, and other services.

Women settlers also felt that they were not listened to or cared about. “Every time an official comes from Cairo, officials at the LDU tell us he is coming, wait for him. Everybody waits for him, all the engineers and member settlers of the board committee in the LAC, and then he never passes by. This story keeps repeating itself,” explained Om Mostafa, who works as an accountant at the LDU. Settlers also lost interest in meeting with officials as well. When Om Badee’ was told to be present for a meeting with the former Head of LRS at the LAC, she procrastinated and had no interest in seeing him. She kept baking her bread and did not set foot in the LAC on that day.

### **“They threw us into the desert”: Sense of Abandonment**

People felt abandoned by the Egyptian government. Settlers in both settlements felt that they were “thrown into the desert”. The LAC constituted the only government presence in most of the villages of both Sa’yda and Intilaq. There is a notable lack of health care, schooling, and veterinary services:

“Even Ministers used to visit us here. We want them to look at us like they used to.”  
(Om Badran)

“The government had a lot of people. They just threw us here. That is it, nothing else is provided.” (Om Badee’)

“The government wanted to get rid of us. They threw us into the desert without any services. Mosquitoes here eat us alive. This child is sick. Doctors here are not as good. She has been sick for three days. The only way to get a good treatment is to go back to town.” (Om Azeez)

Despite the presence of government buildings to host and provide services, these buildings, such as the agricultural bank, the veterinary services, the health care unit, and the post office and shops, were often empty and did not function in Sa’yda. Some of these government buildings are now on flooded land. In Intilaq, the services were present but did not meet settlers’ expectations or needs.

### **Inequality and Injustices**

Inequality has also shaped how settlers perceived and felt about their government. In the New Lands, there are two kinds of people with different rights and privileges: government people and not government people. The two groups had unequal privileges and access to resources. Some of the Heads of the Settlements in both Upper and Lower Egypt provided the wives of their crew with land. GWLs who were from the same area as the Head of the Graduate Projects Unit came from were provided with greenhouse projects and land expansion projects- although some of these GWLs did not meet the condition of being permanent settlers.

In Intilaq government officials and their friends also accessed land which was set aside as ‘uncultivable land’ in closed options for lower than market prices. In fact, many of these lands turned out to be very cultivatable and generated profits for the officials and their friends.

In Sa’yda Land Squatters who took much of the water ear-marked for settlers left settlers downstream desperate for water. Many complained that their *berseem* dried due to lack of water. Settlers were angry that Land Squatters took all the water and felt betrayed that the government did not protect their water rights. Many did not have irrigation water in the

summer time. Water regulations were very poorly enforced partly due to the lack of security in the New Lands and partly because the MWRI offices are often understaffed.

Perhaps one of the biggest injustices is evident in the sale of fertilizer earmarked for farmers by both the LAC and LDU for their own profit. “If you have money and you paid us more, then we can give you one ton of fertilizer,” explained a member of the board committee in Shahama village. Along the same lines, a GWL member on the LAC asserted that people in the LAC sold fertilizer for their own gains. Settlers were furious about the sale of fertilizer and felt that this fertilizer should be theirs: “God is my provider and in him I confide. They [people at the LAC] work in the dark. They sell fertilizer to make money,” lamented Om Badawi.

One board member explained that a Village Engineer hid fertilizer in a house of a board member for secret sales and profits. Other WLs also narrated this story. This same Engineer gave women fertilizer according to how much they planted and not how much their ration is. Women as mentioned in Chapter 5 sold fertilizer for profit and used a cheaper brand called *Kima* on their lands.

One day, Om Zakariya, a WL, told me that she felt outraged by the LAC’s sale of fertilizer. The LAC Engineer told her that there was no fertilizer, but, on that same day, she saw a van going out of the village with fertilizer from the LAC on its back. The current Village Engineer also sold the fertilizer 30 EL more than its usual price and told settlers that the fertilizer’s price increased because it is from Amr, a nearby village.

The government made secure land access a privilege only available to the rich and to those with good, productive lands. The poor, who are, supposedly, the original beneficiaries of the reclamation project in Upper Egypt, are to eventually lose their access to land due to their inability to pay the mortgage payments. As mentioned earlier, the widowed landholders were in a worse position to pay their mortgages due to a two-fold increase in the price of land, prohibitive cultivation costs, the flooding, the lack of irrigation water (because the ‘Widow Village’ is at the end of the irrigation canal), and the lack of access to loans.

Many farmers in Sa’yda who bought land from original settlers felt that it was very unjust to have to buy their lands twice, from the settlers and then from the government to

legalize their land access. Indeed, the prices that the government is asking for, particularly for those who purchase a house or land are enormously high for the local settlers. “The price that the government is asking us to pay is imaginary [160,000 EL]. I paid 11,000 for both the land and the house,” said Fareed, Om Nizam’s son who bought the land and house of a WL. Many entrepreneurs who worked in the Gulf legalized their land titles on the 160,000 price (as opposed to 11,000-36,000 for settlers). These entrepreneurs are raising the price of the land for land purchasers.

## 7.4 Governing Techniques

The government used fear and repression to force people into resettling, stay quiet, and obey rules and regulations. Government officials focused on their image and hid many problems in the New Lands to look good in front of inspectors and bosses in Cairo. It seemed that the government in the New Lands is more authoritarian than it is in the Old Lands. Officials used fertilizer earmarked for settlers to solve almost any problem that they encounter.

### Governance through Fear and Repression

The LDU sent women warning letters threatening them with suspension of land access if their lands were left fallow. Om Badee’ felt embarrassed by these letters and asked the Village Engineer to stop sending them to her house in Edfu. The LDU sent these letters to all the WLs regardless of whether they farmed their lands. Some WLs were terrified by these letters and relocated into the New Lands to farm.

“Since we started getting those eviction letters, my mother bought a water pump and moved into the New Lands. We have been farming since.” (Amoona, the daughter of Om Badwan)

“I got back here with my son to farm the land because those eviction warning letters scared us.” (Om Sayid, who has no water access on her land, but returned to farm the land when a drainage canal passing through her land was built)

Women who complained about, for example, lack of access to resources or pump thefts were threatened with eviction by local officials at the LDU and the LAC.

“The Village Engineers told women here to say nothing negative about Sa’yda in front of the members of the inspection committees. Engineer Badawi told women to

say nothing about the theft of water pumps. He kept telling WLs to keep quiet about that.” (Fatma, the daughter of Om Badawi)

“One time I came running. I knew Dr. Azeeza was in Samaha. I ran to her screaming from afar, ‘my land has no water. I need water; give me water.’ The Head of Sa’yda at then stormed back and said, ‘get me her file. Where is her file? I want to tear it apart.’” (Om Badawi)

“I went to the Governor of Aswan. I told his office that our pumps got stolen. The Village Engineer Badawi knew that. He came to me and told me, ‘so you went to the Governor to tell him about the pumps. I will tell about you too. I will say that you do not live here so your land and house would be taken away from you.’ We do not like Village Engineers. I told him, ‘go ahead, ride your highest horse.’” (Om Badran)

“One time I had wheat rust on my crop. I saw a visiting committee next to the LAC. I approached them. I told them, ‘please help me. Why wheat is diseased.’ The Village Engineer at then, Badawi, got upset that I did that in front of strangers.” (Om Badran, on a different occasion)

Women felt fear towards the government. On many occasions WLs lied in the media out of fear of punishment. When women first got the land in Sa’yda, they attracted enormous media attention. Women rarely own land in Upper Egypt. In the Governorate of Aswan, the place of origin for almost all of the WLs in Sa’yda settlement, for example, 1-2% of the land is owned by women, which is managed by brothers or male cousins. WLs in Sa’yda were featured on many national and regional Television shows and newspapers, such as Egypt Today, Good Morning Egypt, Aswan TV, and many of Aswan’s newspapers. Women were photographed on combines and interviewed. A newspaper reported that the ‘Widow Village’ of Samaha in Upper Egypt had the best harvest amongst all of the Sa’yda villages. One WL reported that she got scared because she was sitting next to the Governor of Aswan on her left and another official on her right and told in the interview that the land was doing great and that they had schools in the new villages. Another WL told the Aswan Television, Channel Eight, that the micro-credit for cantaloupe was a success, when in reality many lost their crops due to a pest worm.

Om Badran also reported that some Engineers scared them from cultivating the land, “‘leave the Sa’yda,’ an Engineer told us. ‘You will sell your pots and pans to farm here. It is very expensive to farm the land,’ the Engineer continued.”



In a similar response, the Head of the Sa'yda settlement told a settler who insisted on claiming his land not to be persistent in his request: "You want the land. Then, prepare to sell your wife's earrings."

Along the same lines, officials in Cairo used intimidations with officials of lower ranks in the local settlements. "Why do I appoint you as Head of Settlement," complained the Head of Sa'yda who was repeatedly told this by an administrator in Cairo. As a result, local officials, in fear of their bosses' backlash, often hid the settlers' problems on the ground, which only grew worse, as we will see in the coming section. Admitting problems meant that officials were admitting their responsibilities for leading to these problems. This approach that forbade revealing mistakes, which are a natural course of projects, has very negative consequences on solving or dealing with the problems that left unsolved exacerbated.

### **Focus on Image and Reputation**

Officials used fear and repression to maintain their own image and hide problems in the New Lands. Many drivers reported that due to the inspection visits from Cairo, the Heads of the Sa'yda settlement became indifferent to the type of irrigation settlers were using.

"The Heads just wanted the inspection committees to see green lush, or that the project is working. They stopped caring about whether farmers used drip or flood irrigation. All they cared about is that the land greens." (A LDU driver)

The issue of improper irrigation and theft of pumps was often concealed from the inspection committees that came from both the LRS and the WFP. The inspections committees came from many sources, including the WFP, the Ministry of International Cooperation (MIC), and the LRS in Cairo. The WFP worked in Sa'yda for 5 years. A bi-annual inspection of the S'ayda project occurred, as well as a final inspection in the end of the fifth year. The MIC evaluated loans provided to the LACs through debt swap programs from Italy and Switzerland. The LRS Head visits the 24 settlements, including Sa'yda, on a regular basis to stay in the loop and see firsthand the situation of the settlements. The WFP committees were the most prepared for, and officials were scared of them. The committee included people from all over the world and had the power to recommend new projects and aid.

Before a visit by the Head of the LRS, the Head of Settlement over the phone angrily told one of the LDU officials, “you want to pollute our name in front of the man [the Head of the LRS]. Our reputation is white. We are the only settlement without problems. We are all going to heaven in Upper Egypt.”

Because officials worried about losing their jobs, they hid mistakes and focused on their images rather than on whether the resettlement project really worked. One Village Engineer went as far as requesting that women pretend to be the owners of fruit crops that are not really theirs, such as cantaloupe, to make women, who were the center of attention for many development agencies, out to be excellent at farming, most notably using the term ‘pioneering rural women’. “Village Engineer Badawi told me to come with him and pretend that a cantaloupe plantation is mine, as a ‘rural woman pioneer’. I refused,” explained Om Badee’.

Women reported that they were trapped in the settlement and roads were cut just before an inspection visit. This was done to show inspectors from both the government and development agencies that people are staying in the settlement. Temporary medical and potable water vans were provided for inspectors to see that the living conditions for settlers were adequate.

When settlers’ lands flooded, the government tried to hide this problem. Settlers largely paid for the government’s efforts to conceal this problem. There are two observed cases in Sa’yda settlement whereby the Head of Sa’yda refused to sign a letter stating that all the land is flooded. The Head often changed the letter to say only half the land is flooded when all the land is. “How can three acres flood, and the other three acres, just next to the ones that are flooded, not flood?” one wife of a settler whose land is flooded asked angrily. She went on to tell me that she had asked for the same letter twice, and, each time, the Head insisted that only half of the land was flooded.

Another similar case emerged during fieldwork, where a man, whose land was flooded, also asked for a letter and was, similarly, provided with a letter stating that half his land is flooded, when all of the land is flooded. This inability to acquire a letter, stating that one’s land is flooded, has drastic consequences on affected people’s lives. They are not able to access social assistance; because according to the letter provided, they still have land that

they can cultivate. One of the settlers' wives, whose land was flooded, left the house due to a lack of finances. "It has been seven months since she left us. Because there is no money in the house, she left. Her father agreed that she leaves," explained the sister of one of the settlers, whose land is flooded.

Settlers knew that local officials pleased bigger officials at the expense of concealing problems in the settlement. "No, the Head will not help us get permanent job contracts. He keeps saying to the big officials, 'Yes sir. I am under your command. Everything is fine here. There are no problems'," explained Najim, Najim is employed in the LAC of Iman on a temporary contract with no benefits. Najim is also the husband of Mortada, whose mother is a WL. "The Head will not help me get land. All the Heads of Sa'yda are scared of the bigger officials. Heads do not request anything. They are all scared," explained Om Mostafa.

### **The Government is more Authoritarian in the New Lands**

In the New Lands, it was clear that the government had more control over people's lives rather than less control as is the hope from Structural Adjustment Policies. Participatory training that was provided to the local LRS officials by the WFP did not go very far. Quite on the contrary, many Village Engineers and Heads of the Settlement reported that government control in the New Lands is far more top-down than it is in the Old Lands. Engineers, and not the board members in the LAC, are the ones who run village matters.

"In the Old Lands, farmers can remove a Village Engineer. In the New Lands, on the other hand, the Heads of the Settlements and not farmers move engineers around. Also, engineers, not the board committee, run the village cooperatives." (Retired Head of the Intilaq Settlement who has extensive experience in the Old Lands)

"Unfortunately, the Village Engineer, and not the board committee, as it is supposed to be and as outlined in the Law of Agricultural Cooperation, controls the daily operations of the village cooperative," similarly, argued a Village Engineer in the Sa'yda settlement.

Decision-making in the New Lands is more, not less, authoritarian. Nowhere is this truer than in the Samaha village. Members of the board committee (all women) seldom meet with the Engineer and the President of the LAC signs blank cheques for the engineer to use. Although the President of the LAC is to be elected by the members of the board committee, Village Engineers often tell women who to vote for during the voting, as explained in

Chapter 5. The Law of Agricultural Cooperation states that the Village Engineer only oversees the bureaucratic operations of the cooperative. The roles of the board, on the other hand, are to initiate, plan, and execute day-to-day activities of the LACs.

The WFP also encouraged the local settlers to form, *Majlis Orfi*, or Local Councils for informal conflict resolution. In Sa'yda the Village Engineers infiltrated these groups, which are usually independent (Abdel Aal 2004). Village Engineers of the LACs made strategic decisions on these councils. They solved all problems in the village that are not necessarily related to agriculture, including those related to farm borders, to marital disputes, bread disputes in the local bakery, and conflict between Bedouin groups, entrepreneurs who purchased land from WLs, and the original settlers.

Fertilizer allotments to be provided to the farmers were not provided to the farmers but controlled by the LAC and LDU officials. Village Engineers in both settlements, sometimes without consulting with the board members, used fertilizer to solve any problem in the villages but did not necessarily provide the fertilizer to the settlers. In fact, many settlers complained that, when they went to buy fertilizer from the LACs, they were often told by the Village Engineer that there was no fertilizer left. This practice, for the Samaha village in particular, is appalling. Only 5% of the land is cultivated, yet the LAC receives fertilizer for 100% of the settlers.

Fertilizer was sold in both Upper and Lower Egypt by the Engineers to pay off overdue loans and membership dues of settlers, to make money for dealing with flooding in the village, or to compensate a family of a LAC board member for his death. Sometimes, the LAC in Sa'yda, to make money from selling fertilizer, increases the price of fertilizer sold to these settlers and makes up excuses for the increase in prices (77 increased to 93EL), such as "This is not our fertilizer, it is from a nearby village", as mentioned earlier, or "We need money to deal with the flooding of the village."

Even on a higher bureaucratic ladder, the Heads of the Settlements have more control than the Engineers over how fertilizer is distributed. The Heads of the Settlements sometimes do not necessarily give fertilizer to the settlers, but use it the way they wished, such as giving it to their friends in the Old Lands. Many settlers complained that fertilizer is far more available in the Old Lands than it is in the New Lands.

In addition to controlling the fate of the fertilizer and participation in local decision-making, the government in Sa'yda also indirectly and directly controlled the price and type of crops planted in the New Lands. Though it is reported that the government does not interfere with the crops planted (Lonergan and Wolf 2001; Adriansen 2009) in the New Lands, the government prevents people from farming cotton, bananas, sugarcane, and other water-consuming crops in the New Lands in general. To assure that settlers abide by cropping regulations, settlers were required to sign that they agree to these regulations, which are reiterated in the intermediate land ownership contract.

The settlers hoped that the Revolution would bring them freedom to cultivate sugarcane, which is at least five times more profitable than cultivating subsistence and traditional crops of alfalfa, wheat, and barley. Settlers also wanted the LAC to provide them with their rightful shares of fertilizer. Nonetheless, on the same day that settlers in S'ayda were protesting their right to have all the fertilizer, the Head of the Settlement gave fertilizer in tons on the phone to his friend in the Old Lands.

By making only wheat seeds available in the LACs and extension advice and research in Sa'yda mostly focused on wheat, the LAC encouraged wheat, the price of which is determined by the government. Also the only available markets for crops were for wheat and through government mills and agricultural banks in towns. Unfortunately, however, wheat does not grow well in Sa'yda.

Since the onset of the Revolution of January 25, wheat was encouraged for cultivation on a massive scale (Al Ahram June 2012, 2011). The government promoted wheat cultivation by increasing the price of a bushel of wheat by one third. This focus on wheat is also part of the counter-measures to the Mubarak policies that had increased wheat imports, making Egypt more food insecure and the largest wheat importer in the world. The Head of the Settlement in Sa'yda kept recommending planting of wheat to farmers he met. More recently, President Mursi met with the Minister of the MALR to discuss a national plan to achieve self-sufficiency in food production (Al Masry Al Youm, May 19, 2013).

## 7.5 Expertise and Planning

In Sa'yda, massive technical problems started to appear, as time passed, sharpening people's sense of abandonment and the government's view of settlers as a burden. Egypt is a country with some of the best land and agricultural sciences professors in the world. Their knowledge, however, does not seem to be capitalized on in land reclamation projects. Alzanati and Badawi (1995) argue that many land reclamation projects fail due to inappropriate choice of land type. The GARPARG is responsible for land reclamation in Egypt and contracts many of its reclamation projects to construction companies, such as the Komombo Company and Beheira Company. It seems that GARPARG and these companies did not reclaim Sa'yda settlement on the correct type of land. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement reported that a land professor conducted a study which criticized the location of the Sa'yda settlement, particularly the type of land chosen to be reclaimed. Dr. Bashour, a soil fertility and desert reclamation expert, says that land reclamation should be done on lands that are relatively not very saline and have a relatively deep impermeable layer. Unfortunately, both of these factors were not considered when picking the land of the Sa'yda settlement which both has saline soils and a shallow impermeable layer.

In addition to the soil type and profile, elevation differences should be minimized in reclamation projects (Biswas 1993a). The GARPARG believed that an 8 m elevation difference is not significant. Furthermore, GARPARG and its construction companies did not feel it was necessary to build a drainage system<sup>23</sup> in Sa'yda. Due to the sprinkler and drip irrigation system installed in Sa'yda, it was thought that no excess water would be generated and hence no need for drainage.

However, due to the use of flood irrigation, lack of drainage, and elevation differences, the Sa'yda settlement flooded on an increasingly massive scale. Many lands and houses are completely lost to flooding. Lands turned into swamps with reeds inhabiting these

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<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the MIWR does not have a drainage department. The drainage department, located away from the MIWR, is at the Ministry of Social Works and is largely underfunded (Barnes 2010). Barnes (2010) notes that the Egyptian focus on water scarcity ensures that drainage, or extra water, is not given the importance it is due as an important anchor of Egyptian agriculture.

lands, and houses' foundations cracked. More lands and more houses are increasingly showing signs of pre-water logging. Wet spots on the ground appear before water logging occurs.

The irrigation water from Sa'yda is draining into lower areas in the Old Lands leading to tragic collapse of houses and water-logging of ancient farm land due to a rise in the water table. Affected communities in the Old Lands are aware that this disaster is coming from Sa'yda drainage water and are bitter about the Sa'yda project.

Other projects in Sa'yda also turned into disasters. A former Head of Sa'yda wanted to adopt a cantaloupe plantation project, having seen Africa Care operate such a project with big success in the Sa'yda settlement. But the LACs lacked access to expert knowledge and pests took over the cantaloupe plantations, leaving farmers indebted for loans the LACs provided to them for the plantation. The LACs in Sa'yda ended up selling fertilizer to pay back the LRS in Cairo for the misused loan money. As a result, many settlers felt reluctant to take loans from the government. Om Bayoumi, a widow landholder in the Iman village said "I do not take loans. The loans that the government gave to farmers here for planting cantaloupe [which were lost to pests] left them indebted up to this day."

This was not the only mismanagement that led settlers to mistrust their government. "The government is a horrible planner. They built a drainage canal that is higher than the irrigation canal," emphasized a son of a WL. Indeed, this drainage canal built in the past two years led to the flooding of the Samaha village. The flooding not surprisingly was not adequately addressed.

In addition to the lack of expertise and sound science in planning, the government provided unequal access to extension and micro-credit between Upper and Lower Egypt. As opposed to Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt receives very limited training with an inadequate focus on farming strategies that are crucial for farmers to reclaim the land and succeed in a desert environment. In addition to the inequitable access to training, Upper Egypt also receives far fewer loans. This lack of knowledge and money ensure that, in Upper Egypt's Sa'yda settlement, it is cost prohibitive to farm because little revenue is generated due to inadequate knowledge. Decentralization started only recently in Egypt since 1991. Prior to this period, all government offices were located in Cairo. Places close to Cairo had the lion's

share for development projects and services. Along the same lines, development agencies seem to be more involved in Lower Egypt due to the accessibility of rural areas to towns, such as Cairo and Alexandria.

Furthermore, there was a lack of planning between various bodies which limited the use of available services and contributed to the flooding problem in Sa'yda. Refer to Table 11 for discrepancies in planning between various bodies and the consequences. Timing was especially poorly managed. The WFP provided loans due in two years when the land required three years to become reclaimed. Also, there is a notable lack of coordination between settlement timing and provision of basic services, which came years after resettlement when they should come before. Food aid was also not provided in a timely fashion. Food aid is to be provided to relocated settlers until the land starts producing. However, in many cases, food aid was provided years before actual resettlement on the land.

Most notably, the GARPAR, LRS, Land Enhancement Unit, and MWRI exchanged blame over the flooding of the land. The GARPAR blamed the farmers for using flood irrigation and the LRS for failure to enforce sprinkler and drip irrigation. The LRS, on the other hand, blamed the MWRI for not providing farmers with a constant flow of water, required for use of sprinkler and drip irrigation. The MWRI, in turn, blamed the GARPAR for leaving lands vacant, leading to theft of water by Land Squatters. The Land Enhancement Unit refused to consider fixing the Sa'yda's flooding problem as its job and blamed GARPAR for inadequate reclamation.

## **7.6 Resistance**

Ferguson (1990: 17), Everett (1997), and Scott (1998: 320) argue that state planning often does not account for the socio-economic complexities at the local level and that the outcomes of development are often far from planned objectives. Ferguson (1990: 276) argues that such outcomes have their own logic, which Scott (1998) labels as practical improvisations. These improvisations often avert the negative consequences of states' planning (Scott 1998). Ferguson (1990: 280) also argues that the changes to the outcomes envisaged by the formal or expert planning are not introduced by the planners but created through the resistance of the local people. Settlers in the New Lands had many reasons to resist their government's planning and goals, including but not limited to the inequality in



privileges, lack of basic services, deception, and empty promises. They feared their government, however, and consequently resisted, for the most part, in informal and subtle ways. People thought that “This is the government. No one can defeat it,” commented Om Waleed, a WL in Upper Egypt.

