# NGO-led village development in Egypt: An enduring discourse

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# Abstract

Rural Egypt has suffered from poverty for a long time, and several measures including governmental initiatives have been taken towards poverty alleviation. The most recent rural development initiative is a collaboration between the government and NGOs which target villages in which more than 70% of inhabitants are under the poverty line. This initiative came after thirteen years from the first thrust of similar NGO-led rural village development targeting poor villages whose activities and impacts all fell short of their comprehensive plans.

This research provides an understanding of the reasons for the continuity of NGO-led village development programmes despite their repeated failure over the period from 2007 onwards and through major political and economic changes that occurred within the same timeframe. To address the issue of continuity, this research analyses those programmes with regard to their ideas, visions, and processes, drawing on Hajer's (1995) approach to view the rural development programmes as a discourse.

This research adopts a discursive institutionalist approach, underpinned by critical realism, to examine how various structures have interacted with the agency of all those involved to sustain this discourse of development. Working with the concept of aid chains, the research investigates the understandings and motivations of not only the principal decision makers, but also all the actors within the aid chains, including beneficiaries and their lived experiences. It adopts two qualitative methodological approaches; of interviews and documentary analysis, to address the question 'How do actors and institutional factors interact to sustain a discourse of NGO-led development in rural Egypt?' The research defines the discourse and identifies the actors as well as institutional factors that sustain the discourse at each level of the aid chain. Reasons for the institutionalization and therefore the continuity of the discourse are found to be a result of a broad match between the discourse's ideas, visions, and processes, and the institutional, cultural, religious, and political aspects of rural Egypt.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures and Tables

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To my father whose life and passing have taught me to enjoy the people and cherish the moments. Thank you. Above All thanks to God almighty. May this research and all endeavours I take help bring more light into the world.

# Dedication

To the toughest and most sincere, Samia Amin Serry, to my mother, there are never enough words to thank you for your unconditional love, unparalleled encouragement and tireless support through my highs and lows. Thank you for being my role model. I love you and I appreciate everything you do for me.

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To my daughter Nour, I hope that this work inspires you and I wish that you light up the world with kindness every day.

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| Alorman | Dar-Alorman Foundation |
| CAPMAS | Central Agency for Population Mobilization and Statistics |
| CDAs | Community Development Associations |
| EFB | Egyptian Food Bank |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LMF | Life Makers Development Foundation |
| MB | Muslim Brotherhood |
| MeK | Misr El-Keir |
| MOSS | Ministry of Social Solidarity |
| MSA | Ministry of Social Affairs |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| PBUH | Peace be upon him |
| RSC | Rural Social Centres |

# 1 Chapter One: Introduction

In 2013, and as an enthusiastic young Egyptian driven by the revolutionary atmosphere, I took part in a voluntary project with a group of experienced, and committed Egyptians who possessed a clear vision and strong technical backgrounds. The group's main aim was the comprehensive development of poor villages. The initial goals included infrastructure development, human and social enhancement, and economic enhancement. Although the intentions were comprehensive, the interventions were not.

Having been involved as a volunteer, I watched closely the positive outcomes and the shortcomings of the programme, especially years later when visiting the villages we thought we had developed and not observing change I wondered why we prioritised charitable handouts, infrastructure and other physical interventions over human development plans. Why did we choose renovating a house, building a roof, and helping with marriage costs? I also wondered, did we leave the village too early when we faced time and funding constraints? Finally, I wondered, did we integrate the intended beneficiaries' perspectives, and what were they? And above all, did we do good or harm? The failure in fully achieving the comprehensive developmental interventions was always a question that puzzled me. Various reasons came to mind including: the lack of funding, bureaucracy, our possession of overly ambitious plans, donor preferences, and time limitations.

