



**HAI EL SALAM PROJECT**

**AN UPGRADING**

**AND**

**SITES-AND-SERVICES PROJECT**

**ISMAILIA, EGYPT**

**ISTANBUL, 1996 – “The City Summit”**  
**United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Nairobi, 1994**

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GOVERNMENTS WILL HAVE TO DEVISE ALTERNATIVES TO THE INFORMAL PROCESSES OF LAND SUPPLY THAT HAVE ASSISTED MANY LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN THE PAST BUT THAT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SUPPLY LAND TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS.

Informal processes of land development now play a crucial role in making land available to low-income and disadvantaged groups, particularly in the face of rapid urbanization in developing countries. The high cost to developers and individual households of acquiring land for shelter through the formal sector as well as the high standards for preparing that land have made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the poor, homeless and disadvantaged to gain access to legitimate housing on legally acquired land. There is, however, considerable doubt that established informal processes can continue to meet needs (even if it were desirable to look on informal supply as the permanent *de facto* policy of the government). Therefore, some form of intervention by government may be necessary.

The Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000  
(UNCHS, 1990:32)

## FOREWORD

The Hai El Salam project, Ismailia, Egypt, has become a classic example of solid professional work applying innovative concepts in the field of upgrading, community improvement and the provision of land for lower income groups. The project itself and its implementation provide a variety of lessons to be learned ranging from the methodological approach to the problem, the inception of the physical planning concept, to its implementation and occupation. Internal cross-subsidy, sites-and-services, upgrading, community involvement and participation, the creation of a project implementation agency are areas where innovative approaches and techniques were applied in the project. For these reasons, the Hai El Salam project represents an example of successful management of the human settlements development process and, as such, has been selected for inclusion in the catalogue of best practices for the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

This study discusses the various facets of the project. This includes the existing situation, the proposed plans, their implementation and an evaluation of what actually happened 15 years after the launching of the project. The format follows the stages of the project: Strategy; Physical Planning; Community Facilities; and Roads and Utilities. Each of these aspects is discussed in terms of the analysis of the existing situation, proposals, implementation and an evaluation highlighting the "lessons learned" throughout the process.

This case study has been prepared as part of a series for use in the Housing and Development workshops and seminars, jointly organized by UNCHS (Habitat) and the Post Graduate Centre Human Settlements, of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, funded by the Belgian Administration for Development Cooperation. The collaboration of Dr. Mohamed El Sioufi and the assistance of Dr. Reinhard Goethert with UNCHS (Habitat) Training Section Staff, in the preparation of this publication is gratefully acknowledged.

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## SUMMARY

The case study -the Hai El Salam project, Ismailia, Egypt -presented is rich in concepts that illustrate positive examples of the role of government institutions as enablers in the housing process. Intervention is minimised to the component level (i.e., the provision of new plots and infrastructure) and the access to resources (i.e., legalising land tenure and providing technical assistance).

The project was completed 15 years ago, and gives a unique opportunity for a retrospective review of the project performance. This review does not intend to be an exhaustive study but is intended as a brief overview to highlight key issues. A definitive, in-depth study would still be useful as a comparative reference for other projects. The project is of particular interest and importance since many of the concepts accepted as everyday givens were first developed and given form in the Hai El Salam project. Projects throughout the world have adopted many of the principles first tried in Ismailia.

**Egypt's** urban population is expected to increase to 45 million by the year 2000. The high rate of urbanization of about 3.6 per cent annually has resulted in an acute housing demand. Consequently, spontaneous settlements were created producing large unplanned areas with substandard services and utilities.

**Ismailia City** had a population of some 175,000 in 1975. The rapid urbanization and the devastation of war set the need for reconstruction and the provision of housing in the city. Hence a master plan for the city was commissioned with the aim of participating in relieving the urban pressure from other large cities and providing for the rehabilitation of the city.

**Hai El Salam**, the case study discussed here, is one of the demonstration projects that were proposed to illustrate the implementation of the master-plan concept. The Hai El Salam project area was an unplanned northern extension of Ismailia on desert land. The majority of its population belonged to the very low to low income groups. The project combines both upgrading of the existing settlement and the development of its unbuilt fringe.