Settlers were mostly defiant and rarely complied with state policies and plans. Table 13 explores some of the ways which and rules that settlers resisted the government, some of which are already covered in previous chapters and sections. Settlers’ reactions to state plans and policies range from being subtly disobedient to overtly rebellious responses to state policies and actions. Such resistance is nurtured and exacerbated by the Revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>. The Revolution introduced new forms of activism through courts, TV programs, open protest, and collective political mobilization for demanding basic services. Perhaps, most importantly, the Revolution contributed to this activism by the elimination of barriers of fear and intimidation.

**Table 13 Topics and methods of settlers’ resistance to government planning.**

<b>Policies Resisted</b>	<b>Formal Rules</b>	<b>What Happens in Reality</b>
<b>Residence</b>	Settlers have to permanently relocate into the New Lands and farm their lands in their own hands	Many settlers did not relocate. They planted cactus, rented their lands, sharecropped, or left their lands fallow.
<b>Irrigation</b>	Pumps are not allowed to be located on the main source	Many settlers broke the asphalt on the roads to locate their pumps right on the water source
<b>Land Transactions</b>	It is neither allowed to sell or rent the land before the lapse of a 30-year period and complete payment of land price.	Settlers sold and rented parts or all of their lands and housing well before a 30-year period.  Settlers also had plans to bequeath their lands to their children
<b>Fertilizer</b>	Fertilizer is distributed for use on the land	Settlers sold the subsidized fertilizer to make profit or buy relevant types of fertilizer
<b>Loans</b>	Loans are to be used on an agricultural enterprise	Some settlers used loans to marry off their children

<b>Farming</b>	Settlers have to farm the land themselves	A few settlers farmed only a small parcel of land to avoid eviction
<b>Pumps</b>	Each pump is to be shared between 4 settlers	Some settlers removed pumps and placed individual pumps to get better access to water
<b>Yearly Payments</b>	Settlers have to start paying yearly installments after 4 years from receiving their lands	In Upper Egypt, many settlers collectively decided not to pay the mortgage payments due to unproductive lands and the threat of flooding. Many believed that their lands would flood someday
<b>Land Registration</b>	Land bought from original settlers had to be registered with GARP. The price is 5 times more than the price of the land given to the original settlers	Land buyers thought that the price the government was asking for was outrageous and opted not to register the lands or houses they bought from original settlers  Land buyers also felt that the land should not be bought twice, from the original settlers and then from the government

### **Improvisation**

Some of the improvisation by settlers which alleviated the negative consequences of bad government planning, included irrigating land from alternative water sources, renting other WLs' land due to lack of irrigation water on the received land, elevating soil layers by excavating soil from the Old Lands to overcome water logging, and farming small parcels of land.

To illustrate, both Om Badawi and Om Badran rented other WLs' lands for cultivation. Both their lands had no adequate access to water. As explained in Chapter 5, many farmers in Samaha irrigated their lands from the recently built drainage canal to compensate for their lands' lack of access of water. Along the same lines, in Intilaq many dug artesian wells to irrigate their lands but also depended on Nile water to wash off the salts left behind by artesian wells' water. Perhaps, most interestingly, Om Badee used dreams to deal with her fear of salt accumulation on her kidneys due to improperly treated water.

“I dreamt of an angel. He came to me and conducted surgery on my kidneys. He removed a layer of salt from my kidneys. Like that [Om Badee’ showed me how with one of her hands sliding against the other].”

One farmer, an entrepreneur, succeeded in raising his water-logged land and cultivated *berseem*. Along the same lines, many WLs raised their backyards with excavated soil in fear of water-logging. Many WLs especially in the Iman village who relocated due to the received house being close to town, and opted to plant their lands with one tenth the area of their lands or even rented their lands for free to maintain their access to property.

Other practical improvisations that saved the resettlement project included planting of cactus trees in Intilaq and the sale of fertilizer in both settlements. In Intilaq, because of the lack of services many women found it quite difficult to relocate into the New Lands. As a result, they opted for planting their lands, which will otherwise be taken away from them, with cactus. Instead of leaving their lands fallow, or renting it out which is illegal, many GWLs opted for cultivating cactus because it requires low maintenance and is far cheaper to cultivate than fruit trees or field crops. These GWLs would stay in their original hometowns but show up in the settlement on a sporadic basis to prove that they stay there and to irrigate and fertilize their cactus orchards. The sale of fertilizer in Sa’yda was done to generate profit for some farmers. In Intilaq GWLs who planted cactus did not need all their fertilizer rations and sold some of it for a profit. With government blessing, GWLs also sold fertilizer provided by the LACs to acquire the fertilizer that they needed for their orchards but that the LAC did not provide or sell.

### **Covert Resistance**

Settlers resisted government planning subtly by passive non-compliance, gossip, and spreading of rumours. The LRS only allowed unmarried GWLs to apply for land access, however, most of those who applied were married or engaged. “But this [the government rule that GWLs be unmarried] is impossible. Girls are often engaged by the age of 16. Most women were married when they applied for land, but they just did not tell the government,” explained Om Azeez.

In fact, most women accessed land in Intilaq through their husbands, as mentioned in the Chapter 4. In comparison, women in Upper Egypt were given land as heads of

households. If they were to marry, they would not longer be heads of households. Nonetheless, many women got married.

Another example of passive non-compliance is not registering purchased land with the LRS and GARPAR. Many of the settlers who bought houses and land from the original settlers had no interest at all in registering their purchased land and housing with the government. Most did not even know how much the government was requesting from them to register their purchased property. But in the long term, the security of their access to land and housing is questionable.

A third example is not relocating into the New Lands despite receiving warning eviction letters.

“I did not feel intimidated by those eviction letters. Like me, like many other women who did not farm their lands yet.” (Om Tofayli who planted her land for the first time after many years from receiving her land)

Many WLs often gossiped about the LAC’s sale of fertilizer and officials’ superior lifestyles.

“Yesterday, a van of fertilizer was taken out from the LAC. Much of the stolen fertilizer fell off, as a punishment from God.” (Fatma)

“I hope the Head of the LRS gets some soil on his pants while he visits the Samaha village... Yesterday on the television people requested that the Minister of Social Assistance try to live on 130 EL per month [the value usually given to poor WHHs]. Let him do it. Let him show us how will he live on 130 EL per month.” (Om Badee’)

Rumours played an important role in people’s perceptions of the government. The Revolution introduced many rumours, some of which were adopted from the media. The following rumours suggest that settlers perceived the government as corrupt, a thief, and malicious:

“Suzan Mubarak gave all her money back to the government—25 million dollars. This money will be given to the poor.” (A male board member of the LAC in the Iman village)

“The pumps were removed in a way that only the people who installed them know how to remove them. The company who installed the electric pumps stole them too.” (Badran, one of a WLs’ sons)

“Youssef Wali [a former PM of the Mubarak regime] is not married. Now that is a very weird thing. He likes to have sex with men. He got pesticides and fertilizer from Israel to give us cancer.” (Zakariya, a WL’s son)

“Jamal Mubarak [son of former president Mubarak] told the construction company to install electric pumps from here and to steal them from there.” (Om Majid)

“People applied for jobs after the Revolution. But a relative of mine, who works for the government, told us that all the job applications are going to end up in the garbage. There are no jobs.” (Om Hussien, a WL, who lives in her original hometown but frequently visits her land and house in Samaha)

Many settlers as well as the media were saying that Al Waleed Bin Talal gave back land to be the Revolutionaries of Tahrir square. Some said that these lands were earmarked for the poor but sold to Waleed Bin Talal by the corrupt Mubarak regime.

“The loan of six sheep and one ram was diseased. All the animals given by the government as a loan died. People are indebted until this day to the LAC.” (Om Sayid of Samaha)

In both the Samaha and the Iman villages, WLs believed that they were supposed to get much, much more financial aid, but that the engineers and staff at the LDU took their money.

“They gave us only 2,000 EL and took the rest of the 16,000,” complained many WLs in Samaha.

“They [officials at the LAC] often had us sign for different amounts because we cannot read.” (Om Badwan)

“They [officials at the LAC] had a carbon paper underneath what I can read which said that they will remove the guards from us.” (Om Badee’ who can read and write)

“They gave us 250 EL, but they took the rest. Much more money was supposed to be given to us, probably 600 EL.” (Om Badwan)

“This village, in particular, [the Samaha or ‘Widow Village’] was given so much money that was not distributed to the rightful people.” (Om Badawi was reportedly told by a person who works at the local school in Samaha)

When I asked officials at the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit, they said that the amount of money provided to settlers for the first cultivation was 2500 EL and not 16,000 EL as was circulating in Samaha. So the 16,000 EL could be a rumour.

## 7.7 Open Resistance: “From Going to Heaven” to “Becoming Tahrir Square”

The Head of the Sa’yda settlement initially claimed that all Upper Egyptians were going to heaven because they did not participate in the Revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>. Then, after a few weeks, he started calling Sa’yda “Tahrir Square”. Encouraged by the Revolution in Tahrir Square, settlers entered a new era of defiance against their government, that of overt and direct resistance. New forms of political mobilization emerged. People protested everywhere and all the time in front of the LDUs in both settlements and in front of the local governorate buildings. In both settlements settlers gathered in front of the LACs and LDUs asking for their fertilizer rations. In Sa’yda settlement, which was still distributing land to people, many gathered on a daily basis requesting their lands immediately. The Head of the Settlement in Sa’yda was working day and night to provide land to the unsettled beneficiaries and please them. When I came back in 2013, I was told by the Head of Sa’yda that the LDU had to close many times because of large protests.

Settlers gained the courage from Tahrir Square and the Revolution’s victory to demand access to basic services through collective or individual political mobilization. “We did not know about the injustices and the corruption. The youth told us [alluding to the revolutionaries of Tahrir Square],” said Om Taher. Om Taher wanted to cancel bread cards, which cost 3 EL each month, and the bread is of low quality, “with flies and hair inside of it.” She mobilized village members to refuse to pay for the monthly card fees. The group wanted to buy bread just by paying for it without any membership cards. At a collective level also, a group of men from the Iman village visited the local Aswan governor and demanded potable water. The governor promised them potable water very soon.

Also a group of WLs from the Samaha village visited the LDU and demanded that the drainage canal be unblocked to drain the water that is flooding the villages in another area. They also demanded access to free potable water, and medical services. The Head of the Settlement called responsible officials on the spot to provide the settlers of the Samaha village with potable water and medical services. When the Revolution happened, sons of WLs in Samaha confronted the Village Engineer with his sale of fertilizer and demanded they know what he did with the money. He told them that he has to sell fertilizer to solve the

problem of flooding in the village. They seemed to believe him because he threatened to have settlers pay for solving the flooding problem from their own pockets. Many other, however, did not believe this story.

Similarly, but on an individual level, Om Badawi a WL, refused to pay more for the fertilizer than its worth, and she did something quite remarkable about that. She called the Head of Settlement and told him about the fact that the LAC sold fertilizer charging far more than its real price, and that she should have her money back. The Head of the Settlement told her to go back to the LAC and take back her money, her right. Many officials were terrified of losing their jobs—as many of them did—and tried to please the settlers. “Even Mubarak is charged for corruption. Let them [the LAC members] work in the light. Why sell the fertilizer for more than what it is worth? That is *haram*,” said Om Badawi assertively.

The Revolution opened other venues for requesting basic rights and reform, particularly through television shows, newspaper articles, and complaints to the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF). Settlers called in on a political show called ‘The Street of the South’ (alluding to Upper Egypt) and spoke with officials directly to solve their problems. The purpose of the show was to resolve people’s problems on the spot. In one episode which was about Wadi Al Nokra, a desert settlement also in Upper Egypt (see Figure 3), settlers from Wadi Al Nokra requested electricity, potable water, and irrigation water. Officials, including the Head of the Settlement, who were on the phone and in person in the studio all promised these settlers the services that they were asking for.

Many individual men filed complaints to the police and to SCAF through emails and faxes. One man filed a series of complaints through faxes to SCAF and prepared a report at the police station protesting his inability to repay his loans because the government did not provide him with water during the fifth month of the year. “This guy complained against all of us, against me, the Head of the settlement, and everyone,” the Village Engineer of Iman told me, laughing.

Along the same lines, another man in Upper Egypt sent an email to SCAF complaining about the outrageous prices of registering the land he bought, and the fact that he has to pay for purchasing his land twice. A third man in Sa’yda also sent a fax to SCAF complaining against Dr. Zabadi’s access to many parcels of land saying that Dr. Zabadi was

not conducting any kind of herbal research and stealing from those he deceived into working with him. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement and the Head of the Irrigation Unit at Sa'yda were in court on a weekly basis.

The success in achieving what settlers were asking for was remarkable. Settlers in Intilaq of Lower Egypt, for example, removed their Head of Settlement. He was dismissed and given a small job in Cairo due to people's resentments of him. "He did nothing for the settlers here. He only did what is good for his personal gains," said Najla, an accountant at the LDU in Intilaq.

Many more officials were dismissed. The Head of the Irrigation Unit in the Sa'yda settlement of Upper Egypt was literally removed by the settlers from his office. The Iman village male settlers went to Aswan and demanded potable water. In 2013, they told me they got what they wanted. Potable water entered their homes.

Settlers who bought land from GARPAP protested the increase of 4,000 EL per acre for services provided such as building irrigation canals, roads, and water pumps. The settlers won the case because of 'retroactive effect', which entails that a certain law is ineffective for those who carried out the respective act before the law came into effect. "Closed legal cases that are already judged are now getting reopened," explained the Head of Legal Affairs at the LRS as one of the main impacts of the Revolution.

In Lower Egypt, also, settlers built new structures on public lands when the Mubarak regime was toppled. The government wants to remove the structures, but all the decision-making processes were halted until a new government is in place, instead of the, at then, merely bureaucratic government. Along the same lines, Land Squatters in Upper Egypt grew adamant about the government's removal of their crops. Many of whom the government wanted to remove their illegally planted sugarcane slept underneath the excavators. This problem of land squatting is omnipresent in the media, increasingly since the Revolution, depicting land squatting throughout Egypt.

Along the same lines, the man who was deceived by Dr. Zabadi grabbed Dr. Zabadi's land and claimed it as his and cultivated it. In Sa'yda, male settlers of Iman cut the water source feeding all the villages of the Sa'yda settlement protesting inequitable distribution of



water. They gave the head two conditions that had to be met: (1) they did not want to pay for draining on their village anymore and (2) they wanted irrigation water. The Head was able to provide these male settlers with both conditions. Women in the Samaha village, however, were not politically organized and complained about long trips to visit officials. As such, the Samaha village was the least to benefit from actualizing government's promises, which stayed empty for settlers there.

Even before the Revolution, a few settlers in Upper Egypt grabbed land and cultivated it with sugarcane. The government constantly removes the crops of the Land Squatters, but settlers also resist. "Once I stood in front of the men wanting to remove our crops. I took my dress in my hands and threatened to rip it off if they removed my crops," explained Nada, the wife of a WL's son who grabbed land for cultivating sugarcane. If, and when, sugarcane plantations are established the government is less inclined to remove the crop.

Even before the Revolution settlers overtly resisted the government but less frequently. In both settlements, settlers, including women, broke the asphalt and placed their pumps in the direct source of water canals, rather than waiting for the water to pass through many lands before it arrives to their land via water branches. Most people did that at night, when the government was sleeping.

"See [pointing to broken asphalt lines on the street] people are completely irresponsible. They break the asphalt at night and make the government loose so much money due to their acts." (Head of Naguib Mahfouz Bank in Intilaq of Lower Egypt)

"I got lucky, I broke the asphalt from here, and on the other day the roads were re-asphalted." (Om Bayoumi, a WL in Iman)

As mentioned earlier WLs tried to rip the Head of Sa'yda's clothing due to changing land prices and demanding installments. Along the same lines, Om Badee' confronted a training official who came from Alexandria.

"Drink our water. If you say it is okay, then, why don't you drink it? Why do you drink mineral water [purchased bottled water]. Drink our water like we do... You did not ask about us and the flooding here until the water reached underneath your feet in Iman," Om Badee' told the Head of Sa'yda angrily.

## 7.8 Government's Response to Resistance

The government's responses to settlers' resistance ranged from legalizing resistance, to turning a blind eye to resistance, and to participating in resistance. Table 14 illustrates some examples of how the government reacted to settlers' resistance. Due to the Revolution, the government made more empty promises and introduced some new policies that were not very responsive to local settlers' needs or even informed by the local reality and more empty promises.

**Table 14 Examples of government's reactions to settlers' resistance.**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Rules</b>	<b>What Happens in Reality</b>
<b>LAC Elections</b>	The board members should be elected by members at large (all landholders in a settler village) and attend regular, monthly meetings	In the Samaha LAC, Village Engineers not only turned a blind eye to the lack of interest by women landholders to participate in the LAC elections and affairs but also appointed the board members and choose easy-to-get-along women
<b>Land Transactions</b>	Land is neither rented nor sold	Engineers themselves were renting and selling land, making profit as middle men
<b>Fertilizer</b>	Fertilizer is earmarked to settlers  Fertilizer should be used on the land of settler farmers	Fertilizer was not only provided to settlers. It was, for example, sold to solve any problem in the respective village.  LRS turned a blind eye to farmers' sales of fertilizer. In Lower Egypt, the LRS even encouraged farmers to sell fertilizer
<b>Residence</b>	Settlers have to settle into the New Lands permanently	The LRS turned a blind eye to those who did not relocate and those who lived between the Old and New Lands
<b>Pumps</b>	Pumps are government property that settlers need to use to irrigate their lands	The local officials turned a blind eye to the removal of collective pumps in hope of 'greening' the settlement by any means to please national officials

## Legalizing Resistance

In the beginning, settlers who sold or rented their lands were punished by the LRS in both settlements. These settlers' status and records in the MRS were cancelled. Those who bought the land lost their access to the land they had thought was theirs. Eventually, as the land sales increased and to keep resistance under control and, more importantly, to make money, the LRS and GARPAR legalized the sale and purchase of the land distributed to settlers.

The Search Committee of Graduate Irregularities was formed by GARPAR and the LRS. The committee was formed in response to settlers' misconduct, and its role focused on examining what needs to be done in response to the identified irregularities. The committee included two judges, three administrative heads from the LRS, and the concerned local Head of settlement. Each buyer presents the committee on certain visiting periods with a proof of purchase from the legal settlers, a power of attorney from the settler to cancel the settler's status in the MRS, and a monetary value.

“The current priority of the government is to legalize the purchases of land from the original settlers. We are telling people, ‘come out from the dark, show us who are you and register your purchases’.” (Former Head of the LRS in 2010)

The registration of land sales generates a lot of revenue for the government. Sales of settlers lands became legal starting in the year 2000, which was legislated as the Law of Investment of 2000 (Adriansen 2009). The price of the land for the buyers termed entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that for the original settlers (see Table 4, Chapter 3). The price of purchased land has increased with time: Om Azeez, a GWL in Shohada, complained that the price of purchased land has increased by more than two-fold.

The Head of the LDU at Sa'yda was very proud of the income generated by the registration of purchased land. Along the same lines, the government's next step is to legalize the status of land grabbers by also the registration of their access to the land.

Many settlers who grabbed land were happy about that. “Now we are much more relieved that the government will legalize our status. We will become legal,” explained Nada, the wife of a WL's son who grabbed land for cultivating sugarcane. Nada, however, will

probably not be able to afford registering the land. The price the LRS and GARPAP are asking for is very high. Nonetheless, she will not face crop removals anymore.

### **Turning a Blind Eye to Resistance**

The Search Committee of Graduate Irregularities was supposed to fine the settlers who transgressed irrigation rules and used flood irrigation, but the Committee turned a blind eye to the issue because it saw the MWRI as responsible for farmers' lack of adherence to modern irrigation.

“We forgave the settlers because we are like their parents and because they were not given a constant flow of water to be able irrigate by sprinkler and drip methods. In normal circumstances, however, the Search Committee of Graduate Irregularities would have taken punitive measures towards the settlers for their lack of compliance with the irrigation rules.” (Vice Head of the LRS)

For women to pay their membership dues, the LAC turned a blind eye to the WLs' sale of fertilizers. More generally, all the LACs in Sa'yda turned a blind eye to the dealers who waited at the doors of the LACs to purchase fertilizer from settlers.

The LDUs also turned a blind eye to settlers' lack of resettlement into the New Lands. Many officials understood that the living conditions in the New Lands were hostile. “I know men who had their girls leave the settlement when they grew up because of a lack of safety in the New Lands,” explained the Vice Head of the LRS.

In Sa'yda, WLs in particular, were forgiven for not relocating into the New Lands. “These are old women and have their own circumstances. We just let it pass that they did not relocate, but in Amr [a gender-mixed village] we are strict with the settlers' relocation rule,” explained the Head of the Sa'yda settlement.

Officials at the Governorate Local Council reported turning a blind eye to settlers who broke the Asphalt for direct access to water. They did not encourage it, but they did turn a blind eye. “We should provide water for the local settlers. That is why we turn a blind eye to breaking of asphalt,” said the Head of the Governorate Local Council in the Iman village. Om Badee' on that day was getting permission from the Governorate Local Council to break

the asphalt on the road and place her water pump at the source. She did get the okay from the Governorate Local Council, which turned a blind eye to her pump.

### **Participating in Resistance**

The government itself did not follow the rules that the settlers were supposed to follow. Engineers participated in sales and rents of land as middle men and made personal profits. Land sales and rents sometimes occurred inside the LACs itself. Local officials at the LACs and LDU also sold fertilizer.

After the Revolution, the Head of the Sa'yda settlement, among other local officials, worried that settlers would get him fired, as happened to many other colleagues. The head of the Sa'yda settlement explained to me how he participated in a protest set by local farmers: "I told them [the farmers], when the Governor comes, you lock us in and say you won't release us until water enters our lands. They locked me in with governor for four hours. Water came in, and I became friends with the Governor. He now calls me, and I have good relations with him."

On another occasion, settlers in Samaha threatened that they would open the drainage canal that is flooding their village. This is illegal but, similarly, the Head of Sa'yda concurred with the settlers to do so. "Ok yes I am with you, break the water canal. I will break it with you." Indeed, two years later, Om Badee' reported that, "the Head is a good man. In the breaking of the drainage canal issue he stood with us. Together with him we broke the drainage canal open which was accumulating water that drowned the village."

### **Changes in Policies Incurred by the Revolution: Are They Really Changes?**

The pattern of making promises continued after the Revolution. The government promised citizens with land access to solve the problem of youth unemployment and to mollify the angry crowds. Job applications were also open on a massive scale throughout the republic. Many people applied for both jobs and land. There was much uncertainty, however, about where would the government reclaimed desert land or how would it provide job opportunities. The LRS complained of the massive piles of land applications it received. "I

have about 30 kgs of land applications sitting in my office,” complained the Head of Development Affairs at the LRS.

The governor of Aswan did not know what to do with all the land applications, and he sent them to the LDU in Sa’yda. The Head of Sa’yda, in turn, wanted to send the applications to Cairo but was advised to keep them in the LDU. Along the same lines, land applications in Intilaq ended up underneath an official’s desk. The Head of the Sa’yda settlement complained that, “there is no land here for distribution. Why are they sending me all these applications?”

After two years. Out of thousands of applicants only a negligible portion accessed land. No new land was reclaimed. Three already reclaimed villages in established settlements were chosen for distribution. For example, out of 5,300 applicants from Asiout governorate, only 54 people acquired land. Out of 5,400 applicants from Suhaj governorate, only 54 people acquired land. The Vice Head of the LRS reported to me that the Governor of Aswan apologized and asked that applicants from the province be considered in another reclaimed land distribution project.

It seems that job applications also did not go very far in fulfilling their promise of better life. The unemployment rate in 2013 in fact increased for the youth. Workers on contracts in the local LACs were promised permanent jobs, and their papers were provided to the LRS. A new Head was appointed to the LRS, and he refused to consider LACs workers as MALR employees and, as such, denied permanent jobs status to the LACs workers. The constant changes in government officials led to a situation where not much work was getting done; government offices were also experiencing protest or disruption from their workers. In the MWRI, for example, technicians wanted to have equal benefits as engineers, as I was informed by the Head of Horizontal Expansion at the MWRI.