Unaware of any previous programmes, we, as a voluntary group, thought we were doing something revolutionary by going away from the capital, Cairo, and targeting poor hamlets; but we were actually following a developmental discourse that had become hegemonic over the years. Before setting out on this research, some initial investigations suggested that the discourse of development could have been built on the '1000 village project', an initiative launched by the Egyptian president Mubarak in 2007. The initiative was concerned with developing poor villages. The Egyptian government which was dominated by the neoliberal National Democratic Party decided to use the geographical targeting of poor villages as a tool to end poverty. With the help of the World Bank and CAPMAS,[1] a poverty map was produced which ranked all 4,500 of Egypt's villages from the

[1] CAPMAS Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics

poorest to the wealthiest (Elnour, 2012). According to this map, a comprehensive programme was designed to develop the poorest 1,000 villages. The programme aimed to enable the sustainable improvement of the health and environmental conditions of the poorest families. This would be achieved by 'physical improvements' such as enhancing village level infrastructure, renovating homes, installing sanitation, providing clean drinking water sources, constructing roofs, and restoring houses. These ideas were coupled in by 'human development' through creating job opportunities and empowering community development associations (CDAs) in local communities (Elnour, 2012; Tawila and El-majeed, 2014; Verme *et al.*, 2014).

Overall the results were limited and between 2008 and 2015 the aggregate poverty measurement of the country increased by 6.2% to 27.7% (CAPMAS, 2022a) and inequality in the aforementioned villages increased (Elnour, 2012). Despite this, it was remarkable to witness the continuity of the ideas after the 2011 revolution. Similar programmes were implemented by major Egyptian NGOs and small voluntary groups starting 2012. These activities have remained continuous under different names to the present day. As will be shown in detail later in the thesis, despite each NGO designing its own programme, nonetheless, all of the plans of the different NGOs were relatively similar (Alorman, 2018; Misr Elkheir, 2018; Resala, 2018). All the programmes have sought to develop poor villages through a long list of interventions from infrastructure; through providing clean water supplies, electricity connections and road pavements to literacy classes, as well as vocational training, and micro finance project loans. Awareness campaigns and medical convoys (where medical checks are provided in nearby areas to the villages) have also been integral parts of the advertised programmes' plans.

In face of the changes to Egypt's political scene after the 2011 revolution, and after 12 years from the first village development programme during which the NGOs have continued in their ideas of comprehensive development, the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) launched the *Sakan Kareem* (سكن كريم, 'A dignified house') programme in 2017 targeting house renovation, water and sewerage connections in rural Egypt. Then in 2019, El Sisi, the Egyptian president, commenced the first phase of the *Hayah Kareema* (حياه كريمة, 'A dignified life') initiative which aims to deliver comprehensive village development. An upgrade to the *Sakan Kareem programme*, this initiative seeks to elevate the living conditions of families in rural and informal areas and to provide the same with a 'dignified life'. Both were designed to build on NGO programmes, and to be

implemented collaboratively by the government and national NGOs (Ministry of Social Solidarity, 2018). The partnership is designed so that the government provides 80% of the funds, whilst the NGOs act as implementers and part-funders (to the tune of 20%). Almost two years later, the president announced the second phase of the same initiative – which would target the development of 1,300 villages in 2021. The ambitious *Hayah Kareema* plan aims to develop 1,300 villages in one year, even though it had earlier been shown, in the 4 years following the 2007 programme, that such a period of time was barely sufficient to enable intervening in 1,000 villages (Elnour,2012). In the same way, all 4,500 Egyptian villages should, at a rate of 1,000 per year, have been developed by now through the NGO programmes.

Looking at outcomes, there has been no significant impact from all of the activities that have been undertaken; poverty is still rising, and the various programmes appear, therefore, to have failed or to be failing. In spite of the huge amount of donations and resources, the executed interventions were limited to physical interventions with minimal to no focus on human and social development especially sustainable interventions in the education and heath segments. Even though the plans of these programmes may appear holistic and comprehensive, their actual outcomes did not fulfil or comply with the plans' initial proposals and ambitions. Despite all this, somehow the idea of what counts as an appropriate rural development programme has evolved into an identifiable set of ideas and practices reproduced over time; a 'discourse' in Hajer's sense (Hajer, 1995; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). In practice, the government and the NGOs were following a discourse of development in their choices of interventions and procedures, and apparently, we, as a voluntary group-like any other NGO, were choosing interventions from something like a 'menu', a selection of possible interventions from which all providers choose. So, in spite of the minimal evaluation and the lack of information about the success of those programmes except for numbers of projects, between the government and the NGOs, the initial ideas and practices are imitated and copied, and the programmes are continuing whether implemented by the government, NGOs, voluntary groups or even individuals. The same over-ambitious visions and ideas together with the specific interventions.