The master plan proposed a housing policy to provide the housing units needed to meet the growing demand. The Government was to "redirect its housing efforts away from direct provision and towards the encouragement of the private and informal sectors". The informal sector, characterized by progressive incremental construction of housing by small contractors and the owners themselves, is well established and has many advantages in the Egyptian context (El Sioufi, 1981). A thorough understanding of the housing system was a prerequisite to the implementation of the policy outlined above. The Hai El Salam demonstration project has proved to be successful in meeting many of the goals it set out to achieve. It provides several lessons for future application in similar projects in Egypt and elsewhere. The "lessons" from the case study are summarized below.

**Proposals** for upgrading projects should be based on rigorous research to understand the "natural" housing process. Proposals should be relevant to carefully targeted income groups; implementable with minimal subsidy; based on a strong understanding of the existing situation; able to be administered without the need for a high level of sophistication; realistic; implementable as soon as possible; and capable of modification with experience; and replicable.

**Community participation** should be encouraged, as much as possible, in all the phases of the project including: data collection; community leader selection; selection of alternatives; implementation; and financing. The involvement of special groups in the project should also be encouraged, for example: community youths and politicians. This ensures a shouldering of responsibility by the community as well as political support from officials and a high degree of credibility of the intentions of the project team.

**A project agency** that has the authority to implement upgrading projects should be created. The major objectives of the creation of such an agency include: management and implementation of the project; decentralisation of project administration; being semi-autonomous; and the creation of proficient local cadres of professionals and administrators through training.

**Affordability** through the self-financing of upgrading projects, if achieved, would alleviate the financial burden from governments. Several concepts could be combined to finance projects including: minimising external funding; self-financing through the sale of land to settlers in return for legal tenure and improvement; reduction of initial costs by staging upgrading; internal project cross- subsidy where funds could be raised by the sale of newly developed land at market prices; and generating income from housing for the inhabitants by allowing mixed use.

**Land management** such as the allocation of undeveloped, peripheral land to an upgrading project, if available, is a key element to solving various problems within a project area. This land could be used for the provision of: prime commercial plots for sale at market value; sites for community facilities; compensation sites for inhabitants who need to be relocated; new plots to address the increasing demand; and landscaping areas to ameliorate the urban environment.

**Incremental implementation** of upgrading should be planned. This helps meet the real present needs of inhabitants as well as suit their financial means. The following should be taken into consideration: initial provision of the minimum acceptable levels of infrastructure and services; provision of higher levels of service as needed; incorporation of initial minimal infrastructure into the higher levels of service so as not to waste resources; incremental implementation of infrastructure as funds become available; and provision of higher levels of services and utilities for salable plots for cross-subsidy to occur and to generate more income.

**Professionals** can facilitate the process of these types of projects; their role includes: the improvement of market responsiveness; the establishment of new routes for the supply of services; the creation of legal frameworks supportive to local initiative; the monitoring and evaluation of the production factor markets, of service systems and of the housing process; the development and management of service systems that could be adjusted to incremental provision; urban planning and subdivision design; technological innovations focusing on construction materials, components and methods; and design and implementation of new processes and structures.

**Flexibility** is necessary during the different phases of upgrading and sites-and-services projects so as to ensure a high degree of success. Alterations to different aspects of the project to accommodate local conditions, changing situations and the community's requirements have proved fruitful. Some examples of changes include: administrative and structural changes; widening of the agency's involvement in other problems in the area; relaxation of procedures; design changes in response to user demands; and new building regulations.

**Replicability** is one of the main goals of a project. To assist in making the project a success and therefore a model to be replicated it is necessary to conscientiously achieve rapid success to maintain a certain momentum and to encourage those involved. Certain factors should be taken into consideration to ensure a rapid and visible success to the pilot project. These include: ease of implementation; short time frame to show initial results; and implementation of visible project components that give dignitaries political satisfaction.

The lessons learned from the Hai El Salam case study confirm the housing philosophy outlined in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 adopted by the United Nations that emphasizes the role of government as an enabler rather than a provider of housing. It reinforces the concept that there is a very significant potential in the informal sector that should be acknowledged, encouraged and guided to obtain optimum results in the housing process.