At the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit workers forbade the Head of the Unit to enter to his office. “These medium officials are refusing to accept that there is a Revolution. They are thinking this is a phase that would pass. We will fight injustice, and we want to remove the Minister of Agriculture himself. We forbade the Head of the Unit to come here. He doesn’t come here anymore. We sent him to the ARC,” explained the Head of Legal Affairs at the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit. Workers at Intilaq’s LDU organized into groups and

demonstrated in front of the MRS Headquarters in the Noubariya demanding raises and permanent jobs with full benefits. Many of the Village Engineers in Sa'yda conveyed that some of the MALR employees in both settlements, including the Village Engineers, have been on contracts for over ten years.

New rules were set to control corruption and enhance accountability. In Intilaq, the distribution of fertilizer came under tight control. Landholders were supposed to personally sign when receiving their rations. According to some LACs' employees, a couple of LACs in Intilaq had discrepancies between the amount collected and the amount present in the bank accounts of the respective LAC. A few accountants fled to their original homes in fear of being caught as they were suspected for being responsible for the fraud.

In S'ayda in 2013, most villages except for the Samaha village now have access to potable water, a permanent doctor, and a distributor for gasoline and natural gas. The fuel crisis of 2013 led to measures to ensure that farmers access gasoline for their pumps; distributors were appointed in each village and sold fuel to settlers at subsidized prices.

The MALR released loans to farmers on a massive scale. Settlers in Sa'yda, even women landholders, were provided with loans. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement told me that "all the changes incurred by the Revolution of January 25 came to the agriculture sector."

The LRS changed some of the conditions for land access. Full land ownership titles were introduced into the MRS. Settlers can now sell or rent their lands after 15 not 30 years of accessing land. It seemed that these conditions were irrelevant to local settlers as they sold and rented their lands in the first year of their access to land with blessings from the LACs. Another change is that the LRS participates in decision-making with the GARPAP related to distribution of land to settlers. This is good for the poor since the LRS are pro-poor and not purely profit-oriented as GARPAP who often sold the good land to the entrepreneurs and provided poor settlers with land furthest downstream and away from towns, as the Head of the LRS and the Vice Head of the LRS reported to me.

On the women front, many feminist activists worry that women got further marginalized after the Revolution. The Revolution made it more difficult to advocate for

women's participation and involvement in development projects. The Head of the Sa'yda settlement reported that,

“The Revolution changed all our priorities. We did some neat work with the Sa'yda village's Amal Women Association [a women exclusive Social Development Association]. Now the Revolution came; do I work on water problems and services provision or do I work on the Amal Women Association?”

It is also questionable whether women will access land in the revolution-induced land distribution projects. Without the involvement of the WFP, the government believes in a unified household model. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the MRS Head of Training and Agricultural Affairs clearly stated that each woman given land is a lost opportunity for a breadwinner's access to land. Even those WHHs provided with land in Upper Egypt failed the test in the eyes of the government. The government without any external pressure is reluctant to provide women (graduates or widows) with land. On the other hand, at the local level, I observed at the LAC in Sa'yda that many WHHs in Upper Egypt are applying for land justifying their land applications with the fact that they are WHHs.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

Clearly the way the government perceived women settlers and settlers more generally differed across scales. The local government has felt that settlers are annoying, demanding, and stubborn. Gender seems to be an easy target that local officials can use to excuse the government's lack of proper planning and coordination. WLs were doubly annoying, treacherous, cursed, and there was no hope for their situation in the 'Widow Village' of Samaha to change even after the Revolution. Through access to land, some women gained increased mobility, knowledge, and decision-making power (as mentioned in Chapter 5) that included subversion and resistance to government policies. These women, however, still faced malicious accusations due to their increased freedom and mobility.

Clearly, land did not enhance their status, as argued for by Agarwal (1994). Despite their independence in their households and communities, these WLs were not free from malicious gossip and its consequences. As such, it is questionable whether any women can be independent of patriarchy, as argued by Jackson (2003: 476), as they often need patriarchal support at many levels. Findings point to the fact that patriarchy is present not only in



households but nested in hierarchies across many contexts. Women settlers and their daughters in particular were not taken seriously as farmers, and were prevented from accessing micro-credit and training, as well as basic services provided to other villages after the Revolution. The lack of political organization on the part of women also contributed to limited gains from the Revolution in Samaha. Clearly the Revolution was not enough for these citizens to gain increased rights. They had to mobilize and protest in front of the right people.

On the national front, officials were proud and bragged about how the MRS settlers cultivated very difficult areas. Graduates had the lion's share of training and micro-credit. The national officials felt that Land Squatters contributed to water-logging in many parts of the settlement and that their settlers had to suffer the consequences. Officials in Cairo felt that reclamation and resettlement were collaborative efforts between the LRS and local settlers. Officials in Cairo also felt that their relationship to settlers was that of a father and a mother. Upper Egyptians were perceived as too stubborn and incapable. As we have seen, however, in Chapter 3, inequitable access to national resources between Upper and Lower Egypt is to be blamed for the regional differences in development. The differences between the perceptions of officials in the two regions could be attributed to the fact that the local officials and not national officials were the ones who had to solve the local problems and deal with settlers' needs and demands, all in a context of poor government planning and coordination, and thus the local officials were likely participate in settlers' resistance and turn a blind eye to it. Officials on the ground were caught in the middle and acted as a buffer, shielding national officials from local discontent, while being deprived of the resources necessary to do their jobs.

Settlers, on the other hand, initially felt that the government was better than their own parents because of the hopes the government program encouraged. But due to negative experiences of unfulfilled promises, bad planning, injustices, and inequality, eventually settlers felt that the government was untrustworthy, careless, malicious, a thief, and a liar. WLs and GWLs felt abandoned and thrown into the desert with a general lack of basic services. With the Revolution, settlers used covert and increasingly overt methods to resist the

government's misdeeds<sup>24</sup>. Rumours shaped much of the relationship between settlers and the government, and spreading rumours was a main method used by the weak to undermine or defy government policies.

Settlers also understood their usufruct rights as ownership and sold, rented, and bequeathed their lands. Their reactions often fed into state policies structurally through a legalizing committee. The government reacted to people's improvisations and resistance by turning land sales as a way of legitimizing the status quo and financially benefitting from doing so. The government also turned a blind eye to many of the irregularities, mostly because of awareness about the terrible planning and understanding of the settlements' conditions, and in this way colluded in circumventing its own official policies. It is likely that local officials took part in such collusion because they too were in the position of being ignored by service providers and their superiors—a complaint they often made.

The Revolution introduced new forms of conflict resolution with the government in courts, television programs, and open protest. Government's reactions to the Revolution included the usual focus on making promises which eventually were not kept. Land was given to only a very small number of applicants and employment conditions deteriorated for the youth. This general pattern of offering promises not kept was met by resistance at the local level. Many benefitted from mechanisms of dispute but these mechanisms are not friendly to women. It is considered shameful for women to stand in courts and many women felt that going to Aswan or to the LDU or even the LAC was time consuming and pointless. Many WLs gained the courage to demand basic services and fertilizer rations, however, as a result of the Revolution.

Although government planning and governance techniques seemed top-down and rigid there was ample room for both local settlers and local government officials to exercise agency, improvise, resist, and legalize counter practices. Bush (1998: 95-98) argues that focusing only on government policies oversimplifies the impact of the state on peasants. The

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to note here that the Revolution did not necessarily lead to a nascent resentment for the government and its policies. Empty promises, lack of basic services, and mistrust toward the government were present well before the Revolution, but the Revolution did accentuate resistance toward government policies and planning.

sole focus on state policies underplays the role of peasants in changing their conditions and resisting plans of the state. In this context also this approach masks the role of government itself in circumventing rigid policies that do not work at the local level. Local officials had to weaken these rigid policies to get things done on the ground and to prevent their ouster by the angry and empowered crowds.

For future desert reclamation projects it would be essential to utilize the knowledge generated from previous reclamation projects and in the academic community, including the ideal soil and land characteristics, drainage specifications, and suitable crops. Along the same lines, settlers' needs and realities should be taken into account for the success of policies. The government would have benefitted remarkably from working on a small scale and learning from the mistakes encountered while trying to resolve them (Scott 1998). This stands in sharp contrast with what Mitchell (2002) calls a pharaonic or massive project model of development projects that the Egyptian government characteristically adopts.

Looking also into the future with regards to settler-official relations, one might wonder what the future in Egypt will look like post Mubarak and post Mursi. Perhaps the answer lies in the Revolution's slogan of "bread, freedom, and social justice". What comes first and matters most to the rural poor is bread. This became evident in Sa'yda when settlers were terrified to lose their subsidized food items when the Revolution began. Bad planning and injustices are, as we have seen, often resisted in subtle and overt ways on a daily basis by settlers and officials alike even without a revolution. The Mursi government has been widely accused of mismanaging the government's budget and failing to save the economy through, for example, creating opportunities for youth employment. As such, the next government's primary concern should be economic development, especially for the poor, who constitute the largest portion of the Egyptian population.

## Chapter 8

### 8 'Greening the Desert' and Protecting Daughters from 'Dark Days': Inheritance Practices in Egypt's Mubarak Resettlement Scheme

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the fate of property given to women landholders in Egypt's MRS. The sustainability of providing women with land rights, many fear, is threatened by the practice of bequeathing this land mainly to sons (Jackson 2003; Agarwal 2003). In this chapter, I examine how the rules and practices related to inheritance are reproduced and challenged in the settlements of Sa'yda in Upper Egypt and Intilaq in Lower Egypt. For WHHs in Sa'yda, I examine the significance of daughters and mothers' participation in labour on the land in providing girls with social legitimacy to receive inheritance rights. I pay attention to the forms of inheritance (monetary, land, housing) and place specific attention on bridalware, which is often locally considered equivalent to inheritance for women. Bridalware is similar to trousseau or dowry. The brides' parents provide her with clothing for years to come, kitchenware, cupboard, washing machine, television, and carpets, as well as, sometimes, gold. As opposed to dowry, the bridalware belongs to the bride and is not a gift to the groom's family but is a contribution to the couple's new home.

I will start by outlining the analytical framework I use in this chapter. Then, I examine brother-sister relations and how the New Lands context affects these relations. I, then, outline how property, gender, and money are perceived by WL families, GWL families, and Egyptian society at large. Then, I consider what factors affect the decision-making surrounding women landholders' bequeathing plans, if present, and how they affect sons and especially daughters. I, then, consider MRS-specific rules and regulations and their impacts on inheritance in the New Lands. Afterwards, I move to describing land dispute mechanisms and what routes are available to sisters for resolving inheritance conflicts. In the end, I conclude by summarizing and considering broader implications.

## 8.1 Analytical Framework

Following Jackson (2003), I examine what strategies and decision-making rationales, if any, women landholders use for transferring their land rights to children, and, in particular, to daughters. These considerations are important to identify which factors lead to daughters' success in claiming inheritance shares and which do not. I look at bequeathing rules and strategies in the Old Lands to examine how these rules and laws are reproduced and challenged by the women landholders and their daughters in a New Lands context based on regional ethnography and drawing from Middle Eastern literature, including Bach 2004; Moors 1996; Sholkamy 2003; Joseph 1994; Altorki 2003; Stauth 1990. More broadly, following Scott et al. (2010), I look at how, and whether, the New Lands context introduces changes (legal or social) to the land tenure system and affect adopted practices from the Old Lands to enable or impede daughters to access their inheritance shares.

Because analyses of gender in the Middle East tend to over-emphasize spousal relations and neglect women's relations with brothers (Joseph 1994; Altorki 2003), which are especially important in land matters (Moors 1996), I have been particularly interested in analyzing the relationships between brothers and sisters in the landed households of Say'da and Intilaq. Such relationships in the Middle East are often described as being based on both an asymmetrical power relationship and love (Joseph 1994; Altorki 2003). For understanding inheritance and local property rights for women, I also look at kinship structures, including marriage practices, which fundamentally shape women's property rights in many parts of the world, such as India, Palestine, and Vietnam (Agarwal 1994; Moors 1996; Scott et al. 2010: 229).

Agarwal (1994: 66) argues that women's abilities to claim land from their parents are a function of their bargaining power and the social legitimacy of their claims both inside and outside the household. Particularly, a daughter's ability to claim her inheritance is a function of the local inheritance laws; her legal literacy; the social legitimacy of her claim in the local community; her knowledge of officials who work in land-related matters; the accessibility of legal aid and financial resources to assert and pursue her rights; and an ability to survive independently of help (social or economic) from competing heirs (Agarwal 1994: 66). I, therefore, focus on brother-sister relations; land dispute strategies; and the social legitimacy

of inheritance claims for daughters. I also examine daughters' willingness to claim their land rights in the New Lands which are also shaped by social legitimacy of their claim and their relations with their brothers.

## 8.2 Brother-Sister Relations and the New Lands Context

I lay out brother-sister relationships as I saw them in Upper and Lower Egypt with consideration to age, social status, location, and education, and, when relevant, identify changes in brother-sister relations in the New Lands context. Seniority interacts in these gender relations. Elder brother in households headed by women play the role of the father. In Sa'yda, which is mostly concerned with WHHs, brothers, especially elder brothers, to the daughters of WHHs are considered, for all intents and purposes, fathers to their sisters. This paternal relationship is exemplified by Fatma, the daughter of Om Badawi below:

“My brother Nazeeh is my brother and my father at the same time. He educated me and took care of me since I was a child. He taught me to be brave and not to fear the roads. It was because of him that I got educated [in University]. My other brother wants me to speak with no one. My younger brother is very difficult.”

Not all brothers are equally liked. Fatma, for example, has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and is relatively free but often complained about her brother Adli (see above quote) who wanted to restrict her from speaking with men and going where she pleases. He also gives her a hard time about cooking food and doing laundry. In Sa'yda, all brothers from the same mother worked collaboratively on the land and were responsible for providing their sisters with bridalware. The financing for their sisters' bridalware did not necessarily come from the land profits. Some brothers worked in the tourism industry, while others worked as casual labourers in nearby towns. Brothers from a different father and the same mother or the same father and a different mother are not obliged to provide bridalware for their sisters. Some contribute modestly to their sister's bridalware with a wedding gift, which is part of the bridalware, such as a television in the case of Fatma.

Brother-sister relations are based on love and generosity. Many sisters told me stories about how they sold their gold so their brothers could work the land, as in the case, for example, of Fatma and Om Mortada. These sisters willingly sold their gold for their brothers' sake. Fatma got her gold back from her brothers, but Om Mortada did not due to a lack of

water on her mother's land. Fatma, for example, related her fear for her brothers from the Revolution to be greater than her fears for her husband. The idea that the husbands are replaceable but brothers are not is often reiterated in Middle East brother-sister relations literature (Altorki 2003: 187).

Daughters of WHHs who were married and educated through their brothers' money (from their mothers' lands or elsewhere) are less likely to have legitimate inheritance rights at both the societal and familial levels. They are also less likely to claim their inheritance rights, as illustrated by the following quotes:

“I do not want anything [inheritance share] from the land or the house. My brothers paid so much money on my bridalware and education.” (Fatma, a sister in a household headed by a woman)

“I do not want anything from my brothers. It is enough that they buy us bridalware and provide us with education. My sister Somaya had bridalware not even the mayor's daughter could dream of getting.” (Safia, another daughter in a household headed by a woman)

Stauth (1990), similarly, reports that in rural Egypt women whose parents have invested in their education are less likely to obtain inheritance rights. Along the same lines, sons of WHHs also felt that having paid for their sisters' education and bridalware, they were now solely entitled to the inheritance. The sons of a Christian WL from Samaha named Om Tofayli, for example, told their mother that if she sold the land, then her daughters would be entitled to nothing. The brothers attributed their refusal to provide their sisters with inheritance shares to the fact that they had provided for their sisters' education and marriages, particularly their bridalware.

In any case, brothers usually make the final decisions about whether their sisters receive inheritance shares, as illustrated below. Often inheritance distribution comes into effect after the parents' death, which enables brothers to gain more control. Because brothers are both decision-makers and also contending heirs, sisters are often marginalized in so far as their inheritance rights are concerned. In cases where sisters are disadvantaged (such as widowed, single, or married to poor husbands), their brothers offer them inheritance. More generally, in cases of property sales, sisters are likely to receive their inheritance shares,

which are half that of their brothers. When property is sold it is a general rule in both New and Old Lands that all daughters and brothers gain inheritance rights in monetary shares.

Sisters in both settlements regardless of class rarely asked for their inheritance rights (as described in the examples of WLs in Chapter 5):

I was in Edfu one evening with the Head of the Sa'yda settlement female family members. One sister had a dispute with her brothers over land rent. She complained that her brothers forgot her for many years but now remembered her, only for this year. She refused to take the 1000 EL for renting her land as she was upset she was not compensated for all those years. When I asked her why did you not ask for rent then in the past years. She told me that "in Upper Egypt. It is shameful. It is not appropriate for a sister to ask her brothers for rent money."

Women who ask for their shares in rent money could face conflict with their brothers. They could lose the support of their brothers as prime protectors in cases of hardships.

Stauth (1990) also reports that women in rural Egypt refrain from asking their brothers for their inheritance shares in hopes that they will take care of them in cases of widowhood, divorce, or needing protection from abusive husbands, especially when the father is dead. Even if brothers do not end up taking care of their sisters in cases of hardship, this is the ideal situation and so sisters cede their inheritance rights to their brothers (Jackson 2003). Hence, generally sisters refrain from asking for their rent or inheritance shares. Furthermore, even if a sister asks for her inheritance or rent share, she is not guaranteed that she would gain that. Sisters bank on the good will of their brothers. Om Nizam's daughter, for example, said "here in Upper Egypt, it is shameful to ask for one's inheritance. If my brothers give me inheritance, then I will take it, but I cannot really ask them for anything."

In the New Lands context, however, sisters do ask for their inheritance rights in cases where they worked on the land. Amoona, Safia's sister, who is older and still unmarried, said that she wants her inheritance rights: "no, see me I want my rights. I worked hard here, and I want my rights." Amoona did not want her inheritance to be in the form of land, but rather money. "What would I do with the land? I do not want land. I want money," explained Amoona. Both Safia and Amoona go to the land, harvest fodder, vegetables and wheat on a regular basis.



It would be safe to say that sisters generally participated in labour related to harvesting, seed cleaning, and separation of *karkadeh* flowers in almost all the households that I visited. This labour related to the land, however, is marginalized and considered trivial, even by the sisters themselves. Sisters who accomplished these tasks seldom praised their own work and often emphasized how hard their brothers worked on the land. However, sisters who irrigated, harvested, and weeded on a regular basis, like Safia and Amoona, are more likely to be recognized for their contributions to the land and also want recognition for those contributions.

Fathia, for example, a daughter of a WL in Iman, goes to the land with her brother regularly and her efforts were appreciated by her brother who bought her a golden ring from the profits of the land. Another daughter of a WL in Samaha said that she also wants her inheritance rights when she responded to her female counterparts' comments about ceding their inheritances to their brothers because they have provided for their education and bridalware. Na'ima said, "my mother got me my bridalware, I owe my brother nothing. I want my rights. I worked hard on the land. My brother himself also tells me that he will give me the land that I irrigated using water carried on my head when the pumps got stolen." Na'ima's story also shows that her mother's participation in managing and labouring on the land legitimizes Na'ima's claims to inheritance by reducing the role of her brothers. Na'ima's story also shows that her brother was willing to give her land since she participated in male-dominated labour. Na'ima's case demonstrates that participating in labour on the land provides sisters with the social legitimacy needed to acquire inheritance rights.

Along the same lines, Dalida, a daughter of another WL in Samaha, who also has a brother called Mostafa, worked hard next to him on the land. She went regularly to labour on the land and helped him manage all its aspects, as reported by many witnesses in Samaha. When Mostafa beat his sister up and did not provide her with sustenance money, people from many villages were appalled and criticized him for being ungrateful for her help. Local people attributed Dalida's involvement in labouring on the land to her right to acquire monetary compensation as recognition from her brother for what is locally valued as hard work.

Sisters who are married to relatively affluent men are often expected to cede their rights to other needy siblings and, especially, brothers who provide for their own families. A deceased WL's daughter in the Sa'yda settlement who is married to a relatively affluent man said that she, "does not want anything from her mother's land because she is married to a financially stable husband. 'There are others who are more worthy,' she said. Her younger sister goes to school and is in need of money for books and clothing [and also bridalware upon her marriage]," explained Layla, whose father is a brother of the deceased WL mother and farms her land. Similarly, two other relatively affluent daughters of WLs reported wanting nothing from their brothers. It is considered an honorable and righteous thing to do for sisters who have good marriages.

In addition to providing daughters of WHHs with education and bridalware, brothers should elevate their married sisters' statuses amongst their in-laws by showing compassion for their sisters. In sisters' marriages, brothers are a source of pride and protection that elevates sisters' statuses amongst their in-laws and prevents potential maltreatment by in-laws, especially the husbands and their mothers who often live in the same house. Many households are joint households. This was not a ubiquitous model, but it was common at both sites. Each couple has their own apartment to retreat to at night but all the women in the family cook, eat, and work together under the direction of the mothers-in-law during the day. Mothers-in-law can be very difficult to deal with, as illustrated in Chapter 5, and as narrated by Asma, a daughter of a GWL in Shohada: "A mother-in-law is not like a mother. A mother-in-law is not as kind and understanding. I work from 5 am until the night in the communal house. I sleep with my *borka*' (dark piece of cloth covering the face) on. At night, from fatigue, I sleep without feeling what I am wearing."

Unfortunately, the New Lands relocation made it difficult for women landholders to consolidate their relationships with their brothers due to the far distances involved and the isolation of the New Lands, as illustrated below:

"I do not want anything from my brothers. They have families: they are more deserving of the money than me. I just want them to come here and ask about me. We are in a desert and a difficult place to get to. I want them to raise my status in front of my husband. I just want them to keep asking about me." (Om Hasaballah, a GWL in Safa wal Marwa)

Some GWLs used farm produce, gifts, and adopted conflict resolution roles among siblings, as mentioned in Chapter 5, to consolidate their relations with their brothers, which highlights the importance of this relation. For some other GWLs, their productive lands were a target for many greedy brothers and a source of conflict. For example, Om Nahawand, who wanted to protect her daughter from her greedy uncles, put the land and house in her daughter's name. When her brothers found out about this transfer, they came storming into Om Nahawand's house and beat her. In Islam, if the daughter is brotherless, then uncles are entitled to large shares of the inheritance (An-Na'im 2002).

Brothers also protect their unmarried sisters from dangerous situations, such as living in the desert lands, and from malicious gossip by accompanying them during travel. As such, many unmarried GWLs and WLs were accompanied by their brothers into the New Lands who would also help them farm the land. Most GWLs were married, but many of the WLs came as young widows (as these were the conditions to access land) and needed male companions. In Sa'yda, the fact that the land was not productive limited brothers' help to their sisters: many brothers left because the land was poor and they lacked desert farming knowledge.

The obligations and responsibilities differ between single and married brothers. The immediate family of a brother is more important than his sisters, as illustrated by the story of Om Talib below:

One brother who accompanied his sister into the New Lands was forced by his wife to leave his sister, "When my brother got married, she [the wife] told my brother, 'Why are you running and working this hard? This is not our land. We have no place here. We should leave.' He left with her. I wish he stayed here with us. He helped me so much with the land." (Om Talib, a WL in the Iman village who now lives with her mother, two young sons, and a daughter)

It is often reported that brother-sister relations in the Middle East are that of a guardian or a second father to a daughter even in households headed by men (Joseph 1994; Altorki 2003). Girls cede their rights to their brothers in hope of their brothers taking care of them in times of hardships. Daughters who acquired their inheritance rights, especially from land sales, had a different relationship with their brothers than sisters who left their inheritance with their brothers in expectation of their support. Girls who acquired their

inheritance rights had a more equal, less romanticized, and assertive relationships with their brothers.

One notable case was that of a sister named Rola who acquired her inheritance rights from the sale of her mother's land and so asked her brother for labour money to farm on his land. Her brother was upset that she asked for money to harvest his wheat. He told Rola, "why are you distinguishing between me and you?" She replied back, "you made the distinction in the first place. You did not buy my bridalware. I purchased my own bridalware from the money I got from my mother's land sale." (Rola, mentioned in Chapter 5, needed the money because she had left her husband who beat her on a daily basis.) This story shows that by being less dependent on her brother, Rola was able to assert her need for money to sustain herself and live away from her abusive husband.

Another sister who also took her inheritance rights from her mother, who sold parts of her land, did not tolerate her brother's disrespect to her and chose to cut her relationship with him. "I do not speak with him. He and his wife are very disrespectful to me," explained Noha. In comparison, an unmarried woman in Intilaq who did not gain her inheritance rights and was hoping her brothers would provide her with her share was described by her neighbor as being maltreated by her brothers and their wives, who left her in need of labour jobs.

A third sister who acquired her inheritance rights upon the sale of her mother's land was suspicious of her brothers. She felt that the brothers were deceiving her and her sister. She had the middle man who sold her mother's land swear on the Quran that the land was sold for the price of 90,000 EL, as opposed to passively accepting "whatever her brothers give her" as described above by other sisters. This story shows that girls who acquired their inheritance rights do not consider it 'shameful' to ask for their just shares of inheritance.

### **8.3 Property, Gender, Money, and the New Lands Context**

In this section, I discuss the relations amongst property, gender, and money. It was clear that relations between the type of property, gender, and money are interrelated. Women rarely get their inheritance shares in the form of agricultural land. Land in both settlements is masculine. Land is for brothers, fathers, and uncles to farm. Land is also labour; land is

farming. Because women are seldom involved in steady labour on the land, women are pushed to the periphery for access to land:

“Girls do not get land here. People say, ‘Why would she inherit land? What did she do to inherit land?’” (Nabila, a daughter of a WL in Samaha)

Land is also family. If the family breaks down, so does the land. Land is often left undivided between heirs, and farmed as a family business (Bach 2004: 174). This is also why girls do not inherit land because the land does not get divided but is farmed as a whole entity (also see Stauth 1990: 38). Since girls do not farm, they rarely benefit directly from agricultural lands. If the land was sold, however, as explained earlier, then girls do get their shares. When there is dispute amongst brothers, then the land gets divided.

Another factor which could lead to dividing a family’s land is perceived to be brothers-in-law. When and if a sister gains her inheritance rights in the form of property, this property is not really considered hers but considered her husband’s land. Along the same lines, when girls ask for their inheritance shares, this is interpreted as brothers-in-laws asking for these shares, as if these women had no will of their own (Moors 1996). It is widely believed that ‘unrelated’ brothers-in-law, as opposed to cousins, are likely to be greedy and claim their wives’ inheritance shares for themselves.

“Brothers-in-law are trouble. They could demand their wives’ inheritance shares. You know brothers-in-law were behind the sale of Om Abdo’s land. The brothers-in-law incited the sisters to demand their inheritance. The brothers had to sell the land. Each sister has a tongue this big [using hand gestures to show big size].” (Om Zakariya in Samaha)

Land does not necessarily have to be sold when daughters demand their land rights, but it does get divided.

So their brothers and parents in landed families do not allow girls to marry unrelated men. At a very young age, girls in landed households are engaged to their cousins. If girls marry unrelated men, however, then they are not entitled to land.

“No, girls do not get land. My son-in-law comes just like that and takes the hard work and sweat of my sons. No way. We do not let unrelated men into our lands. That could never happen. Girls do not get land.” (Om Nazeer, a WL in Iman)

On the other hand, cousins are secure. They are less likely to ‘betray’ their cousins (wives’ brothers), and cousins do not need their wives’ inheritance. Cousins would already have inheritance from their fathers.

“Some families who have land do not let their daughters marry unrelated men. Daughters are only allowed to marry cousins. If not, they could even stay without marriage. If a cousin marries my sister, I am assured that he will not try to take my land away. My cousin is not greedy. He also has land, like me, like him. If my father has land, then his father, my uncle, has land too which he would have bequeathed to his son. I will, however, give my sister rent. Everybody is happy this way. I am assured of my cousin. A cousin is safe.” (Head of the Sa’yda settlement)

Sons of sisters are also considered illegitimate heirs and are not allowed to farm their mothers’ shares of the land with their uncles, with the result that women cannot transmit rights to such land to their sons. “Unrelated men [particularly men other than brothers] are not allowed into the land. I farm the land with my sons only. My sister’s son wanted to farm with us. I refused,” explained a Legal Advisor at the Aswan Agriculture Directorate.

Girls who inherit land are not normally entitled to control or pass it on. Girls with land usually have no say in land transactions, such as dividing the land, selling it, or renting it. “I do not like my land. I wish I could sell it and buy another piece of land in a different area. My cousins, however, do not let me do so. They rent out my land for a very low price,” explained an accountant at the Agricultural Bank in Edfu who is brotherless and whose paternal cousins control her land. Sisters who are educated and provided with bridalware are less likely to gain inheritance rights or rent for land, especially if brothers provided the money from education and bridalware, as mentioned earlier. The money paid for their education and bridalware is considered their inheritance.

Sisters, unlike their brothers, need bridalware for their marriages to occur. Many stay unmarried due to poverty and the high expense of the bridalware. Sisters, brothers, and parents feel that bridalware is equivalent to inheritance shares for daughters, and also education, if provided. In Egypt elementary education is for free. While some married women had control over their bridawlare, others did not. Those who have control over their bridalware could assert their voices by threatening to remove the bridalware from the house. One wife in Iman who is married to a non-relative called her father to pick her up and took all her bridalware with her when she got upset with her husband. Depending on the brides’

home region and who they marry, a list that outlines who brought what into the marital house is notarized to protect the wives' shares in cases of divorce. In cases of marriages with relatives, the groom is usually trusted and no papers are written between the families. If a bride is provided with gold in her bridalware, she retains the gold and uses it in cases of emergencies.

Daughters in the Intilaq settlement were provided with very extensive bridalware. Om Fareed reported that her daughters' bridalware was ten times more than her own. Daughters in Intilaq have more expensive bridalware than daughters in the Old Lands. This puts daughters in a strong position in front of their in-laws, and cases where the bridalware included gold provide daughters with security against hardships. In both settlements a daughter's bridalware is collected over many years, sometimes since the day the future bride is born.

Sometimes brothers do not pay sisters rent for farming their shares of the land. Sisters can get produce from the land or nothing at all if the sister was considered by her brothers to be well off. The sister cannot ask for a rent share. Nonetheless, cases of husbands demanding their wives' inheritance shares against their wills are reported in the Middle East (Moors 1996).

The New Lands context also includes 'greening the land', 'changing its soil colour from yellow to black', 'cooling the land', and 'treeing the land', which are all additional steps to those required in the Old Lands. Because girls often do not participate directly in reclaiming the land, this context further marginalizes girls from gaining inheritance rights in agricultural lands.

“If my sister said I want my share from the land, I will tell her, ‘come, let us talk. Let us calculate how much money I have spent on the land to green, to tree, and to produce. You come to my house with your children, and I treat you well. I feed you and offer you drinks [non-alcoholic types]. But, if you want inheritance, then that is a different story. We need to sit down and calculate how much money I have spent on the land’.”

In both settlements sisters also rarely got monetary compensation from their brothers' profits that are related to farming mothers' lands. Sisters, however, are far more likely in both

settlements to acquire their inheritance rights from the land in monetary compensation resulting from property sales.

The sale of land is much more common in the New Lands than in the Old, where land is rarely sold. “Land is honor. One cannot sell land like one cannot sell one’s honor. People here laugh at you if you sold your land. Unless you are dying, you do not sell your land,” explained the Head of the Agricultural Banks in the District of Edfu (which the Sa’yda settlement belongs to). The head of an agricultural bank is aware of all land transactions in the Old Lands because when one decides to sell land, the agricultural bank is required by law to provide a paper describing whether or not this person’s land has debts to the bank.

Desert lands did not have the same emotional attachment as the old, ancestral lands. “We didn’t get this land from our fathers’ houses. We could sell it,” said Om Badee’. The New Lands are 5-10 times less fertile, isolated, and expensive to reclaim. As a result, land sales in the New Lands are far more likely to happen than in the Old Lands, especially in Sa’yda. In addition, desert land’s original value is relatively low, reflecting its marginal quality and the labour and inputs needed to make it productive. This is reflected in the low value of the monetary shares girls may expect from such land.

For women landholders and their families who did not sell their lands, there existed a monetary value for girls’ inheritance shares. In both settlements, even if a daughter does not get this money in her lifetime, theoretically the value of a girl’s inheritance share of the land is valued at half a brother’s share of the land when it was still barren desert – with no green vegetation, crops, or trees. Although the sale price of the land may have increased ten-fold in some places from when it was desert to a green orchard, for example, this had little bearing on the money girls could expect as their inheritance share. The time that girls spent cooking for their brothers in the New Lands and the fact that these girls also had to sacrifice the amenities and friend and family support present in the Old Lands was not appreciated or factored into their inheritance rights. Along the same lines, brothers who did not labour on the land, get shares in monetary compensation equivalent to the price of the land when it was still desert. These brothers’ inheritance shares were given as money and not land because families worried that since these brothers are not interested in farming, they might sell the land.



Daughters do get a physical share in the *houses* of their fathers, however. As opposed to the land, which only men farm, houses are inhabited and worked by women too. Women could inherit an entire house, a room in the house, or a small piece of land to build a house on. Many women in the Sa'yda settlement reported gaining housing inheritance from their fathers. In some cases, the inheritance shares of the girls in their fathers' houses stayed with the brothers. If brothers inhabit the house solely, it is expected that sisters get monetary compensation for their shares from the brothers at some point in the sisters' lifetimes. "I told my brothers. Give me my share from the house. It is time. I need some money. I want to go on pilgrimage," explained Om Nizam. Sisters could also choose to cede their housing rights to their brothers, but sisters' abilities to gain housing inheritance in property or monetary forms are far more likely than the case of agricultural lands.

In the New Lands, the houses that WLs got in Sa'yda are, for the most part, occupied by sons. Many of the houses in the 'Widow Village' were occupied by newly married sons, and most of the WLs stayed in their original home towns. If more than one son lives in the house, they expand beyond their mothers' houses by building extra rooms in the backyards. In case the mothers are living there, they are usually left with one room to stay in. Cooking, watching television, baking bread, laundry, and washing dishes are activities shared together as one big extended family. Some wives, however, choose to separate from the communal living style and live independently. In many cases, daughters of WLs who got divorced or widowed came back to live with their mothers in the New Lands.

In Intilaq, on the other hand, the lands are far more productive. The houses that the women received through the MRS stayed with the mother landholders and their husbands. Sons either built above their parents' houses or built or bought new houses elsewhere in the New Lands from the profits of the land.

In both settlements, many daughters did not benefit physically from the houses of their mothers because daughters wanted to marry in the Old Lands. Many daughters disliked the New Lands: housing in the New Lands was more of a farm house inhabited by those who farm the land. In Sa'yda monetary compensation for daughters' inheritance rights in the houses, unless the house is sold, is difficult to obtain due to poverty and the poor quality of the lands.

## 8.4 Factors Affecting Women Landholders' Bequeathing Decisions

Although many women landholders reported that they would “leave inheritance to God”<sup>25</sup>, most had plans for bequeathing their lands. Religion, personal life experiences, resistance or alternatively compliance from sons, an urge to protect daughters, financial need, identity of children’s spouses, and the amount of labour put on the land are the main factors that impact women landholders’ decision-making related to bequeathing the land. Some factors were more important than others, with the most important being labour, identity of the spouse in the cases of daughters, and the personal experiences of women landholders.

### Religion

Muslim women landholders in both Sa’yda and Intilaq feared the punishment of God. The *shari’a* stipulates that daughters inherit half the shares of sons irrespective of whether or not daughters farm the land. Women landholders often asserted that they would definitely provide their daughters with inheritance rights equivalent to half the shares of brothers. “This is the will of God. No one can change or challenge that,” many would often say.

One women landholder from the Shahama village explained that failure to be just in inheritance matters results in dire consequences:

“Especially inheritance, worms will eat you up instantly in your grave. Worms will also eat up your house. Your house will fall down, and your land will be cursed too.”

Women landholders in both Upper and Lower Egypt rarely divided the land amongst their children before their death and feared that the land would be divided after their death. Land divisions are synonymous with conflict amongst inheritors. Women landholders often told their sons to stay good with each other and to provide their sisters with their rights, as illustrated below:

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<sup>25</sup> This term “leave inheritance to God” means that *shari’a* [Islamic rules set down in the Quran] would determine inheritance shares. For example, *shari’a* stipulates that property is divided into equal parts for sons, and each daughter gets half a share relative to a brother’s share.

“I always tell my sons: ‘don’t eat [take] your sisters’ shares’. Give them their complete rights’.” (Om Waleed)

“God keeps land divisions away from us. My sons are good with each other. They will not divide [the land], and they will give their sister her rights.” (Om Badawi)

Christian women, on the other hand, were reported not to have this religious obligation of providing girls with inheritance rights: but having a religious obligation to provide daughters with inheritance rights did not seem to affect practice much. As seen in the above two quotes, the land will not be divided (and sold), and as such girls will not get their inheritance shares. In practice, religion favors boys. Three WLs in the Iman village have expelled their sons from their houses for being drug addicts, idle, and/or disrespectful. All the respective women landholders, however, reported that they will give these sons inheritance rights because they fear the punishment of God.

### **Personal life Experiences and the Urge to Protect Daughters**

Many WLs had hard lives and experienced many hardships. As a result, a few WLs are keen on providing their daughters with their inheritance shares to protect their daughters from a ‘dark day’. Om Badawi, for example, came from a polygamous household and was regularly beaten and eventually abandoned by her husband. Girls are vulnerable in their marriages especially to polygamy and infertility. Both polygamy and infertility could be detrimental to women. Polygamy often results in competition in access to resources between wives. Infertility often leads to new marriages or abandonment. The land and housing provides daughters in general with security, many mothers thought.

“I will give Fatma the entire house. I told her brothers that, and they are fine with that. I do not want anyone to annoy Fatma. She comes here and stays with her husband and children to visit her brothers with dignity. I have seen bad days myself and do not want that for my daughter.” (Om Badawi)

“I want to protect my daughter. She cannot carry children, and her husband already told her he will take another woman. He might even divorce her. I want to protect my daughters, both of them. I have seen dark days in my life. They can live in this house and benefit from renting the land. I will give them their shares. I wish I could give them as much as their brothers, but the Sheikh on the radio says it is *haram*.” (Om Taher)

To further illustrate women landholders' keenness on providing daughters with inheritance shares, Om Fathi in Intilaq wanted to strengthen her daughter's fallback position in front of her in-laws: "I want my daughter to inherit so that her wings will not be broken in front of her in-laws." Another GWL in Intilaq, Om Nahawand, mentioned above, legally transferred her land and house to her daughter to protect her from greedy uncles. On the other hand, Om Tofayli, who is Christian, refrained from selling her land (to give her daughters their inheritance rights) because her sons refused to support her in case she did so.

"Om Tofayli refused to sell her land because the sons do not want to give her daughters inheritance shares. She told me that. She said that she wants to keep the land so that her daughters could benefit. She wants her son-in-law to farm the land." (Om Fahmi)

"My sons tell me, if you sell the land, you are making a difference. You are being unfair. After all, they educated and bought bridalware for their sisters." (Om Tofayli)

It was common for WLs in Sa'yda to give their sons-in-law land to cultivate, especially when WLs' own sons refuse to farm the land. Many WLs reported that by doing so, they were elevating the status of their daughters and providing them with inheritance rights. Some WLs also reported elevating their own status by doing so, "When I visit my daughter, my son-in-law treats me like a queen. He is like a son to me. I gave him some land to farm. I gave him my daughters' share to farm," explained Om Abdel Aal. These examples illustrate how women landholders defied the norms to provide their daughters with security (compare to section 8.3 above).

### **The Significance of Sons' Compliance**

As illustrated by Om Badawi above, she was able to decide on giving her daughter Fatma the house because her sons were alright with that. Sons play a big role in their mothers' decisions of bequeathing. Usually sons also support their mothers and farm their lands. As such, mothers want to please their sons and their compliance with their inheritance plans is important for their survival. Many women, as mentioned in the Religion section, left the decision-making power related to the lands with their sons who farmed the land.

### **Financial Need**

A few women landholders in Sa'yda reported factoring financial need in their bequeathing decisions. Om Sayid, for example, a WL who has four boys and two girls explains how she still wants to eat and live from the land:

“I did not speak about inheritance. I still want to eat [benefit] from the land. If I told each son you got this much land, then how can I farm the land and eat from it.”

Another WL Om Tal'at divided her land amongst her daughters and sons to get a monthly stipend from each child. She gets a 100 EL from each son and 50 EL from each daughter on a monthly basis.

### **Identity of Spouses**

Most women landholders in Sa'yda and Intilaq preferred that their sons and daughters marry cousins. Kinship also determines social relations (see Sholkamy 2003; Bach 2004). Cousins are likely to tolerate lower marriage-related expenses. Cousins are also considered better care providers for mothers-in-law in old age. Many daughters and sons married their cousins. Daughters in Intilaq who married to cousins were provided with generous land produce of corn, grapes, cactus fruit, peanuts, lemon, and other fruits.

It was clear that in both settlements those daughters who married cousins are more likely to inherit property or gain inheritance shares from their parental home. As opposed to Om Nazeer, mentioned above, whose daughters are married to unrelated men and are thus not entitled to land, Om Badawi who is marrying her daughter to a cousin wants to give her only daughter a house and a land share of half one acre. In Intilaq, Om Fareed, who married her daughter to a stranger, went as far as signing over all of her land in the name of her son, and the mill and its land in the name of her husband, to ‘protect’ her male family from greedy in-laws.

“The other day my daughter Asma came to me saying that her mother-in-law told her to go and ask for her inheritance share from the mill. I want to protect my son and husband. I signed over all the property in their names.”

## Labour

Most women landholders in both settlements factored the amount of labour put on the land by each inheritor into their bequeathing decisions. Om Badwan in Sa'yda, like many other landowners, said that she would give her children inheritance shares comparable to how much labour they put into the land. Om Badwan reported that she would give her eldest son the biggest share because he is the principal farmer of her land. Her second son still goes to the army. She also reported that each of the girls will get 5000 EL, equivalent to half a brother's share of barren land (before it was reclaimed). Along the same lines, Om Fareed reported that it is custom in Intilaq to give daughters monetary compensation equivalent to half a brother's share of desert land value.

As mentioned earlier, brothers who did not labour on the land were given inheritance shares in desert land value as well. Om Badee' and her son Tareq explains below how the brother Tamer who never visited the New Lands will get inheritance in desert land value.

Om Badee' decided with three of her sons to give her fourth son Tamer who never showed up to labour in the New Lands with a monetary share equivalent to a son's share of barren land. "The land with the house was sold at about 30,000 EL. Now after the land has been 'greened' and is partially an orchard of mangoes, the land is valued at price range of 90,000 EL to 120,000 EL with the house. So Tamer will take  $30,000/4$  brothers = 7,500 EL for his share in the house and the land," Om Badee' reported. Tareq, Om Badee's eldest son, said "if Tamer, our brother, showed up and knew which is our land and which is our house, then we will give all the land and the house as well. All of it, we will give it to him."

Along the same lines, Fatma complained of her brother from another father, Lateef, who comes into the New Lands only to visit his mother.

"My brothers always ask Lateef to come and help them in labouring the land, and then all of a sudden he leaves without telling anyone. We sell the best for him. Once Lateef got in a tight financial situation, and my brother Nazeeh sold a cow for him. But, Lateef doesn't ask about his brothers. We won't give him land."

When Fatma's mother heard her, she yelled back and said that she would give all her children inheritance. Fatma replied, "perhaps then we could let Lateef take the acre which is flooded."

A lot of women in Intilaq who had a hard time convincing their sons to work the land promised their sons apartments and land in return for labour. Girls, on the other hand, were not required to farm the land; on the contrary, they were protected from farming the land. “Her father takes good care of her. She doesn’t work on the land,” explained Om Fathi about the lack of her daughter’s involvement on the land. As a result, sons, as opposed to daughters, are able to access land and houses in their names while their mothers were still alive and from the profits of the land.

## **8.5 MRS-specific Rules and Regulations and their Impacts on Inheritance**

Two main MRS-specific rules and regulations affected inheritance in the New Lands. The first one is the extent of security of the mothers’ land title. In Intilaq, this was not a problem as most GWLs paid their property installments and acquired Intermediate Land Contracts. In 2011, the LRS introduced full land titles to settlers who paid all of their 30 land installments. It seems that GWLs in Intilaq will not have any problem owning the land.

On the other hand, in Sa’yda many, and most WLs, did not pay any of their land installments. The security of their access to land is jeopardized. As a result, many daughters and sons could possibly not inherit land. The government could take the land away from those who did not pay their land dues. The fact that the land is not owned but leased in mortgage payments also marginalizes daughters who might not be able to pay for their land shares while their brothers do. Women in Sa’yda often do not work and are confined to the household; husbands might not allow their wives to work. The ability of a daughter to generate income, therefore, is limited, which in turn limits her ability to purchase her own land share. If husbands paid for the land, then they could claim it for themselves. For this reason Fatma often said that she wants to pay for her land share from her own work; she is currently employed as a schoolteacher in her husband’s home town.

Inheritance rules specific to the MRS are unique to the New Lands and may marginalize women from gaining their inheritance rights. Upon the death of the landholder, land is transferred into one ‘custodian’. This person represents all the inheritors in legal matters related to the land. Even if the inheritors felt like dividing the land, they cannot do so legally. This consolidates decision-making power about property in one person’s hand,

usually the elder son, until all land installments are paid. Mostafa, a son of a WL, for example, refused to allow his brother-in-law to farm his mother's land with him. The brother-in-law's land in Shahama is waterlogged, and he approached Mostafa in hope of accessing land for farming, but the brother-in-law legally cannot do anything about Mostafa's decision. In the Old Lands, on the other hand, the brother-in-law could have taken his wife's share of the land and farmed it.

## 8.6 Land Dispute Mechanisms and the New Lands Context

Agarwal (1994) argues that the social legitimacy of land claims is related to effective land rights for women. Here I explore the ways in which women can settle their claims over land with both the government and the local people. Budlender and Alma (2011) emphasize the need to have, and introduce when absent, just means for land dispute settlements that are enforceable and protect the inheritance rights of women.

There are formal and informal land dispute mechanisms, available to women that I have witnessed. Formal methods included the LDUs, LACs, courts, and the MRS Noubariya Headquarters. Informal methods for resolving land conflicts in the Old Lands often resort to the intervention of sheikhs or third parties, usually neighbours. Women who had conflict with their husbands over land often wanted divorce. Sheikhs were not supportive of women divorcing their husbands through *khola* to resolve their conflicts over land. As a result, many women were not able to divorce their husbands of their own free will.

Resorting to neighbours was a better strategy as they represented the interests of the person who sent them to broker a deal with the other side. Both of these methods did not seem to resolve conflicts over land. Om Hadi, for example, reported in Chapter 5, used both third party intervention and sheikhs to resolve her land problems, yet by 2013 her problems with her husband over the land were still not resolved. She cannot farm her land. Her land is sitting fallow.

Formal venues for resolving conflict were also accessible to women and included the Noubariya MRS Headquarters, the local LDUs and LACs, and courts. Courts were not socially acceptable for women. Another problem with courts is that they require a long time,



and in a brother-sister context, legally, only one person represents the land and its decisions until the 30 installments (one each year) are paid. So courts could not help women who are struggling with a greedy brother.

Engineers at both the LDUs and LACs were supportive of husbands and not wives. Engineers felt that husbands are entitled to land shares because of the husbands' provision of labour on the land. Along the same lines, they may rule against girls because of their lack of labour on the land. Both the LACs and LDUs solved conflict between spouses informally by talking to both sides. Perhaps the LACs and the LDUs can arrive at settlements, but this does not mean that they broker a just deal.