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#### GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

'imara	Small block of apartment walk-ups from three to five storeys, with one or two apartments per floor.
Amlak	Government land agency under the General Agency for Land Reclamation which registers claims and collects rents for <i>hekr</i> land outside the City Council boundaries.
Gama'ia	Cooperative
Hekr	The system whereby vacant desert land may be claimed ( <i>wada 'yad</i> ) registered and an annual rent paid for its use ( <i>tahkier</i> ); leasehold.
raba'	Single-storey housing consisting primarily of rented rooms (tenement).
tahkier	The tax paid on hekr land.
wade'yed	Laying the hand", the mechanism for claiming <i>hekr</i> land.
zakat	The concept of donating from one's profits and extra income to subsidise the needs of the poorest members of society.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

DBST	Double bitumen surface treatment
GOPP	General Organization for Physical Planning
km	Kilometre
KV	Kilovolt
KVA	Kilovolt ampere
£E	Egyptian pound
MOH	Ministry of Housing
NAPWAS	National Authority for Potable Water and Sewerage
SCA	Suez Canal Authority
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US \$	United States dollars

Currency equivalents		
Year	United States dollar (US\$)	Egyptian pounds (£E)
1977-1980	1	0.7
1990	1	2.7
1992	1	3.3

## OVERVIEW

Developing countries are witnessing rapid growth of their urban populations as a result of migration from rural areas

and rapid natural growth. Consequently, the provision of shelter for such large numbers constitutes large-scale urban problems. Government policies aimed at the provision of housing for the lower income groups vary in the level of intervention. These have been identified by J.F.C Turner\* at three levels: the provision of housing (assemblies); the provision of components; and increasing access to resources. +

\* J.F.C. Turner is a strong proponent of the role of government in housing as an enabler versus a provider. He has published his theories in various influential publications. Interestingly, Turner was involved as one of the consultants in masterminding the approach and concepts applied in the Ismailia project.

+ Turner, J.F.C., *Issues and Conclusions in Building Community*

### ***Provision of housing (assemblies)***

The provision of housing implies complete assemblies (ready-to-occupy or turn-key projects.) A minimal version of such projects would consist of a site, access routes connecting it to other urban areas, water supply and shelter. A full-fledged version of these types of projects are mass housing projects. These are usually beyond the financial means of the lowest income groups unless they are heavily subsidised. In the majority of the cases this type of government intervention is limited in number and does not reach the original low-income target groups.

### ***Provision of components***

This type of intervention addresses components of settlements such as the provision and/or upgrading of services and infrastructure. The provision of potable water in the form of communal water taps or upgrading sewage disposal from pit latrines to a water-borne sewerage system are examples of components within a settlement. Such a level of intervention takes the form of sites-and-services and upgrading projects.

### ***Increasing access to resources***

Increasing access to basic resources (such as land, labour, time and building materials) that constitute parts of the components is the main concept of this level of intervention.

The three levels reflect the attitudes and roles of governments *vis-à-vis* the housing issue. In the case of provision of assemblies, the government usually plays a central role both in the construction and management of such projects in addition to the provision of extensive subsidies. The second and third levels tend to reduce the role of governmental agencies and they imply a shift in attitude from government as a "provider" of housing to government as an "enabler". In addition the involvement of the settlers themselves and the private sector is encouraged. Such a switch is currently being embraced by many countries, particularly after it has been established that the role of provider of housing has generally failed except in atypical controlled contexts such as Singapore. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has been advocating the philosophy of government as an "enabler" via the Global Strategy for Shelter concept that it generated.

The case study presented here, Hai El Salam -a settlement in Ismailia, Egypt, represents an example in which many of the concepts outlined The in the second and third levels mentioned above have been implemented. For example, the project involves the provision of new plots and the upgrading of existing areas in the settlement (provision of components.) In addition, it involves the legalisation of land tenure and the provision of technical assistance (access to resources).

Many of these concepts are well established by now and are widely implemented and accepted. The Hai El Salam project helped pioneer many of these concepts and gave form to them through a variety of techniques. Many successes have been experienced. The "lessons" are analysed and presented in this case study, many of which could be applicable in other contexts around the world.