The Noubairiya headquarters seemed to be the best route for women to resolve conflict over land with their spouses. One WL described the Noubairiya headquarters as the "protectors of women's land rights". Om Hasanein had a fight with her husband who wanted to take her land from her. She claimed to have reclaimed the land from her own inheritance money. She took her case to the Noubairiya. They wrote her back saying that the land is solely hers and not her husband's, although he provided labour and even money to improve the land. As a result, the husband left the New Lands, and Om Hasanein is now divorced. The Noubairiya headquarters could be a viable option for sisters who have conflict over land with their brothers, providing all instalments had been paid. The Noubairiya enforces inheritance law and as opposed to the court is not considered shameful for women to turn to.

## 8.7 Conclusion

Custom which predates *shari'a* seems to have larger effects on girls' abilities to access inheritance rights than religion (Bach 2004). Although girls are to inherit half a brother's share in anything, they often do not inherit land. Land is also strongly tied to masculine identity, as argued by Jackson (2003). Daughters themselves often did not want land and preferred money for their inheritance shares.

Girls who marry their cousins in fact do not get their land rights, as is popularly believed. Girls who marry their cousins are more likely *not* to get effective land rights and are in fact encouraged to marry cousins for this reason. Their land access is symbolic and their brothers, with blessings from their cousins, control the land. Brothers might, however,

pay these sisters rent for using their lands. The fact that the land is cultivated by men as a whole entity, undivided, contributes to a lack of access to land for daughters. Daughters' inheritance of housing, however, is received in the form of property or money.

As Moors (1996) argues for Palestine, in both settlements the position of the women involved affected their inheritance rights. Widowed, divorced, or single women, and those women wedded to poor husbands are more likely to gain inheritance rights. Girls who received bridalware and education from their brothers were less likely to gain inheritance rights. Shares of inheritance for women were not taken seriously by the women's parents or brothers, especially those who provided bridalware to their sisters in WHHs, because bridalware and education for women is considered to be equivalent to inheritance. Similar findings are reported by Agarwal (1994) in South Asia, whereby dowry is considered inheritance for daughters, and, as such, girls are denied inheritance rights if they have dowries.

Some women landholders defied social norms to provide their daughters with inheritance shares in land and housing, particularly to provide daughters with security against patriarchy (polygamy and abandonment in case the wife was infertile). Women used their own experiences in life to justify their daughters' need for material security. Three WLs in Upper Egypt and one GWL in Lower Egypt were willing and determined to leave their daughters with land. Nonetheless, as feared by feminist scholars, findings reveal more generally that women's land would be largely inherited by sons. This means that land access through the MRS is limited to only one generation of women. Similar findings are reported for a South African land reform program, whereby land given to women was bequeathed to sons (Walker 2003: 143).

This finding highlights that broader changes in local customs (Jackson 2003) and what Agarwal (1994) calls social legitimacy of land claims are the most effective way for women to gain land access. Findings point to the fact that one way to change inheritance practices is through daughters' productive involvement on the land, and in households headed by women, also through mothers' work on the land. Labouring on the land by mothers and, especially, daughters provided daughters with both the courage and legitimacy to claim their land rights. Similar findings were reported in South America by Porro et al.

(2010) whereby women who provided labour on the land were able to claim legal land titles for that land. Labour seemed to be a very important factor shaping the bequeathing decisions of women landholders and their social acceptance.

Daughters in the New Lands are more likely than they are in the Old Lands to gain their inheritance rights from the land in the form of money. As opposed to the Old Lands, land is frequently sold in the New Lands, partly because of its lower agricultural value. Furthermore, in Intilaq girls were more likely than they are in the Old Lands to receive an extensive bridalware, which elevates their status in the eyes of their in-laws and provides them with security.

Girls who got their inheritance shares were more assertive and had a more equal and healthy relationships with their brothers than girls who did not get their inheritance shares. Gaining inheritance shares has constructive consequences for brother-sister relations. Similar findings are reported by Altorki (2003: 189) in Saudi Arabia, whereby lessening dependence on brothers had empowering effects on sisters by increasing their autonomy. Girls in both settlements who gained their inheritance rights were more likely to stand up to their brothers and assert their needs and feelings.

The sustainability of providing women with land access is often mentioned in speculation and rarely systematically examined in empirical research (Jacobs 2002; Walker 2003; Jackson 2003; Agarwal 2003). Findings reveal that mothers are more likely than fathers to provide daughters with inheritance rights, but mainly in form of money or houses and rarely in land. Sons are likely to inherit almost all their mothers' land, which highlights the limitations of providing women with land access that only benefits one generation of women.

## Chapter 9

### 9 Conclusions

This research addressed the challenge of achieving increased empowerment and equality for women in Egypt through enhanced access to land. Land access in the past two decades has been closely tied with achieving increased empowerment and equality for women in the Global South (Razavi 2007, 2009; Varley 2007; Deere and Leon 2001; Datta 2006; Agarwal 2003). The MRS provided an excellent opportunity for an empirical test of this assumption, which implied that women who access land through the MRS are likely to become empowered. I conducted a 14-month field study in the desert resettlements of Sa'yda in Upper Egypt and Intilaq in Lower Egypt, as well as Cairo, using a qualitative, extended ethnographic approach. I interviewed and interacted with women having various types of land titles, women without titles, and other local men and women. In addition, I spoke with local officials in the two settlements and policy makers based in Cairo. The study considered several village organizations in Upper and Lower Egypt as a frame for contextualizing women's experiences with land access in the MRS.

In particular, I identify how land access could empower Egyptian women and women's experiences with land access in the two settlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq. In this final chapter, I outline the main findings of the current research. I, then, move to a consideration of their practical significance. I believe that development research should always consider policy implications and solutions to problems identified. In this case, the aim is to move the women's empowerment and equality agenda forward, building on positive experiences and learning from mistakes. As such, in Appendix C, I identify site- and institution-specific policy recommendations to enhance the participation of women as landholders in the MRS and future resettlement projects. I also consider methodological implications for studying the complex subject of land rights and empowerment for women. Finally, I consider the scholarly significance of this research, broader implications to women's empowerment and land rights agenda and future research prospects.

## 9.1 The MRS, the Land, Women and Empowerment

Research findings fall into three broad, interrelated themes: (1) the MRS, (2) the land, and (3) women and their empowerment.

Following Mosedale (2005) and Kabeer (2000), who stress the importance of contextualizing empowerment, the study operationalized empowerment in the context of Egyptian women's experiences with land in Sa'yda and Intilaq. On this basis, empowerment through land access in Sa'yda and Intilaq mainly included an ability to expand life choices, enhancing one's bargaining position, and gaining a sustainable source of livelihood (Agarwal 1994; Mosedale 2005; Carr 2000). I use the notion of empowerment as a tool to help link changes or impediments to changes for women as a result of gaining access to land in the social, legal, economic, and political spheres (see Charmes and Wieringa 2003). These changes and impediments were related to, for example, participation in public life, gaining of political power, and accessing information and micro-credit.

The study highlighted the limitations of achieving women's empowerment through instrumental fixes (Cornwall et al. 2007; Kabeer 2000). Clearly, the WFP focused on land access to empower women, but did not attempt to challenge gender hierarchies, which is an essential component for achieving women's empowerment (Mosedale 2005; Agarwal 2001). On the local scale, officials had no understanding of or sympathy with the importance of providing women with equal rights and resources. As a result, providing land to women was seen as an outside imposition that had little to do with local aims and goals – and was hence resisted at all scales, most forcefully in the cancellation of joint titles for women following the reception of donor aid.

More broadly, along the same lines, advocating on behalf of women's empowerment and equality as an *instrument* rather than a *principle* or *goal* to achieve sustainability, food security, or economic growth also does little to challenge gender hierarchies and leads to the reproduction of the status quo. One important route to challenging gender hierarchies is to include men (officials, sons, husbands, brothers) in the debate on women's inequalities and hence the need for their empowerment. Having said that, IFIs can only be catalysts and cannot provide women with empowerment – though they can facilitate it (Mosedale 2005). Fostering dialogue between men and women through mixed-gender farmer groups and truly

collaborative research with officials and scientists is a possible option for challenging gender hierarchies (Najjar et al. 2013).

Women with the best land access experiences were located in Intilaq; were literate; encountered limited male resistance against women's adoption of farmer and farm manager roles; had access to good lands, irrigation, training, and markets; had diverse enterprises; and, through land access, participated on official committees. Some of these women turned to the land to end abusive relations and raise their children. Many of these women bought more property from the profits of the land, which they registered in the name of their husbands or sons. Women with the worst land experiences were located in Sa'yda were illiterate; encountered enormous resistance from local men and officials against women's adoption of farmer and farm manager roles; had unproductive lands; had limited access to training, markets, labour, and micro-credit; lived in villages that are located the furthest from towns; and cultivated only a small portion of their lands to avoid eviction. The land was a burden for these women who felt that the land is taking their money without generating profits, separating their children from them, and depriving them of family relations in the Old Lands.

Yet, women were led to stay in the new settlements because their lack of resources fuelled hopes for better livelihoods through access to land. In the event, however, property access was not enough for women to achieve better lives and equality with men. Perhaps the most important factors in accounting for the differences between the two areas are the productivity of the land and the reception of male settlers and officials to women's adoption of new and land-related roles. Resistance by officials, sons, and husbands limited women in their ability to capture available opportunities. An alternative strategy might seek to limit such opposition by finding better ways of including men in projects related to women's empowerment and equality (Mosedale 2005).

Sa'yda is a failed reclamation project and the Revolution's prospects are not very promising to transform the situation there. The lands in Sa'yda are increasingly flooded due to a general lack of drainage and large elevation differences between lands. Although after the Revolution, the MWRI released a budget of seven million E.L. to build drainage that cuts through the entire Iman village, other villages remain flooded, like Samaha (the 'Widow Village'), without access to drainage or planning for it. Furthermore, other problems persist,

such as lack of markets, adequate access to micro-credit, and training. Many WLs are leaving Sa'yda with the main benefits arising from their access to their houses, particularly in villages that are closer to towns, and not the land. Those who sold their lands and bought other property, mainly housing, are more likely to be the greatest beneficiaries of the land in Sa'yda in the long term.

There were serious limitations to the sustainability of women's access to property. It was clear that real property seems to end, for the most part, in the hands of sons through the mechanisms of inheritance. Labour and finances invested on the land determined each brother's or sister's share from the land. Daughters who participated in the labour on the land, who were few (three), were more likely to access their inheritance as property than other daughters. The monetary value of inheritance for daughters and brothers who did not farm the land stands at the value of the land when it was still barren desert, which is 10-30 times less than the land's current value. Nonetheless, in Intiaq daughters were more likely to have valuable bridalware than daughters in the Old Lands. Because land was sold frequently in Sa'yda, many daughters gained their inheritance rights in land in the form of money, which is sometimes used by the daughters to purchase their bridalware. This does not happen in the Old Lands where lands are rarely sold and continued to be farmed by brothers without the sisters and their sons benefitting from the land.

Although the experiences with property access differed markedly in the two settlements, women landholders in both Sa'yda and Intilaq shared some experiences with their new lives in the New Lands. In both settlements, the land required money for a lengthy reclamation process during which little to no profit is generated. In both settlements, women landholders located in women exclusive villages suffered the most from isolation, lack of labour, commodities, and transportation. Women landholders who relocated into the New Lands experienced some form of social empowerment. Many women through their farming, and sometimes as legal representatives in property affairs, accessed knowledge that is usually only available to men. By doing so, they felt equal to men and gained respect from local settlers (men and women) and officials, sometimes describing these women as brave, warriors, equal to men, knowledgeable, and hardworking. Also, women in both settlements through their access to land identified goals and acted upon them, such as camel fattening projects and purchase of apartments in towns.

In both settlements, women with access to joint titles (20% of husbands' lands) did not usually claim their land rights unless faced by hardships, particularly divorce. Compared to full titles, joint titles are clearly inferior in strengthening women's abilities to participate in public life, defy social norms, or gain increased mobility. Women with joint titles did not participate in farming and did not gain new knowledge. Yet, many women, including those without a land title, felt that land title in any form would allow them to subsist on land in cases of divorce and polygamy, which constrain access to resources for the earlier wife. Also in both settlements, the LDUs canceled joint titles for women within a year of receiving food aid, which was predicated on having women constitute 20% of landholders in a settlement. Husbands in both settlements strongly opposed providing their wives with 20% of their lands.

Also in both settlements, women landholders suffered from structural adjustment programs. In particular, the dramatic reduction in government budgets and decline in public sector spending (Bush 2007; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2003; Mitchell 2002; Harvey 2005) were strongly felt in the New Lands where basic services and infrastructure (such as drainage) were to be built from scratch. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for training and research in the new context of desert conditions, as well as a need for monetary subsidies or long-term micro-credit since the reclamation process requires at least three years of farming at a loss. Most women landholders felt that the government 'threw them into the desert' without access to services such as health care, potable water, police protection, and adequate schooling. As opposed to settlers in Sa'yda, who were not benefitting much from cultivating their lands, settlers in Intilaq, who had very productive lands, had the financial resources and as such could open schools in their villages and dig artesian wells to access potable and irrigation water.

Structural inequalities were reproduced in the New Lands. The poor settlers (encompassing all women landholders I interacted with) were provided with the worst land with the least reliable access to irrigation water. Many lands, especially in Sa'yda, had no access to water. Lands with good water access were left for the purchase of entrepreneurs. As a result, most poor women landholders in Sa'yda stayed poor, and some became poorer due to the requirement of farming the land. On the other hand, the Egyptian state used land



reclamation to deal with its poor when ironically, in many cases, farming land actually increased the level of poverty.

In addition to lack of basic services, settlers in general (including women) suffered from unfulfilled promises and bad government planning. Settlers resisted these policies covertly, by spreading rumours, gossip about officials and their plans, and passive non-compliance. Local officials, who saw the settlers' suffering first hand and had limited access to resources to fulfill their jobs, actualize their promises, or solve problems encountered, participated in the resistance of the settlers and turned a blind eye to it. National officials legalized resistance as it became the status quo – and generated profit by doing so.

The Revolution introduced new forms of resistance, such as courts, TV programs, and protest, all of which are unfriendly to women. Women felt it was useless, tedious, or shameful to demand fulfillment of their needs through these routes, and as such did not benefit much from these new channels of resistance. Yet, many women gained courage to demand basic services through the Revolution at the local level. Without the WFP involvement, which imposed access to land for women as a precondition for food aid, women would be less likely to gain access to land in future land reclamation projects. For their part, however, many officials felt that women's access to land was a lost opportunity for a (male) breadwinner's access to land. The female breadwinners, WHHs, in Upper Egypt are reported as a failed experiment by officials, who saw these women as inadequate farmers, with treacherous tendencies, and an aggressive and whiny attitude.

## **9.2 Practical Implications**

### **9.2.1 Policy Implications**

Blanket policy applications are often identified in the literature as a shortcoming of land distribution projects for women (see Jackson 2003; Scott et al. 2010; Jacobs 2002; Walker 2003). Land access alone does not mean that women would benefit from the land; broader understanding and assessment of constraints are required. In this section, I outline general themes for and some examples of the context-specific policies identified in Appendix C to enhance the experiences of Egyptian women as landholders in the MRS and future land reclamation projects. First and foremost, win-win arguments are used to justify these

policies, which could otherwise be dismissed or put officials on the defensive<sup>26</sup>. The policies I suggest target the legal, social, and technical spheres, all of which are required to enable and maximize the abilities of women and their daughters to benefit socially and economically from the land.

Changing the inheritance system in the MRS, which currently favors elder sons as sole inheritors of the land, and legislating women landholders and joint titles as a category in the Law of Land Reclamation, are urged. As such, more labour (women's labour) could participate in contributing to the national plan of increasing food security and export production. Also on the legal front, both women and men landholders need to have clear training related to their land rights. This training is especially important since in many cases the government unjustly altered land rights for certain groups, as with the cancellation of joint titles or the increase in size mortgage payments on WLs' lands. Land titling should not be only made available for the rich, and land prices should be reduced, especially for the WHHs whose land prices were tripled. This will help the government increase its accountability and restore trust with the settlers, which clearly was a problem in both settlements.

On the social front, local officials and male settlers need to be included in the debate around women's equality and land rights through gender awareness workshops. Of utmost importance is to train officials to understand and support a joint-household model whereby women are not subsumed under men. These considerations are important for daughters to inherit land and for wives to access joint titles, which act as security against divorce. Women landholders and their daughters need to be included in agricultural training programs to enable them to better farm their lands and gain control over it, including inheritance shares for daughters. Sons and husbands of women landholders also need to be included in training programs. As such, husbands might feel less threatened by their wives' exclusive access to information and field trips, and both husbands and sons are more likely to accept women as

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<sup>26</sup> Although I realize the importance of addressing gender inequality in its own right, the reality was that officials were reluctant to admit the existence of gender inequalities in the light of the so-called 'Mubarak gender-progressive policies'. As such, the policy recommendations I provided were more directly focused on the priorities of the Egyptian state and only engaged gender hierarchies within this larger context.

farmers if they acquire training on an equal basis with them (Najjar et al. 2013). Formal training will also legitimize women's roles as landholders in the eyes of officials, as we have seen in Intilaq.

On the practical front, more desert-specific research needs to be conducted. Clearly, the current research agenda adopted by the Noubariya Research and Training station reproduces the mismatch between crops cultivated and the local conditions. Participatory research, which shows farmers the benefits of certain crops and practices and generate locally relevant solutions, is widely known to increase the adoption rate of new practices for farmers. Research about drainage and irrigation techniques are also equally valuable and recommended and would benefit farmers in the Old Lands who also struggle with inefficient irrigation and water-logging (USAID 2010). Also, joint titles should clearly demarcate the land portion of each spouse to avoid spousal conflict over land and especially husbands' monopoly over land. Village Engineers who have prior training in agronomy and often live in the local settlements could conduct this research with farmers.

One of the main problems faced in many settlements is the lack of markets, which in many cases led to exploitation by middle men. The LACs and farmers individually could benefit markedly from training in marketing and entrepreneurial skills, especially for women farmers. All of these training programs have to be facilitated in a jargon free environment, which inhibited learning for illiterate women.

Finally, also in the practical domain, collaboration between responsible government departments cannot be adequately emphasized. Perhaps a committee should be appointed representing officials from the GARP, Noubariya Research and Training Unit, LRS, MWRI, WFP-Assisted Projects. Some of the committee's roles need to include timely allocation of micro-credit and food aid access, as well as provision of adequate water quantities distributed in a secure way perhaps through underground channels, for example.

### **9.2.2 Methodological Implications**

Relying solely on surveys, questionnaires, and other one-time research methods can be of little help to understand women and empowerment through land access. Instead, there needs to be a sustained and long-term type of research that brings to light issues that unfold

in real time or issues that are inappropriate to discuss in surveys or interviews, such as the fact that the Samaha village is called a whorehouse or that young sisters participate in labour on the land – which is considered shameful for girls to do. Jackson (2003) argues that one cannot understand the relations between land rights and women by simply asking questions. Women often answer according to the question asked and what they think the researcher wants to hear. Data generated through one-time methods have serious limitations that could lead to misunderstandings related to women and land access.

Conducting research about empowerment and land rights is complex and has to be based not only on long-term but also multi-stakeholder interaction. Factors beyond the control of women, such as the reactions of other local women and men, as well as reactions of local engineers and other local and national officials, to women's access to land are as important to consider as women's experiences in understanding women and land rights projects. Clearly, this research reveals that women's empowerment through land access was not enough for achieving women's equality and better lives for women. Broader consideration for settlers' reactions, policy context, economic benefits from the land, and cooperation or lack of cooperation between various government bodies interact together to produce effects on women's experiences with land. Focusing on women's experiences in isolation produces a partial picture.

In the context of Egypt, conducting research about policy objectives, implementation, and formulation is not an easy matter. The Egyptian state is notoriously opaque to the public and especially suspicious of foreign researchers, and access to policy papers and government reports is restricted. Long-term field study, however, allows for the study of policy plans and implications through participant observation on the ground and in officials' offices. This is possible, for example, by observing settler-official interactions and officials' conversations and discussions. Furthermore, bystanders with intimate knowledge about official planning yet no direct responsibility can provide useful insights. In particular, local drivers were often conversant with local issues and knowledgeable about local events, and were an important source of information that would be difficult or shameful for an official to discuss. Long-term interactions led to trust and friendships which facilitated meaningful and informative interviews. In my case, it took many months for officials with the additional help of the Revolution to feel comfortable answering my research questions.

In an authoritarian government like Egypt, the stakes are high for respondents to open up about official matters (legal and especially illegal) to outsiders. Conducting research in times of revolution had the fortuitous effect of enabling respondents to open up and discuss resistance and made it easier to offer bolder, genuine reflections on experiences and events. It was a privilege to be in Egypt during the Revolution as settlers' participation was markedly enriched. Along the same lines, so were officials unrestricted in their choice of discussion topics and openness to challenging ideas. During the policy seminar held at the LRS, a settler remarked that he could not believe how officials and settlers (present in the seminar room) could communicate in such a confrontational manner and resettlement problems could be discussed so openly. I replied that the Revolution allowed for this to happen.

## **9.3 Scholarly Implications**

### **9.3.1 Implications for Women's Empowerment and Land Rights**

Most research about women and land rights in the Middle East is limited to inheritance (Moors 1996; Stuath 1990; FAO n.d.). This study opens up new ground to systemically understand the links among empowerment, women, and land access in the Middle East from government and international agencies' planning agendas, to local officials' implementation, and to local women's reported experiences, all of which in turn affect policies and implementation processes. Land access has the potential of being emancipatory for women given the right supportive policies, such as adequate provision of basic services, markets, training, irrigation water, and micro-credit. A supportive social environment is also crucial.

An empirical comparison between joint and full titles shows that joint titles did not lead to empowerment for women, but increased their security in cases of divorce and polygamy. On the other hand, full titles led to increased participation in public life and access to other domains only available to men. It seems that joint titles work much better in societies where women with joint titles gain increased decision-making power in their households and face less resistance from policy planners and other officials (Deere and Leon 2001). In Egypt, however, joint titles were resisted at household, local government, and national scales. Similar findings are reported by Walker (2003) for a land reform program in South Africa

that was met with resistance during implementation that reduced women's land rights in the program to a largely rhetorical gesture with no practical effect.

The resistance faced by women landholders is often minimized in women's empowerment and land research (Jackson 2003). Male resistance and the resistance of other women to women's land access limited women's abilities to maximize their benefits from the land. "The land for women" argument is largely based on a "land for the tiller" philosophy (see Agarwal 1994, 2003; Budlender and Alma 2011), but while women are the primary farmers in many parts of Africa, they are not in Upper Egypt. To illustrate, only 5%<sup>27</sup> of women landholders in Sa'yda farmed their lands personally and with limited success and enormous difficulties. Women in Egypt had to adopt new roles to farm their lands that were previously socially prohibited.

These difficulties bring into the picture what Jackson (2003) called gendered land subjectivities. Land access for women might not be beneficial for them in the same way as it is for men. Indeed, if land has proven to generate social advantage and assets for men, for women it generated defamation and did not lead to access to microcredit in Egypt. Land in contemporary Egypt is tied to masculine identities and considered their domain by the state, society, and women themselves because of the nature of labour that they provide. When women farmed and managed the land as men did, they felt like they "were men" and were described by local settlers and officials as men (or "warriors", for example, in Sa'yda). The reality that land is tied to masculine identity poses great difficulties for efforts to enhance women's position through land access. In fact, women benefitted far more from their access to housing than land. This suggests that housing could be a better type of property to provide to women and relieves them from the mandatory condition of farming a parcel of land. Housing provided women with space that they could use, and they often did, to raise birds, for example, and thus increase their source of income and food quality. Access to space for

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<sup>27</sup> The figure of 5% in no way represents women's contributions to agriculture in Egypt. In other parts of Egypt, women co-farm the land but rarely make continuous labour contribution, own the land, or manage it, as they may in sub-Saharan Africa. I have noted many women in Lower Egypt who were involved in casual labour on entrepreneurs' farms to collect money for their bridalware. Upon their marriage, however, most of these women stopped their casual labour. Again, this type of labour is also different from managing a farm as women would do in other parts of the Global South on which the provision of land under the 'land for the tiller' policy is predicated.

rearing birds was often reiterated as a problem in the Old Lands (personal observation, South 1990). This focus on housing is not to suggest that women should not get land; however, when they do, they should have the option to farm it or not.

Jacobs (2002) and Razavi (2007, 2009) both report that women faced gendered and general constraints in their access to land. The focus on a single head of household model marginalized women from accessing land as wives. WHHs also faced taboos for interacting with unrelated men, were expected to focus on subsistence crops, and more importantly, were punished for participating in traditionally male activities, especially with regard to mobility, male friendships, and entrepreneurship. These difficulties and low number of women farm managers highlight the importance of reconsidering land reclamations' rules to increase land benefits and access for women. These rules stipulate that a settler has to personally farm the land and immediately upon land distribution.

The study also considered an unusual type of women landholders: Graduate settlers. Most of the research conducted about full title and women is focused on WHH's access to land (Razavi 2007; Jacobs 2002; Varley 2007), but the Graduate settlers were married. Their land access offered insights into the interdependence between their land access and the elevated status their husbands and children derive from the women's empowerment. For these women, empowerment is not independence and opting outside the household, as implied by Agarwal (1994, 2003), but a sustained focus on elevating their children and spouses' conditions. This married women's context also offered insights about the effects of land access on spousal relations, an area largely underrepresented in the literature on women and full land titles. As opposed to what is argued by Panda and Agarwal (2005) and Agarwal and Panda (2007), women's land access sometimes incited conflict and strained spousal relations. Women who managed to stay discreet and strategically obedient to their husbands were less likely to encounter spousal conflict due to their access to land. Nonetheless, as argued by Panda and Agrwal (2005) and Agarwal and Panda (2007), the land and housing provided women with the opportunity to break free from domestic violence and oppressive relations, not only between them and their husbands, but with other kin (e.g., brothers, in-laws) as well.

The study also offered new knowledge about women's status in Egypt through an in-depth diagnosis of kin relations and inheritance rules for Egyptian women with attention paid to social and economic status, age, location, and personal experiences of women. The research differentiates between types of property, which is not emphasized in the literature about inheritance in Egypt (see Stuath 1990; FAO n.d.; Bach 2004; Sholkamy 2003). In inheriting physical property, women are allowed to inherit housing but not land.

Women's marriage to cousins does not allow them to acquire their inheritance shares, as is widely believed (see Stuath 1990 for example), but rather ensures brothers' control over the land and its profits. This in turn highlights the importance of what Agarwal (1994) calls for: effective land rights. Effective land rights encompass not only ownership of land but also control over it. These women are unable to bequeath their lands to their sons, who in turn are considered in this case illegitimate heirs and a threat to their uncles. They are, consequently, unable to farm their mothers' land. Findings related to inheritance also suggest that women's entitlements in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt, depend not only on their social status and spouses' degree of prosperity as argued by Moors (1996), but also on the gender of the parent landholder and property subjectivities. Women landholders were keen on providing their daughters with inheritance shares even when their daughters were not divorced or poor; and the reality that women do not farm land led to their marginalization from actual land inheritance, although they were entitled to inherit real property in the form of housing.

The study is unique in its attempt to study inheritance in the New Lands. The infertile and barren characteristics of desert lands required extra male labour and financing that disadvantaged daughters from accessing their inheritance shares. Furthermore, government succession rules for desert land, which stipulate the appointment of one representative by inheritors, usually the elder brother, also puts control of land in the hands of brothers – thereby marginalizing sisters' abilities to benefit from the land or make decisions about it. Sisters who gained their inheritance rights were less dependent on their brothers and more likely to have healthier relationships with brothers that are devoid of romanticism and unequal power relations. Similar findings are reported by Altorki (2003) whereby decreased dependence on brothers in Saudi Arabia increased women's autonomy more generally.



Following Jackson (2003) and Jacobs (2002), the study also identified social change that could lead to women's enhanced access to land. Participation in land labour for mothers and daughters in households headed by women seemed strategic in providing daughters with both legitimate claims to inheritance rights and the courage to act on them. The study also offered analysis on settler-government relations in rural areas that set the stage for the Revolution in rural areas. Despite the fact that the Egyptian population is 60% rural, most social research conducted around the Revolution of January 25 in Egypt is based in urban areas, particularly concerning events occurring in Tahrir square (see for example Saad 2012; Sholkamy 2012; Winegar 2012). Most of the research conducted about the Revolution in urban areas is focused on social networking and the internet as a route for social upheaval and political reform (see for example Lim 2012). The current research shows that in the two rural settlements examined, the Revolution once again traded on promises which were not fulfilled. However, male settlers through protest reaped many benefits from the Revolution, such as basic services and political power. Officials feared ouster by the settlers and worked very hard to please them. Women settlers, on the other hand, were not comfortable with much of the Revolution-induced resistance methods, and, consequently, did not benefit as much from the Revolution, especially in women exclusive villages.

On the bright side, the study showed through the case of Intilaq that small scale farming could be very successful. This counters what has been widely argued in the policy circles of the LRS and GARP, namely that smallholders are unsuccessful in reclaiming desert lands. In fact, some large entrepreneurs failed in reclaiming desert land, most notably Al Waleed Bin Talal. The smallholder settlers in Intilaq, by contrast, were able to secure and sustain finances needed for investing on the land from their parents, gold sale, micro-credit, and profits from the land. On the other hand, settlers in Sa'yda, and especially women, were set up for failure. Lack of adequate training in irrigation, lack of micro-credit, lack of drainage, lack of farming knowledge, and improper selection of land for reclamation, among other factors, led to reclamation failure for the Sa'yda settlers. In fact, the study showed that land access led to increased poverty in Sa'yda and is, therefore, not a promising method for reducing poverty in such places, as has been argued by many scholars and development agencies. Women lost their gold and inheritance to support their unproductive lands, which reduced their ability to absorb shocks, such as illness, and plunged them further into poverty.

### 9.3.2 Future Research Prospects

More research is needed that examines the lives of women landholders, comparing those who opted to stay in the Old Lands with those who sold their lands altogether, and those who sold their lands and invested in a business<sup>28</sup>. I had limited interaction with women who did not relocate into the New Lands, or did so for a brief amount of time, or sold or rented their lands and left. Possible research questions might include: will it be better for women not to relocate and lose their social networks in the isolation of the New Lands? How can development agencies challenge existing gender hierarchies? How can women empowerment projects realize the necessary involvement of men (officials, brothers, sons, husbands)? Further research into these issues will shed more light and inform practice on how land access could positively impact women's lives.

On the front of inheritance, I largely relied on women's future bequeathing plans to understand inheritance. Reported plans are not necessarily what ends up happening. It would be crucial to complete a follow-up study in a decade or two to understand why and whether women's bequeathing plans were actualized. Another study after a longer period of time would be important to shed light on whether daughters who gained a fair inheritance share replicate their positive inheritance experiences to their own daughters and if so, how.

Perhaps most importantly, women in both settlements were entitled to inheriting property in the form of housing – yet when women were provided with joint titles, they included the lands and not the houses. Also, men in both settlements did not try to grab women's houses but did try to grab their lands. It would be important to know why are women entitled to housing, and what kind of entitlements they have. What kind of activities occur in the houses that are specific to women? And, in which parts of the house? These considerations are important to advance understandings about gendered subjectivities of

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<sup>28</sup> It would be important for research to shed light on what type of businesses do well for women in Egypt. Especially since there is not enough land for women and men. One possibility in Egypt is poultry and small ruminant projects. The profit of the sales of these animals often goes into women's pockets, as opposed to other enterprises, including land, which could benefit others against women's wills.

property that in turn shape how can women benefit from property not only in the short term but also in the long term, for example through inheritance (Jackson 2003).

Another research plan would be to compare women who accessed land in the Old Lands to women who accessed land in the New Lands (the MRS) to further understand what impedes or enables women to benefit from their lands. One clear difference between the Old and New Lands is the availability of basic services, including transport, potable water, health care, and schooling. Perhaps even to generalize the current research findings, a comparative study in the Old Lands might be beneficial. At the planning front, more research needs to address the lack of cooperation between various government policies and identify means to enhance it.

## **9.4 Final Note on Dissertation Title**

The title of the dissertation is a quote by a First Deputy Minister of Local Development at the Egyptian Village Development Sector. He brilliantly described land reclamation as requiring the age of *Nouh* (Noah), who lived for 950 years, the patience of *Ayoub* (Job), who endured enormous tragedies, and the wealth of *Qaroon*, a Quran character who had such enormous wealth that, to carry only the keys that opened his many treasure chests, required six mules. This quote epitomizes the long time that desert land needs to start producing, the patience and difficulties that women (and men) have to endure, not the least due to the lack of basic services, including potable water, and the money required to invest in the land and bring it into production.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Guide for Interviews and Questionnaire

#### A- Open-ended Questionnaire with Women Landholders

Research Topics	Probing Questions
<b>Land Access</b>	<p>From where did you get the idea to apply for a plot of land?</p> <p>How did you apply? Who supported your application? And if so, how?</p> <p>What were the obstacles that you faced to get the land?</p> <p>Did you surmount these obstacles, if so how? Who stood by you?</p>
<b>Benefits from the Land (economic and/or social)</b>	<p>What are the current obstacles that you face? How can you surmount these obstacles?</p> <p>What does the land mean to you? And, what does being a landholder mean to you?</p> <p>What did you want from accessing the land? Did you get what you wanted?</p> <p>Did the land change the way you see yourself, people around you, family members, and the environment? If so, please explain how.</p> <p>What did you learn from the land? What did you learn from living here?</p> <p>Do you like your life now or was it better before? Tell me a bit about your life before coming here? What was it like?</p> <p>Why did you relocate here? Have you thought about leaving? If so, what made you stay?</p> <p>What are your hopes and dreams for the land? Please explain.</p> <p>Have you rented out or bought new land or other property here? If so, in whose name?</p> <p>What is done with money that comes from cultivating the land?</p> <p>Have you ever bought something especially for you with funds from the land? If so or if not, please explain.</p>
<b>Micro-credit</b>	<p>Did you take any loans? If not, why not? If so, what kind of loans did you take?</p>

	<p>How did you know about the loans? Did you repay your loan? If so, how? If not, why not?</p> <p>Would you take a loan [I asked this question specifically to women landholders in Upper Egypt after I was encouraged to find women wanting micro-credit]? If so, what do you plan to do with the micro-credit?</p> <p>What were the benefits and drawbacks of this loan?</p> <p>Did you take any other loans?</p> <p>What thoughts do you have for improving loan conditions?</p>
<b>Contextualizing Empowerment</b>	Who do you think are the women who benefitted the most from their access to land? Why?
<b>Sense of Belonging in the New Lands</b>	<p>How often do you visit your original hometown? What do you do there?</p> <p>Do you feel at home here?</p> <p>Where would like to be buried?</p>
<b>Bequeathing Plans</b>	<p>Whom will you give the land to? Do you have thoughts on bequeathing your property?</p> <p>Whom would you like your son or daughter to marry? Is this related to your bequeathing plans? If so, how?</p>
<b>Participation in Public Life</b>	<p>Are you involved in any committees? If so or if not, please explain.</p> <p>Who goes to retrieve the fertilizer from the agricultural cooperative?</p>
<b>Decision-making aspects of the land</b>	<p>Who gets to decide on what is done with the land?</p> <p>Do you decide on certain aspects of the land? All aspects of the land? Please explain.</p>
<b>The Revolution</b>	<p>What did you think of the Revolution? Did you agree or disagree with the toppling of the Mubarak regime?</p> <p>Where you scared? If so, concerning what?</p> <p>What happened here during the Revolution?</p> <p>Do you have any hopes from the Revolution? If not, why? If so, what are your hopes?</p> <p>Are you satisfied with the Revolution's results so far? If so or if not, please explain.</p>

### **B- Open-ended Questionnaire with Sons and Daughters**

Have you seen changes in your mother since she obtained land? If so, please describe those changes? If not, why do you think there are no changes?

What are the tasks that your mom is able to do on the farm? In the house? In the community?

Are there any activities that your mom can do but no one else could? On the farm? In the house? In the community?

Does she have a plan to bequest property to you? If so, what is this plan? How do you feel about her bequeathing plan?

If she does not have a bequeathing plan, why not?

### **C- Open-ended Questionnaire with Officials**

What is the history of the project?

What are the histories of NGOs and development agencies' involvement in each of the settlements?

[When relevant] How did the 'Widow Villages' form? Why put all women in one village?

What are the official land dispute mechanisms? How do they differ in the Old Lands?

Have you seen any women-related (sisters, wives, and daughters) land dispute issues? If so, how was it resolved?

What happens when the land settler dies? What are your regulations for inheritance of the land? Have you seen conflict with that? If so, how was it resolved?

What are specific issues faced by women and not by men in the settlements? Have you spoken with women who had problems with the land? Please explain: what were the issues and consequences of women's access to land?

Who is/are the most empowered woman/women landholders? Why so?

What happened here during the Revolution?

What are your thoughts and feelings about the Revolution?

How did it change how things are run here?



## **Appendix B: Article Written with Women Landholders and their Families in Upper Egypt** [Translated from Arabic]

### **The Women of Wadi Al Sa'yda: Between Hope for the Revolution and Suffering from the Policies of the Former Ruling Regime**

Based on a seven-month field study, this article uses the voices of women (widowed and divorced) in the villages of the Iman and the Samaha who were provided with land to describe their current situation and their hopes and dreams for the Revolution. The article describes how their lives are constituted by hope and suffering. Quite contrary to what was said in television stations and local and national newspapers during the days of the former regime about the abundance of services, fertile lands, and provision for financial aid for settlers, these women face problems that are uncountable, to which we now turn:

#### **In the Village of Iman**

Iman is a village housing many categories of settlers (Women, Evicted Tenants, and the Destitute). We here focus on the widows and divorced (137 of them) category and their family members. In this village, women have adopted new roles. Along with their children, these women work hard on the land. As opposed to women in the original hometowns who do not go to the land and are, for the most part, confined to their houses, they go to the farms like men. Nonetheless, they are not given similar chances to access investment loans. And, these ladies were promised six EL per day to help them out in their struggles with their children to farm the land, but none of this promised money was ever seen.

And life in Iman has become more complicated, as fertilizer and seeds have not been delivered on time for planting, the 'drinking water' is not potable because it is mixed with sewage water, and transport and medical services are poor. One of the major current problems afflicting these women in Iman is the lack of potable water in their houses, especially considering that the village is close to potable water sources. The trolley that delivers potable water to the widow sub-village, instead of coming once every three days, especially now that it is summer time, comes once every week or every ten days.

Even more important is the issue of flooding and the capillary rise in the water table, which destroys all the hopes of these women because flooding and the rising water table threaten both houses and agricultural land.

As to the issue of land payments, in the beginning, many thought that the land was a gift from the government, as a source of income for survival. Many were surprised to learn that this gift turned into installment payments over 30 years, which burdened the pockets and increased the financial pressure on these women. With time, these installments rose from 400 EL on a 12,000 EL total price for six acres of land and a house to 1,200 EL per year on a 36,000 total price for six acres of land and a house. It should also be noted that men who were provided land under the Destitute category faced the same increase in installments and prices of land and houses.

Most of the lands in Iman are unplanted due to the lack of irrigation water. Even when irrigation water was present, it was only present during the winter season. Sometimes, when water was available in the beginning of the season, it was cut off just when crops were ripening. Providing water at the ripening stage is very critical, and its lack often led to the total destruction of the crop.

Furthermore, when the land was distributed, it was not ready for planting, but many of the women who insisted on planting the land and had the resources were obliged to sell their inheritance and gold to fix the land. Fixing the land includes leveling it, fertilizing it, and building irrigation canals as well as ploughing, removing weeds and installing irrigation tunnels. The lack of job opportunities for their young sons limited these women's ability to fix their lands and continue with planting.

Some of these lands are half-planted and others are fully planted, but the price of planting makes it difficult to save 1,200 pounds per year to pay the land installments. As well, the land is infertile and vegetables (cash crop) often fail on these lands. And these women live in constant fear of flooding and capillary rise in the water table due to faulty planning in the drainage of irrigation water. This leads to the spoilage of many agricultural lands and housing in the east side of the Iman village.

As to the younger girls in the Iman village, they suffer from a lack of ability to continue schooling despite the fact that their mothers are at a more advanced educational stage compared to where these daughters stopped their education. And this tragedy is due to the fact that transport is difficult and costly, and parents are worried about the safety of these young girls. Nonetheless, Iman village is heaven compared to the Samaha village, and we now turn to Samaha:

### **In the Village of Al Samaha**

Samaha is a village of 303 widowed and divorced women. Out of the 303 houses, around 100 houses are inhabited. Despite the strong focus that women in the Samaha received in the first few months of being given land and houses, this village was forgotten and neglected to the most severe extremes. This village does not exist on the map of services as opposed to other villages in the Wadi Sa'yda project.

Not following up on the project led to the thefts of irrigation pumps and electric generators. This, in turn, led to the departure of many women and dependence on *baytar* (diesel) irrigation pumps. This brought about extra financial burdens as the *baytar* pump requires huge amounts of oil and gas. As opposed to the electric irrigation machinery, *baytar's* expenses for maintenance, oil and gas are many-fold more.

The lack of services and irrigation machinery led to the fact that many of the women in the Samaha refrained from farming their land. Some rented out the land and others sold it. Yet, some women struggled and farmed the land in the hopes of a better life and future for their children. The Samaha is the most difficult village to stay in compared to all other villages in Wadi Al Sa'yda.

The village is 70 Km away from Edfu town (both ways), and due to the difficulty in transport, it could take up to four hours to get into Edfu. The lack of transport makes it very difficult for village members to buy drinking water, visit the doctor (especially since there is no doctor in the village as opposed to the other villages in the project), buy vegetables, visit and be visited by loved ones, and market produce, as well as limiting the settlers' ability to work in Edfu. The village itself lacks shops and vegetable markets.

The government has said that providing a doctor and potable water, as well as transport, to a village requires a minimum of 5,000 people living in that village. With the 303 houses in the Samaha village, of which currently only 100 houses are inhabited, 5,000 people is an impossible requirement to meet. This also likely means that Samaha's state of exile is inescapable even if people occupied every house in the village? Is this just?

Given the fact that the entire Sa'yda settlement has benefited from the provision of food aid by meeting the World Food Program's (WFP) condition that women must have access to land, women should be provided with specific care, including access to a doctor, reliable transport, and potable water. The village was used as a showcase to fulfill the WFP requirement. And what adds more water to the soil [in English 'insult to injury'] in the Samaha village, indeed, is that the village is flooded. The drainage canal is much higher than the level of the village, which led to unbearable swarms of mosquitoes, making sleep quite difficult. This humongous fallacy in planning led to the fact that all the houses that are not currently flooded are threatened by flooding, with the result that the price of a house in the Samaha dropped to 8,000 LE, as opposed to 22,000 LE in other villages. And, it is notable that some of these women whose land is flooded or about to be flooded still visit and live in their houses. This is due to their lack of other housing options, especially since many of the women sold their property to fix their land.

### **Conclusions and Hopes**

Let the revolution heal the tragedy of Wadi Al Sa'yda and erase the negative impacts of the former regime with which these women currently live. We hope and request that attention be brought once again to the Samaha village so that justice can be realized, and people can gain their rights to water, transport, and a decent life. Those who stayed in the village should not be punished at the expense of those who sold their lands and left. Yet, those who sold, sold to people who live in and visit the village. And, those who sold, sold due to bad planning and lack of adequate services.

In both villages of the Iman and Samaha, the women and men hope to get a fair share of the loans that were offered to farmers just after the Revolution throughout Egypt. And there is an urgent need to create job opportunities for the youth in both of these villages.

And, in the Iman village there is hope for potable water entering houses, sparing people from waiting in long lines, in hot weather, fighting together, and queuing for hours, waiting for their turn to fill their jars with water.

And, in the two villages there is a demand from the Revolution to immediately find solutions to flooding and the rise in water table levels to solve the problem and avoid the drowning of more parcels of land and housing.

And, there are pressing demands for loans or financial aid to help women to plant their lands completely, especially the women who have the endurance, persistence, and labour but lack the financial resources to fix and plant the land.

Given the weak services in the Iman and the lack of services in the Samaha, we wonder what officials or the readers would do if they were to live in these villages? And, how will they endure all these burdens and deal with them?

## Appendix C: Policy Recommendations

### **Recommendations for the Land Reclamation Sector (LRS) to Enhance the Participation of Women as Landholders in the Graduate Resettlement Scheme<sup>29</sup> and Other Land Reclamation Projects**

#### **In the Sa'yda Settlement**

##### *1- Provide constant micro-credit to farmers in Say'da*

Many farmers lamented the lack of finances to reclaim bigger portions and cultivate their lands. Micro-credit with long-term repayment periods is needed to allow for reclamation of bigger portions of the land provided. Short-term microcredit for seasonal investments on the land is also needed. Currently, micro-credit is available for a limited number of farmers only and is provided once every three years. It is important to provide micro-credit on a more frequent basis for the sustainable success of the project.

##### *2- Provide women with micro-credit*

Women adopted 'men's roles' and seem to be successful in cultivating their lands. Yet, their limited access to credit was based on the stereotype that women are unable to farm their lands successfully. The most successful women were those with many sons, some of whom cultivate the land while others provide funding to the land by working from afar, for example in Sinai, or as casual labourers in nearby towns. Most recently, some women were provided with micro-credit and successfully repaid the first installment of their loans, as well as reclaimed and farmed bigger portions of their lands.

Many women were reluctant to take loans and lacked an entrepreneurial spirit. Training in entrepreneurial thinking is crucial for these women to overcome their poverty and increase their benefits from the land, as well as decreasing national poverty more generally.

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<sup>29</sup> Throughout these policy briefs, I use the title Graduate Resettlement Scheme and not Mubarak Resettlement Scheme because the name Mubarak was banned from public and official use after the recent Revolution.

***3- Provision of training in environmentally suitable cash crops and water saving techniques would be beneficial to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable agriculture***

Most farmers in Sa'yda planted traditional crops of fodder and wheat. Many farmers (both men and women) reported a lack of knowledge and markets for cash crops, such as Henna, vegetables, and sesame. While vegetables are water demanding, henna and sesame are drought and salt tolerant. Dates, cactus, olives, pomegranates, jejuba, moranga, and barley are also recommended for Sa'yda. Hence, training in these environmentally suitable crops is highly recommended. More importantly, serious efforts should be made to create markets for these crops.

The water saving techniques of sprinkler and drip irrigation were not used. Many settlers reported that Village Engineers themselves lacked the knowledge of how to operate these new irrigation techniques. Yet, water shortages are an enormous problem for the settled villages. This situation is further complicated due to the fact that more villages downstream are yet to be settled, and once they are, the water demand will increase. It is, therefore, highly recommended to encourage modern irrigation through specific loans and to encourage the above mentioned drought tolerant crops.

***4- Enhancing the role of the Local Agricultural Cooperatives (LACs) to provide agricultural advice and marketing***

The role of LACs is currently limited to the distribution of fertilizers and to settling dispute over land borders. Training village agronomists to provide extension advice and marketing support is very important and would make use of a resource that is already in place (the local Village Engineers).

***5- Return the price of land for women landholders to 11,000 EL***

The price of land for women was increased from 11,000 to 36,000 EL as a result of a ministerial decree. This led many women to mistrust the government and to refuse to pay the land payments. Furthermore, many women will not be able to pay 36,000 EL for their lands and homes due to unproductive lands and poverty. The government would live up to its

original obligations to the women and be better able to collect its money (given training and micro-credit are provided) if the price of land was restored to 11,000 EL.

***6- Provide adequate drainage to the area***

Draining excess water from the settlement is an important step for the social and environmental sustainability of the settlement. Many settlers left their lands and homes due to flooding, the price of land and homes in the settlement went down, and many lost their investments in the land and sources of livelihood due to lack of adequate drainage. Coordination with the Land Enhancement Unit in installing a drainage system could be beneficial.

***7- Train women landholders in Sa'yda, their daughters, and sons in farming techniques***

Participating in labour on the land seemed effective in gaining control over the land for mothers and in claiming inheritance rights for daughters. Training will also legitimize the role of women as farmers in the eyes of men in the local communities and beyond, which is important for inheritance matters. Furthermore, training women alongside men is recommended. This will also facilitate accepting women in new roles (Najjar et al. 2013), as farmers and members in the LACs.

Additionally, many women and their families lacked adequate knowledge in farming desert land. Training in cash crops, marketing, and farming methods that are more generally suitable to desert conditions are highly recommended to help farmers make better use of their lands.

**In the Intilaq Settlement**

***1- Provide adequate drainage to avoid the long-term threats of water-logging***

Farmers reported that the water table is rising rapidly and that some places are suffering from water-logging. The flooding of the settlement should be prevented by proper drainage. Installing a drainage system through coordination with the Land Enhancement Unit would probably be beneficial.



## ***2- Sustain the excellent training services***

One of the main reasons for the success of the settlement is the provision of rigorous training for men and women in all aspects of rural life, including food preparation, proper irrigation, veterinary training, and vegetable and fruit production, among other topics. Sustaining this training to account for local pests and changing conditions is important, especially since International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) contract in Intilaq is about to end. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to train husbands with their wives on farming practices. Many husbands felt threatened by their wives increased knowledge and forbade their wives from attending training. The involvement of husbands in training could lead to their acceptance of their wives training as well.

## ***3- Facilitate the effective participation of women landholders in LACs***

Many women members, who were few, on the board committee had limited influence in the LACs. Sensitivity training for Engineers and other male members is important to the acceptance of women in decision-making processes. In particular, women have important perspectives that represent other women and that could differ from men's perspectives. Their inclusion will promote inclusivity and comprehensive community participation in the respective villages' development. Coordination with the women units in various sectors, such as the Village Development Sector and the National Council for Women, could be very helpful.

## **Recommendations for both Settlements of Intilaq and Sa'yda**

### ***1- Participatory extension with farmers is recommended and seems to be the most effective way to find solutions tailored to farmers' needs and local conditions***

There is limited knowledge about desert farming in both settlements (especially in Sa'yda) as to what crops do best in sandy soils, how much to fertilize, how to irrigate, etc. In addition to the provision of agricultural training in desert farming, more agricultural research is needed in the local conditions of these areas. For example, typical women-raised crops, such as cactus and *karkadeh* (hibiscus), are a promising opportunity to achieve a better match

between crops grown and local conditions, as well as increasing women's economic empowerment (see for example Biermayr-Jenzano 2011).

There is also limited knowledge about drainage and irrigation techniques. Participatory research is urgently needed to solve problems of inadequate drainage and irrigation methods, the results of which will benefit not only the New Lands but also the Old Lands (United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 2010).

***2- It is strongly recommended to prolong the repayment period of loans***

Farmers in both settlements lamented the short repayment period of loans. A two year period did not suffice for investment needed to repay loans and make adequate profits. It is recommended to consult with the Egyptian Village Development Sector that employs the approach of determining repayment periods of loans according to the types of investment projects. Furthermore, there is a lagging period of 2-3 years for newly reclaimed parts of the land to start producing. This requirement period should be taken into consideration in the repayment schedule. Many farmers were not able to repay their loans, or if they did, were financially drained, because of the limited production of their newly reclaimed land, which they often reclaim in stages and not all at once, as is assumed by the LRS.

***3- Gender sensitive training is needed especially for Engineers in Sa'yda to facilitate economic and social empowerment for women through land access***

Many engineers resisted the involvement of women as landholders and farmers in the MRS. These considerations are important to eradicate poverty in Upper Egypt, especially for Women Heads of Households (WHHs). Women's adoption of farming as a livelihood will increase production of the whole settlement and help women achieve equality and increased empowerment.

***4- Initiate participatory irrigation***

The hottest point of contention between farmers and the government (including the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR)) is water distribution. Putting some responsibility on all the farmers

not only leads to equitable distribution of water but also restores trust between the government and its farmers.

Furthermore, research in Thailand revealed that participatory irrigation often leads to greater realization by farmers that water resources are finite and contributes to more efficient use of water (Kummerdpet and Sinclair 2011). This approach meshes well with the government's priority of saving water.

***5- Legalize land access for Land Squatters***

Land Squatters occupy sometimes twice the area of the settlers' lands. Yet they are outside the jurisdiction of the MWRI and MALR. Legalizing land titles for squatters (at suitable prices to this category) will place Land Squatters under the authority of the state, including the MWRI. As such, water distribution will become more effective.

***6- Land titling should not be possible only for the rich***

The prices for legalizing land titles are too high for many farmers who bought their lands informally or through land grabbing, especially in Sa'yda. It is recommended to determine the price of land legalization on a category-by-category basis. This will ensure that access to legal and secure land titling is available to all social statuses in the local rural society.

***7- Rethink the policy whereby settlers who sold half their lands are Entrepreneurs who have to pay 22,000 EL per acre instead of 1,000-3,000 EL as Beneficiaries***

These settlers would not be able to legalize their land title/access with a 22,000 EL/acre price. Furthermore, these settlers already signed their contracts according to the 11,000-36,000 EL prices.

***8- Introduce inheritance rules that challenge and eradicate injustices and discrimination against daughters and that replace those unjust rules reproduced from the Old Lands and accentuated in the new settlements***

The desert land context, which requires much labour and money for the land to 'green' and become productive, disadvantages daughters who often contribute to neither labour nor money. Daughters are given inheritance shares equivalent to the price of land before its

‘greening’ when it was purely desert. This is unjust because many daughters also help during harvesting times and when labour is short, as well as prepare lunches and complete house chores, indirectly helping their brothers and fathers in farming the land.

***9- For the future planning of resettlements, avoid creating women exclusive villages***

Women exclusive villages in both settlements were the least developed in access to consumer products, labour, transport, renters, and health services, especially in the early stages of the settlements. It is particularly recommended to integrate male settlers into the women exclusive villages in the Sa’yda settlement because this village is the least developed in access to transport, markets, and renters for land.

***10- Hire more women in higher posts for their participation in decision-making at the Land Reclamation Sector and in the local settlements***

Inclusion of women in decision-making would lead to a more responsive sector to women’s needs. On this front, coordination with the ‘Women Units’ in various sectors, such as the Egyptian Village Development Sector and the National Council for Women, would be very helpful.

***11- Adopt workers in the LACs as Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation employees***

Workers in the LACs expressed their deep concern over their insecure job situations and lack of benefits. They had hoped for permanent employment at the MALR after the Revolution. Many of these workers have passed their 40s and 50s and find it difficult, if not impossible, to work as casual labourers in other areas and/or to find new more secure jobs. They feel abandoned and had big hopes of becoming permanent employees. It is recommended these workers be adopted due to their long-term dedication and services to the LACs.

***12- Provide development projects on an on-going basis***

Projects that generate income for youth, such as the handicrafts factory in the Iman village of Sa’yda, are important not only to alleviate youth unemployment in these isolated areas but also to provide a source of income to invest in the land. The most successful women in their

land access were those with sons who had access to cash through employment and provided labour to the land. Projects need to be provided on an on-going or sustainable basis. For example, despite the success of the handicraft Iman project, the project collapsed due to the World Food Program's (WFP) departure from the area and flooding.

***13- Become involved in decision-making prior to both land reclamation and resettlement to enhance the roles of the irrigation and reclamation sectors, as well as the local governorates***

Clearly there is a lack of coordination between the concerned sectors of the MWRI, General Authority for Reconstruction Projects and Agricultural Reclamation (GARP), LRS, and local governorates. While the GARP designed the settlements for drip and sprinkler irrigation, the MWRI provided water on a 'rotational' not constant basis. This partially contributed to large scale damages in many of the new villages' housing and lands. Furthermore, basic services are provided often after resettlement and not before. This led many settlers to eventually leave their settlements to return to the Old Lands. The LRS has extensive experience in executing resettlement projects and can foresee problems and help avoid socially and economically expensive problems by participating in the planning processes ahead of time. For the project to become more successful and to benefit from past experience, it is highly recommended that the LRS advises and coordinates with the involved sectors before both the reclamation of the land and the settlement of the beneficiaries.

The formation of a unit or committee comprised of involved organizations in settlement projects is highly recommended. This committee or unit needs to evaluate previous projects to learn from previous successes and avoid past mistakes. Equally important is the need for this unit to oversee the timely provision of basic services and micro-credit (in some instances ruminant micro-credit was provided before the lands in the settlement started producing), as well as adequate provision of drainage, training, irrigation, and marketing.

## **Recommendations for the Beheira and Aswan Governorates to Enhance the Participation of Women as Landholders in the Graduate Resettlement Scheme and Other Land Reclamation Projects**

### **In both Settlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq**

#### ***1-Provide when needed and enhance services related to potable water, proper schooling, security, and transportation***

Adequate and timely provision of basic services cannot be adequately emphasized. During my six-month stay, all that the settlers wanted to talk about was lamenting the inadequate provision of basic services for their well-being. Many settlers reported death cases caused by the lack of health services and the remoteness of the areas where health care is sought.

Most of the settlers bought their potable water from the Old Lands, which strained their limited financial resources. Most settlers initially, however, when buying potable water was still not an option, opted for drinking salty, untreated, and polluted water. Currently, the few who could not afford buying potable water still drink improperly treated water. Many of the settlers currently suffer from kidney ailments due to drinking this water.

Also many settlers complained about the lack of proper schooling. Few sons and fewer daughters are able to get admission to universities due to low GPAs. Many girls are prohibited from being enrolled in schooling outside the local settlements. This meant that most girls stopped their education upon the completion of elementary school. Furthermore, theft of equipment and machinery is widespread and in addition to financial losses incurred, which cannot be compensated for by the settlers due to their poverty, a general sense of insecurity prevails.

It is widely known that poverty eradication and social justice are strongly linked to education and access to basic services. The lack of proper education and services perpetuates poverty and inequality.

***2-The current approach of using population count/threshold for services' provision is unfair and impedes the development of a settlement area***

Officials in the Governorate Local Councils reported that there has to be a certain number of beneficiaries in an area for services to be provided by the governorate. They reported that the lack of services in villages is attributed to their small populations. If the settlement, however, is to attract more people and sustain the current population, basic services should be available. The lack of services, including health care, potable water, security (or police stations), and proper schooling, is the single main deterrent for settling in the New Lands and in many cases results in people leaving the settlement all together on an increasing basis.

## **Recommendations for the World Food Program (WFP) to Enhance the Participation of Women as Landholders in the Graduate Resettlement Scheme and Other Land Reclamation Projects**

### **In the Settlement of Sa'yda**

#### ***1-Provide gender sensitive training for engineers and officials to facilitate the economic and social empowerment of women through their land access***

Many engineers and officials resisted the involvement of women as farmers and members in LACs. Training is needed for officials to accept and facilitate the involvement of women in public life and in farming. These considerations are important to eradicate the poverty of WHHs in Upper Egypt.

#### ***2-Provide training to women board members in agricultural cooperatives about their roles and responsibilities***

Women in the position of board members in the LACs lacked an understanding about their roles and responsibilities. This was particularly notable in the 'Widow Village' of the Samaha whereby the members were appointed, not elected, seldom met to discuss the cooperative's issues, and the president signed on blank cheques for the use of the cooperative's Engineer. It is important to train the member women about their roles and responsibilities.

#### ***3- Provide training to women landholders and their families in farming their lands***

Lack of knowledge in farming desert land was a main obstacle to benefitting from the land and to farming it all together. Many farmers do not provide adequate fertilization to their lands. Also, and perhaps more importantly, many reported not planting more profitable crops due to their lack of knowledge. It would be very important to provide training for women and their families in farming their lands, new profitable crops, and on how to find markets for these crops. Currently, the most prominent market is for wheat through the local agricultural banks and mills. Training could enhance and, in many cases, generate profits from the land.



***4-Provide a constant supply of micro-credit or the means to generate it***

Micro-credit was sporadic and available to few. Many women farmed less than half their lands due to their lack of finances to invest in the land. A constant supply of micro-credit is crucial for women to finance investments on their lands on an-ongoing basis. Furthermore, before the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit departure from the Sa'yda settlement, it would have been beneficial to effectively train board members in the LACs and other local officials on how to attract investments into the villages, such as through contract farming.

**In both Settlements of Intilaq and Sa'yda**

***1-Better coordination with the MALR for proper timing of food aid***

In some areas, food aid was provided many years before the people had actually resettled. This is problematic since the purpose of the food aid is to sustain and encourage people to stay in the New Lands until their lands start producing.

***2-Better monitoring and evaluation of government policies promised to the WFP***

Joint titles for women in both settlements were canceled within a year of acquiring food aid approval in the local settlements. Cultural practices, such as polygamy, encouraged officials (both at the local and national levels) to cancel joint titles, though many husbands (see point 3 below) behaved as if the joint titles never existed in the first place.

Second, the quota imposed by the WFP-Assisted Projects Unit for the involvement of women in LACs in the Sa'yda settlement was also canceled when the WFP executive body left the area. This was largely facilitated by 1- lack of involved women's understanding about their roles and responsibilities as board members in LACs, and 2- resistance by the cooperatives' Village Engineers and male members to take women seriously as colleagues.

***3-Introduce joint-titles that use win-win policies and act as couples' titles rather than limiting women to only "20% of their husbands' lands"***

Women with joint titles did not claim their land rights in fear of provoking their husbands' anger. Husbands refused to give their wives 20% of their land and kept all the land to themselves. In addition to husbands, officials felt that joint titles interfered with a man's right

to take more than one wife. Both husbands and officials gave the example of losing the land if one was to take more than one wife. Joint titles would have been far more acceptable for both local men and officials alike if these were not introduced as “part of husbands’ lands” and instead framed as joint titles for spouses (both men and women) who are willing to relocate into the New Lands.

Research in India and the Boustan settlement of Egypt revealed that married individuals are far more likely to set down roots into a new area (Datta 2006, Ghanam 1990). To encourage both spouses to relocate, it is important to provide each of them with land rights.

Furthermore, in both settlements many spouses left their partners who accessed land. They found it difficult to live away from their families and in the settlements’ harsh conditions. Providing each of the spouses with land title could become an incentive for them to stay together and establish families in the local settlements. To encourage joint titles, it is important to get involved before, not after, land distribution. Timely coordination with the Land Reclamation Sector, who is responsible for land distribution, is highly recommended.

#### ***4-Encourage bequeathing property to daughters***

Providing land access to women is important but consideration for bequeathing land to daughters strengthens the sustainability of the land access for women project and addresses the root causes of marginalization in land rights for women in Egypt. Furthermore, the WFP also works in the Old Lands where access to property through land distribution is not an option. Bequeathing projects, such as ‘food for bequeathing property to daughters’, could play a crucial role in empowering women and increasing their security against domestic violence, divorce, and abandonment.

#### ***5-Avoid the creation of women exclusive villages***

Most women who gained access to land were resettled into women exclusive villages, most notably in the ‘Widow Villages’ of Upper Egypt (three villages) and the women exclusive Graduate villages in Intilaq. The WFP-Assisted Projects Unit played a major role in settling women in women exclusive villages. In both settlements, the women in the women exclusive villages had a harder time finding labour and renters for their land. These villages were the slowest to develop and least developed and were targets of theft and malicious gossip.

## ***6- Raise awareness for landholders (women and men) about their land rights***

It is important to raise landholders' awareness of property rights to both provide landholders with skills that could increase their security for land access and increase the accountability of the Egyptian state. The need to raise awareness related to property rights became clear during fieldwork as many landholders were not keen on gaining a title deed to their lands. Many of the settlers in Sa'yda, for example, felt that they could resist payment of installments collectively, and by doing so, may not gain access to secure tenure. In Intilaq also, settlers who had paid their land mortgages halfway were not keen on gaining the Interim Land Ownership Contract, although no expenses are incurred by asking for this contract. These considerations are important as one million farmers lost their access to land in 1997 although these farmers thought they had had secure access to the lands they had farmed for four decades. Along the same lines, women who lost their joint title landholder status did not mobilize or take individual action against this injustice to regain their land rights.

Also, the women who were given land at an initial price of 11,000 EL later discovered that the price had inexplicably increased to 36,000 EL, but they could reverse this price increase through the court system. In a similar case, some of the Entrepreneurs reversed a land price change to what it had originally been through a 'retroactive effect'<sup>30</sup>. Raising legal awareness for women, in particular, is important. Women landholders could collectively hire lawyers for their case for free through the National Council for Women, which has branches in main cities all over Egypt.

### **In the Settlement of Intilaq**

#### ***1- Train women board members in LACs to enhance their roles***

The needs of female farmers differ from those of male farmers. Women members in board committees lamented their marginalization from decision-making in their LACs. Their ideas were often dismissed. For comprehensive rural development, the women's voices have to be

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<sup>30</sup> 'Retroactive effect' describes a legal situation whereby a certain law is ineffective for those who carried out the respective act before the law came into effect.

heard and represented in decision-making. Women's training in making their voices heard is crucial.

***2- Train Village Engineers and male board members in LACs to accept difference, particularly women's opinions***

The marginalization of women in LACs (in terms of low representation and level of participation) was mostly due to Village Engineers and male members' attitudes. These men's involvement in enhancing women's participation in public life cannot be adequately emphasized.

## **Recommendations for the Noubariya Research and Training Station to Enhance the Participation of Women as Landholders in the Graduate Resettlement Scheme and Other Land Reclamation Projects**

### **In the Settlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq**

#### ***1- Adopt ongoing, participatory agricultural research that is responsive to local farmers' needs and local conditions***

There is limited knowledge about desert farming in both settlements (especially in Sa'yda), what crops do best in salty soils and which can tolerate drought, how much to fertilize, how to irrigate, etc. In addition to the provision of training, more research is needed in the local conditions of these areas. It is crucial to conduct soil and water tests to understand the biophysical characteristics of the local agricultural resources and promote the adoption of, as well as research about, matching crops and farming practices.

It seemed quite clear that the lands in Sa'yda are burdened with adverse effects related to salt accumulation due to the lack of adequate washing; high evaporation and evapo-transpiration rates, especially during summer times; water-logging; and use of drainage water for irrigation. To overcome these circumstances, Dr. Issam Bashour (pers. comm. 2010) uses a successful approach, practising a crop rotation of barley and alfalfa, for cultivating crops in the desert environment of East Owainat (an area near Sa'yda). Barley is used because it is resistant to salts followed by alfalfa, a leguminous crop with deep roots. Owing to its deep roots, the alfalfa crop pushes the salts downwards. When the barley that has shallower roots is cultivated, salts stay lower than the root zone of barley thereby reducing the impacts of salt accumulation.

It is also important to first initiate a gender- and age-segregated participatory rural appraisal to understand the local problems and needs of farmers, which often differ by age and gender. Participatory research can, then, help solve these problems. It is important to involve all family members who farm the land in research and extension.

Many husbands of women landholders in Lower Egypt were made to feel vulnerable by their wives' increased knowledge and threatened their wives with divorce. Husbands also

refrained from working their wives' lands. It would be important to also provide extension advice to the husbands to reduce and avoid spousal conflict.

Women's crops, such as cactus and *karkadeh*, are a promising opportunity to achieve a better match between crops grown and local conditions, as well as women's economic empowerment. Building on plants that do well in the desert or are desert plants, such as dates and cactus, are enormous opportunities for profitable farming of desert lands, provided there are markets in place and, if not, markets need to be created for those crops. Jojoba, mint, olives, moringa, and henna are also examples of cash crops that do well in the desert. All these crops were not cultivated by farmers and many opted for water-consuming and unprofitable crops.

Even the entrepreneurs did not have adequate knowledge to farm desert lands. Therefore, the importance of agricultural research cannot be adequately emphasized. When I held a policy seminar, an entrepreneur suggested the creation of agricultural manuals. These manuals, he suggested, should be collectively assembled by all desert-related research institutes and outline what grows where and under what conditions of water and land management techniques.

***2- Train Village Engineers to provide informed agricultural extension advice for farmers, including how these methods and information would differ according to gender***

Village Engineers, particularly in Sa'yda, had limited knowledge of desert farming. In both settlements, the Village Engineers' roles were limited to fertilizer distribution and conflict resolution about borders. Training Village Engineers in providing agricultural extension advice is crucial for the success of the settlement and for the Village Engineers to become better equipped in fulfilling their jobs. Village Engineers' training should be of two broad types: 1- training in how to deliver and simplify information using non technical terms and 2- training in desert farming, which differs from Old Lands' agriculture in the type of crops grown, as well as fertilization rates and irrigation techniques. The former training should eventually relate to an ongoing participatory research program collaboratively conducted by the Noubariya Research and Training Center, Village Engineers, and local farmers. Using Village Engineers as agricultural extension agents is cost effective and does not require hiring new personnel to deliver much needed agricultural extension advice. Village

Engineers can capably provide agricultural extension advice as they have university training in agricultural practices and interact with settlers on a daily basis. Many often live in the local villages.

***3- Adopt a more gender friendly, bottom-up, and rigorous, hands-on approach to training and dealing with farmers***

Five problematic issues stemmed from observing training sessions and interacting with the beneficiaries, especially women. One, many Village Engineers and professors used fear in delivering their messages, particularly threatening to send dissenters to jail. Many women reported refraining from being involved as treasurers in local committees due to ‘training Doctors’ warning them of being taken to jail in case of a mistake, even if as small a sum as one EL went missing. Similarly, many Village Engineers scared women from taking loans by telling them that they would be put in jail if they did not repay their loans on time. While this may be true, people who do not repay their loans on time are very rarely put in jail; rather interests would accumulate.

Two, having attended many of the training sessions held at the LACs, I found that a few were top-down. It would be more useful and less intimidating for women involved in training if a discussion-based approach is used rather than a lecturing approach.

Three, some reported not understanding the terminology used by training officials. Women, especially elderly women, in Upper Egypt, have limited to no schooling. More user friendly/locally relevant terminology should be used to make training for women more effective in Upper Egypt.

Four, some training sessions were indoors. Perhaps on-site training would be more useful and participatory whereby farmers will benefit more and ask more questions about their own problems in a real setting than would the case be with indoor training.

Five, in the Sa’yda settlement some training officials were banned from interacting with women after a certain hour because ‘these women were alone’. Few training officials reported not being able to accomplish their jobs. Adopting professional attitudes is important to help women access training services and facilitate the change in discriminatory cultural

beliefs. Perhaps some extension agents and ‘Training Doctors’ need to be women to deal with such sensitive cultures and to ensure the delivery of agricultural extension services to women farmers.

### **In the Sa’yda Settlement**

#### ***1- Provide training in marketing and “Farming As A Business” approach to Village Engineers and farmers***

Poor farmers in Sa’yda, including women farmers, are focused on wheat production because the only available markets are the agricultural banks, which buy wheat from farmers. Farmers grow wheat for home consumption first and the surplus is sold to the banks. Wheat requires large amounts of water, oil, gas, and fertilizer. Compared to other cash crops, wheat generates little money. Instead of focusing on wheat, farmers can invest in more profitable and environmentally suitable crops. Farmers need to be trained in making their farming a more profitable business, for example buying wheat from the market instead of the current focus on cultivating it. Due to lack of irrigation water, sometimes farmers in Sa’yda do not harvest their wheat, especially in times of drought (e.g., year of 2009). Furthermore, because wheat needs a lot of water, farmers are also highly dependent on oil and gas for operating water pumps. The gas shortage crisis in Egypt in 2013 could lead to poor harvests in wheat for farmers in Sa’yda. More profitable and drought tolerant types of farming, with proper market outlets, are needed.

#### ***2- Provide training in agricultural techniques in gender-mixed groups and follow up visits to women landholders and their daughters, as well as sons***

Gaining skills often has wider social implications. Participating in labour on the land seemed effective in gaining control over the land for mothers and in claiming inheritance rights for daughters. Training women in farming techniques could legitimize the role of women as farmers in the eyes of men in the local communities of Sa’yda and beyond in Upper Egypt, especially if this training was in mixed-gender groups (Najjar et al. 2013). Many sons forbade their mothers from farming their lands. Along the same lines, many Village Engineers resisted the phenomenon of women farming their lands and ignored their participation in the LACs. Training mothers and daughters in formal programs, especially



alongside men, will facilitate accepting women as farmers, legitimate inheritors, as well as members in the LACs.

### ***3- Promote Sheeh as a pest repellent for scorpions and the horned viper***

It is recommended that *sheeh* be planted around the boundaries of farms to protect farmers from harmful desert pests, particularly scorpions and the horned viper. The *sheeh* is known to tolerate desert conditions and can be fed to cattle. It has a strong smell known to repel scorpions and snakes. *Sheeh* can also be used for medicinal purposes, such as for the treatment of intestinal worms.

### ***4- Provide training in modern irrigation techniques and follow up visits to both Village Engineers and local farmers***

Better water management is the key to sustainable food production in dry lands. The training provided to farmers and engineers was inadequate in Sa'yda, despite the fact that exchange visits were carried out with farmers in Lower Egypt who were using drip and sprinkler irrigation. Farmers failed to adopt modern irrigation techniques. Follow up visits, technical support, and continuous onsite training in cleaning and maintaining the irrigation machinery is important.

## **In the Intilaq Settlement**

### ***1-Sustain the excellent training services that need to be responsive to local changing conditions (such as pests and climate change)***

One of the main reasons for the success of the Intilaq settlement is the provision of rigorous training for men and women in all aspects of rural life, including food preparation, proper irrigation, veterinary training, and vegetable and fruit production, among others. Sustaining this training to suit the local pests and changing conditions (such as climate change) is important, especially since IFAD's contract in Intilaq is about to end.

## **Recommendation for the General Authority for Reconstruction Projects and Agricultural Reclamation (GARP) to Enhance the Participation of Women as Landholders in the Graduate Resettlement Scheme and Other Land Reclamation Projects**

### **In both Settlements of Sa'yda and Intilaq**

#### ***1- Settlements earmarked for poor settlers should be located close to towns***

The current spatial planning whereby poor settlers are located at the end of the irrigation line is very expensive in terms of connecting these settlers to potable water, building new schools, and providing other basic services. Land that is closer to towns was left to be sold to rich entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs, however, have access to vehicles and heavy machinery. As such, if located at the end of the water canals, they can access basic services and irrigation water far more easily than poor settlers, and this suggests that entrepreneurs should be at the end of the irrigation line. Furthermore, placing poor settlers next to towns facilitates their access to off-farm employment in towns. The resulting income can be used in cultivating the distributed land, which is largely left fallow in Sa'yda due to lack of finances. At best, settlers are only able to farm half their lands.

#### ***2- Water should be distributed in underground canals***

The problem of water theft is omnipresent in most of the MRS settlements. The results often mean that the poor settlers (which are at the end of the irrigation canals) suffer from water shortages. Underground water pipes are recommended for protecting and distributing adequate quantities of water to farmers.

#### ***3- In the long-term, consider replacing diesel pumps with electrical pumps and distribute individual electric pumps in new desert farming resettlement projects***

Irrigating with the current diesel pumps has negative impacts on the soil, groundwater, and air (Kamel and Dahl 2005), and the operating costs of diesel pumps are tens times more expensive than the operating costs of electric pumps. Sa'yda witnessed pioneering attempts to use electric pumps. Settlers, however, did not like sharing pumps due to resulting inequalities in water access. Many, as a result, removed the collective pumps and used individual pumps, which were only available in diesel form. It is highly recommended that

individual electric water pumps be distributed to reduce the economic and environmental costs of diesel pumps. Farmers reported that their high reliance on diesel also left them vulnerable to crop loss or yield reduction during fuel shortages, which were frequent in S'ayda even before the Revolution.

## Appendix D: Supplementary Tables

**Table 15 List of participant officials.**

<b>Officials</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Number and Location</b>
Village Engineers, LACs (18)	Answerable to the LDU in each settlement	9 in Sa'yda 9 in Intilaq
Heads of Settlement, LDU (5)	Answerable to the LRS in Cairo, initially located in Noubariya citry	3 in Sa'yda 2 in Intilaq
Legal Advisors, LDU (2)	Answerable to the LDU Head in the respective settlement	1 in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Heads of Settlers' Affairs, LDU (2)	Answerable to LDU Head in the respective settlement	1 in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Head of Marketing, LDU (1)	Answerable to the LDU Head in the respective settlement	Position was not present in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Heads of Training Affairs, LDU (2)	Answerable to the LDU Head in the respective settlement	1 in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Vice Heads of Settlement, LDU (2)	Answerable to the LDU Head in the respective settlement	1 in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Heads of Agricultural Banks (4)	At the Central Bank of Edfu answerable to the headquarters in Cairo, MALR At the bank of Naguib Mahfouz answerable to the headquarters in Cairo, MALR	3 in Sa'yda 1 in Intilaq
Training and Research Professors (6)	Answerable to the MRS training headquarters in Noubariya	4 in Sa'yda 2 in Intilaq

Head of Training and Agricultural Affairs*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Noubariya
Head of the Agriculture Directorate in Aswan (Old Lands)	Answerable to the respective Governor and MALR	1 in Sa'yda
Head of the Agricultural Cooperatives in Aswan (Old Lands)	Answerable to the Head of the Agriculture Directorate in Aswan.	1 in Sa'yda
Legal Advisor, Agriculture Directorate in Aswan	Answerable to the Head of the Agriculture Directorate in Aswan	2 in Sa'yda
Lawyer, the National Council for Women in Aswan	Answerable to the National Council for Women Headquarters in Cairo	1 in Sa'yda
WFP Projects Head*	Answerable to WFP itself	1 in Cairo
WFP-Assisted Projects Unit Coordinator*	Answerable to the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation and the WFP Great Degree of Autonomy	1 in Cairo
Vice WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator*	Answerable to the Coordinator	1 in Cairo
Agricultural Development Coordinator, WFP-Assisted Projects Unit	Answerable to the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator	3 in Cairo
Micro-credit Coordinator, WFP-Assisted Projects Unit	Answerable to the WFP-Assisted Projects Coordinator	2 in Cairo
Heads of the LRS*	Answerable to the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation	3 in Cairo, changed twice after the Revolution
Vice Head of the LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo
Head of Settlers' Affairs, LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo

Head of Horizontal Expansion, LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo
Head of Legal Affairs, LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo
Head of Development Affairs, LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo
Agricultural Advisor to the LRS*	Answerable to the Head of the LRS	1 in Cairo
Members of the Legalizing Committee*	One economist and three judges, answerable to the MALR, particularly the GARPAP	4 in Cairo and in Sa'yda
Field Researchers, Ministry of Cooperation	Answerable to the Ministry of Cooperation	3 in Sa'yda
Head of the Land Enhancement Unit*	Answerable to the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation	1 in Cairo
Head of the Decision Support Division*, Land Enhancement Unit	Answerable to the Head of the Land Enhancement Unit	1 in Cairo
Social Welfare Officer	Answerable to the governor of Aswan	1 in town of Edfu, Upper Egypt
Government Insurance Officer	Answerable to the Governor of Aswan	1 in town of Edfu, Upper Egypt
Unit of Horizontal Expansion *	Answerable to the MWRI	1 Engineer in Cairo
Unit of Water Distribution *	Answerable to the MWRI	1 Engineer in Cairo

\* Officials who worked at the policy level. The remaining officials mostly worked at the local level.

**Table 16 Informal and formal settlers, associated benefits and conditions to their land access.**

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Conditions</b>
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Beneficiaries, <i>Muntafi'een</i> and Evicted Tenants, <i>Motadarireen</i> (formal)</b>	<p>Access to 6 acres and a house in a nearby village</p> <p>Money for the first cultivation</p> <p>Access to food aid, training, and Credit from the LACs</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p> <p>Representation on local committees (most notably the LACs)</p>	<p>Both farmers obtained 6 acres of land and had to pay 1000-1200 EL over a 30-year period. After 15 years, farmers obtain an intermediary land contract. After 30 years of annual payments, they would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Evicted Tenants, <i>Motadarireen</i> (formal)</b>	<p>Access to 2.5 acres and a house in a nearby village</p> <p>Food aid for four years</p> <p>Money provided for the first cultivation</p> <p>Access to training and credit from the Bank of Agriculture</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p> <p>Representation on local committees (most notably the LACs)</p>	<p>Tenant farmers obtained 2.5 acres of land. They had to pay land installments over a 30 year period. After 15 years, Evicted Tenants obtain an intermediary land contract. After 30 years of annual payments, Tenants would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Informal Buyers (informal)</b>	<p>Bought land in the black market at much lower prices from original settlers. The price of the land is determined by its ability to 'green', as some were too saline to green, and location with respect to the water source, and type of irrigation (some lands did not require a water pump and were</p>	<p>Paid usually once to original settlers who agreed to sell their lands</p> <p>In 2010 Informal Buyers became eligible to legalizing their land title by paying 22,000 EL per feddan over 10 years to GARPAR. After 10 years of annual payments, they would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>

		<p>irrigated by gravity, <i>ray raha</i>)</p> <p>Can access fertilizer through the original settlers</p> <p>But cannot vote or run for positions in the LACs</p>	
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Informal buyers (informal)</b>	<p>Bought their lands from Bedouins who in turn occupied state lands</p>	<p>Registered their lands years before registration became possible in Upper Egypt</p> <p>The price of land registration changed over time. In 2010 it was 22,000 per feddan over 10 years. After 10 years of annual payments, they would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Private investors, entrepreneurs, or <i>Mostathmireen</i> (both formal and informal)</b>	<p>Mostly investors working in the Arab gulf, originally in the Land Buyers category or bought land from the GARPAR</p> <p>Entitled to slightly subsidized fertilizer from the LACs</p>	<p>Some entrepreneurs pay more than Graduates, Tenant Farmers, and Beneficiaries for their lands while others pay less. Price of land for entrepreneurs was 22,000 per acre in 2010, in installments over 10 years</p>
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Private investors, entrepreneurs, or <i>Mostathmireen</i> (both formal and Informal )</b>	<p>Formal Entrepreneurs in Lower Egypt are either local or from the Arab Gulf. Some bought land which was originally state farms; others bought newly reclaimed land</p> <p>Informal entrepreneurs could be settlers themselves or other local Egyptians who bought land from original settlers but have to buy it again from the government to legalize their land title</p>	<p>Some entrepreneurs pay more than Graduates, Tenant Farmers, and Beneficiaries for their lands while others pay less. Some entrepreneurs who bought land from original settlers or closer to cities and at the beginning of water canals paid 22,000 per acre over a 10-year period in 2010. Prior to that the price of land for entrepreneurs was less. After 10 years of annual payments, they would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>
<b>Sa'yda</b>	<b>Land Occupiers (informal)</b>	<p>Official settlers or farmers from nearby towns</p> <p>Subject to constant crop removal and fines by three</p>	<p>Some are entrepreneurs (Egyptians working in the Gulf) who registered their lands in 2010. Others are too poor to register their lands at the very</p>



		authorities the GARPAP, MWRI, and Governorate Local Councils	high prices set by the government that only the rich can afford
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Land Occupiers (informal)</b>	Official settlers or farmers from nearby towns, and nomads	Land Occupiers can register their land by paying relevant prices over a decade or so, after which they would obtain a title deed/ownership contract
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Women Heads of Households (formal, but not a legislated category)</b>	<p>Heads of Households</p> <p>Access to 6 acres and a house in a nearby village</p> <p>Money provided for the first cultivation</p> <p>Access to food aid, training, and credit from the LACs</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p> <p>Representation on local committees (most notably the LACs)</p>	<p>Had a special (strong and personal) relation with the WFP Assisted Projects Coordinator</p> <p>WLs had to pay land 1000-12000 EL installments over a 30-year period. After 15 years, WL would obtain an intermediary land contract. After 30 years of annual payments, WL would obtain a title deed/ownership contract</p>
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Graduates (formal)</b>	<p>Access to 6 acres and a house in a nearby village</p> <p>Money provided for the first cultivation</p> <p>Access to food aid, training, and credit from the LACs</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p> <p>Representation on local committees (most notably the LACs)</p>	Graduates had to pay 400 EL land installments over a 30-year period. After 15 years, Graduates would obtain an intermediary land contract. After 30 years of annual payments, Graduates would obtain a title deed/ownership contract
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Graduates (formal)</b>	<p>Access to 5 acres and a house in a nearby village</p> <p>Money provided for the first cultivation</p>	Graduates had to pay 400 EL land installments over a 30-year period. After 15 years, Graduates would obtain an intermediary land contract. After 30 years of annual payments, Graduates

		<p>Access to training, food aid, and credit from the LACs</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p> <p>Representation on local committees (most notably the LACs)</p>	would obtain a title deed/ownership contract
<b>Upper</b>	<b>Land distributed by "a governor's decision" (formal but not legislated category)</b>	<p>Public land given on the basis of special circumstances such as settling a blood feud or to stop environmental degradation incurred by a group called brick makers, <i>al fakhraniyeen</i>. Giving this group land was conditional on stopping brick-making (which pollutes the environment and depletes fertile soils) and farming the distributed land instead</p>	N/A*
<b>Lower</b>	<b>Auctioned Land given to officials working in the LDU and their friends (formal but not a legislated category)</b>	<p>Unsettled, vacant land (sometimes land deemed unsuitable for farming due to rocky outcrops)</p> <p>Size of the land varies</p> <p>Slightly subsidized fertilizers from the LACs</p>	In private auctions provided mostly to friends and family members of officials (especially wives)

\*N/A There is a lack of sufficient data to draw conclusions from.

## Appendix E: Ethics Form



### Office of Research Ethics

The University of Western Ontario  
 Room 4180 Support Services Building, London, ON, Canada N6A 5C1  
 Telephone: (519) 661-3036 Fax: (519) 850-2466 Email: ethics@uwo.ca  
 Website: www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

### Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. D. Jorgensen

**Review Number:** 17316S

**Review Date:** August 06, 2010

**Review Level:** Full Board

**Approved Local # of Participants:** 200

**Protocol Title:** Women and access to land in Egypt's new lands

**Department and Institution:** Anthropology, University of Western Ontario

**Sponsor:** UWO

**Ethics Approval Date:** August 27, 2010

**Expiry Date:** August 31, 2011

**Documents Reviewed and Approved:** UWO Protocol, Letter of Information (Verbal Script).

#### Documents Received for Information:

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the NMREB:

- changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
- new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

Chair of NMREB: Dr. Riley Hinson  
 FDA Ref. #: IRB 0000941

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Janice Sutherland (jsuther@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Wambolt (ewambolt@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Denise Grafton (dgrafton@uwo.ca)

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

cc: ORE File

## Curriculum Vitae

- Name:** Dina Najjar
- Post-secondary Education and Degrees**
- University of Western Ontario (Western)  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2008-2013 PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology  
Specialization: Egypt, Public Policy, Land Rights, Inheritance, Gender, Desert Farming, Egyptian Revolution of January 25, State Planning, Informal Strategies, Political Ecology
- The University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
2005-2008 Master of Natural Resources Management  
Specialization: Biodiversity Conservation, Social and Ecological Aspects of Natural Resource Management, Gender, Transformative Learning, Farmer Field Schools, Drylands, Taita Hills, Kenya, Policy Recommendations
- Niagara College  
St. Catherine, Ontario, Canada  
2003-2004 Post-Graduate Certificate in Ecosystem Restoration  
Specialization: Applied Geomatics, River Corridor Restoration, Fauna and Flora Identification, Electro-fishing
- American University of Beirut (AUB)  
Beirut, Lebanon  
1999-2003 Bachelor of Science in Agriculture  
1999-2003 Diploma of Ingenieur Agricole  
Specialization: Soil Fertility, Integrated Crop Protection and Production, Ecosystem Management, Agricultural Extension
- External Research Grants:**
- International Development Research Center (IDRC) Doctoral Award, IDRC  
2011-2013
- Middle East Research Competition, Ford Foundation  
2010-2011
- Internal Research Grants and Fellowships:**
- Africa Institute Student Mobility Fund  
2012
- Western Graduate Thesis Research Awards  
2010, 2011, 2012

Regna Darnell Fieldwork Awards  
2010, 2011

Graduate Alumni Scholarship  
2009

Faculty of Social Science Dean's Scholarship  
2008

Western Graduate Research Scholarship  
2008-2012

**Selected Work  
Experience:**

**Researcher**, Fieldwork in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria for Integrating Science into Policy Making  
Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, SciDev.Net  
London, UK  
October 2013-November 2013

**Researcher**, Fieldwork with the Lebanese Diaspora in Southwestern Ontario for an IDRC-Funded Project, entitled "Home Politics Abroad"  
Institute for Migration Studies, Lebanese American University  
Beirut, Lebanon  
2012-Present

**Research Associate**, Policy Analysis and Recommendations  
Land Reclamation Sector, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR)  
Cairo, Egypt  
2010-2013

**Research Associate**, Policy Analysis and Recommendations  
Noubariya Research and Training Station, MALR  
Noubariya, Egypt  
2010-2013

**Research Associate**, Policy Analysis and Recommendations  
WFP-Assisted Projects Unit, MALR  
Cairo, Egypt  
2010-2013

**Teaching Assistant**, Mentoring, Grading, and Facilitating Discussions  
Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario  
Fall 2011-Winter 2012: Concepts of Society and Culture  
Winter 2010: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology  
Fall 2009: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology  
Winter 2009: Cultures of the Pacific  
Fall 2008: Indigenous People, Globalization, and the Environment

**Instructor**, Co-taught Introduction to Crops and Soils  
Department of Soil Sciences, University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Canada  
Winter 2006/Winter 2007

**Researcher**, Grassroots Empowerment Strategies  
Boreal Forest Network, Winnipeg, Canada  
Winter 2005

**Research Assistant**, Climate Change in the Prairies  
Shay Labs for Ethnobotany and Paleobotany, Department of  
Anthropology, University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Canada  
Fall 2005

**Ecosystem Restoration Specialist**, Black Water Creek Headwaters  
Project, Friends of the Fort Erie Creeks  
Fort Erie, Canada  
Summer 2004

#### **Publications:**

Najjar, D., Spaling, H., and Sinclair, A.J. (2013). Learning about sustainability and gender through Farmer Field Schools in the Taita Hills, Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(1): 466-475.

Najjar, D. (2010). Review of Global Institutions: Global Food and Agricultural Institutions. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 31(1-2): 513-515.

Najjar, D. (2008). Learning through Farmer Field Schools: A Case Study of the Taita Hills, Kenya. Master of Natural Resources Management thesis, Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba.

#### **Selected Professional Reports:**

Najjar, D. (April 2013). Technical Report for Research Conducted about Women and Access to Land in Egypt's New Lands. Report presented to the International Development Research Center.

Najjar, D. (November 2011). Major Findings Report on Women and Access to Land in Egypt's New Lands. Comprehensive research report presented to the Middle East Research Competition Program, Ford Foundation.

Najjar, D. (March 2011). Interim Fieldwork Report on Women and Access to Land in Egypt's New Lands. Report presented to the Middle East Research Competition Program, Ford Foundation.

Najjar, D. (May 2005). An Overview of Empowerment Strategies for Grassroot Groups: Towards Participatory Forest Management. Report prepared for the Boreal Forest Network, Winnipeg, Canada.

Najjar, D. (August 2004). The Black Water Creek Headwaters Project, Summer Works of 2004. Report prepared for the Friends of the Fort Erie Creeks, Fort Erie, Canada.

**Selected Conference and Scholarly Presentations:**

Najjar, D. (2013). ‘Greening the Desert’ and Protecting Daughters from ‘Dark Days’: Inheritance Practices in Egypt’s Mubarak Resettlement Scheme. Paper abstract accepted for presenting at the 112th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, forthcoming in November 20-24, Chicago, USA.

Sinclair, A. J., Najjar, D., and Spaling, H. (2013). From Technical Transfer to Farmer Field Schools: The Case of the Taita Hills, Kenya. Paper presented at the Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden, April 17.

Najjar, D. (2013). Expertise, Unfulfilled Promises, Rumours, and Resistance: Women Landholders and their Relationship to the Egyptian State in the ‘Last Lands God Created’. Paper presented at the Women Studies and Feminist Research Graduate Students’ Seminars, London, Ontario, March 21.

Najjar, D. (2013). Women’s Experiences with Land Access in Egypt’s Mubarak Resettlement Scheme. Paper presented at the Institute of Women Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon, February 26.

Najjar, D. and Bezner Kerr, R. (2013). “We are men on the land, but we stay women in our homes”: Women, Power, and Land Dynamics in Egypt’s Desert Lands. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gender and Land Governance Conference, Utrecht, Netherlands, January 14.

Najjar, D. (2012). Factors Affecting Women’s Access to Land in Egypt’s Mubarak Resettlement Scheme and Land Reclamation Projects Incurred by the Revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development, Waterloo, Canada, May 28.

Najjar, D. (2012). Dealing with the Unexpected: Revolution amidst Fieldwork on Women and Land Rights in Egypt’s New Lands. Paper presented at Knotty Encounters: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, Toronto, Canada, March 3.

Najjar, D. (2010). Farming Desert Land: Social and Environmental Sustainability in Egypt’s Mubarak Resettlement Scheme. Paper presented at the 7th Earth Day Colloquium, London, Canada, April 23.

Najjar, D. (2010). "New Land, New Life": Women and Land Titles in Egypt's Desert Resettlement, West Lake Nasser Area. Paper Presented at the 2010 Engage Conference, Guelph, Canada, March 5.

Najjar, D. (2010). Challenges and Strategies for Implementing the 'New Land, New Life' Resettlement Scheme in Egypt, west to Lake Nasser, as Perceived by Farmers, Development Agencies, and the Egyptian Government. Paper presented at the Western Research Forum of 2010, London, Canada, February 27.

Najjar, D. (2009). Reproducing and Challenging Women's Roles in Decision-making: The Case of Learning through the Farmer Field Schools of the Taita Hills, Kenya. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development, Ottawa, Canada, May 28.

Najjar, D. (2009). Transformative Learning through Farmer Field Schools: A Case Study of the Taita Hills, Kenya. Paper presented at the 58th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association of Geographers, Ottawa, Canada, May 27.

Najjar, D. (2003). Depleted Uranium and its Effect on the Environment. Tutorial presented at the Department of Agriculture, AUB, Beirut, Lebanon, May.

#### **Selected Service Activities:**

Since July 2013: **Reviewer**, *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics*

Since December 2013: **Reviewer**, *African Journal of Agricultural Research*

June 2012-April 2013: **Member**, Social Science Decanal Committee, Western

March 2012-May 2012: **Member**, Western-Graduate Teaching Assistants' Union Scholarship Committee

September 2009-August 2010: **Councilor**, Western's Society of Graduate Students

Winter 2010: **Co-organizer**, Western Research Forum of 2010

September 2008-August 2010: **Co-editor**, TOTEM Undergraduate Journal, Department of Anthropology, Western

#### **Skills:**

- Languages: Arabic (Lebanese, Egyptian, and Saudi dialects); Kiswahili; English
- Qualitative, Quantitative, and Spatial Software; such as QSR Nvivo (Proficient), Visual Basics, Excel, PowerPoint, ESRI's ArcView and Arc Map (Proficient), SPSS, and remote sensing software (IDRISSI and MULTISPEC)
- Experienced in surveying methods, including the transit and stadia method and the GPS and pace and compass method
- Field sampling (fauna, flora, soil, and water) and associated lab and data analysis skills
- Gender and social analysis skills, including participatory and rapid rural appraisal