Although change might have been expected over time, this approach to development has sustained during the rule of an authoritarian government and in the face of radical political changes. The programmes are still the same and what we witness is a continuity of ideas and practices that are

shared between NGOs. These are, in turn, being institutionalised through governmental initiatives. This continuity within change is the central focus of this research. The purpose of the research is to understand why a specific discourse of development including ideas and practices that is failing has endured despite the overall lack of progress in tackling poverty and the focus on the physical aspect rather than the proposed sustainable comprehensive development and to comprehend the divergence between the visions of the programmes and the impact.

The research builds on literature on NGOs, aid chains and rural development and identifies a gap in researching authoritarian countries and NGO-led rural development in Egypt specifically. To start with, programmes could have failed in some areas in ways which are familiar from research on international development, such as pre-established timeframes, sponsors' policies, lack of innovation, lack of coordination, and lack of participation and so on (Li, 2007). The reasons why the model noted above has become institutionalised may be attributed to several aspects; it could be that the model responds to the unrealistic government announced plans that are intended for legitimacy reasons and it could be explained by the institutional context and the state/NGO relationship that is unlike the stereotypical authoritarian states discussed within development literature (Lewis, 2013) that still manage to develop programmes with less top-down approaches. Given this and within the context of a lower-middle-income authoritarian centralized state, it may be the case that there are 'other' specific factors that are unique to the context and culture of Egypt. Perhaps, the idea and the qualitative nature of the physical interventions are attractive to donors (Edwards and Hulme, 1996), the fieldworkers having the knowhow , the power of intermediaries in the aid chain -the actor oriented resource transfer paradigm- (Silk, 2006), and the inertia of cultural, social, and bureaucratic processes have locked this approach in.

The set of practices are possibly failing by not addressing the diverse aspects of poverty, and are inappropriate in terms of a logic of consequences (Olsen and March, 2004), at the same time those practices are institutionalised – people following formal and informal rules- to sustain the discourse. To account for the discourse, the institutions and agents, the research adopts a discursive institutionalist (DI) approach underpinned by critical realism (CR). By using DI, the research accepts and comprehends the power of discourses, the importance of ideas, and the role of agents in institutional processes (Schmidt 2008). The research additionally uses Arts and Buizer's (2009) CR-based conceptualisation of DI that admits the hardships of operationalizing the analytical

duality between discourses and institutions without one taking over the other, but in a way in which both concepts work together and yield novel understanding and perspectives of social practices over time. As the purpose is to explain causally how institutionalisation happens, and what its effects are? Critical Realism (CR) provides a coherent philosophical underpinning for causal explanations that are comprised of both the enduring social structures including discourses and institutions and the agency of those involved. To comprehend a complex under-researched reality, the research examines the processes of delivering aid and the actors' intentions to understand the nature of the programmes and particularly to respond to the main research question '**How do actors and institutional factors interact to sustain a discourse of NGO-led development in rural Egypt?**'

Unpacking the rationale for and processes of NGO-led village development programmes to be continuous as well as the importance and role of the stakeholders involved needs a detailed, empirical investigation. Using three different NGOs and a voluntary group all operating in rural contexts in Egypt as case studies, this study deconstructs the programmes undertaken and questions the alignment of the visions of the government, NGOs, and the beneficiaries. Thereafter, and by comparing the primary intentions with the actual interventions of the programmes and understanding the processes of aid delivery the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of NGO-led Village development in Egypt to be able to better plan for future attainable sustainable rural development. Drawing on the discursive institutional framework (elaborated in Chapter 2) the research focuses on the social, cultural, procedural, religious and political aspects of the institutionalization of the discourse and with the CR philosophical stance the research accounts for the agential motivations and other causal factors to answer the main research question through addressing the following sub questions.

1. What ideas, categories and practices constitute the NGO-led village development discourse in Egypt?
2. How do individual and organisational actors work within institutional frameworks to put the discourse into practice?
    a. Who are the actors involved and how are they organised in aid chains?
    b. How do resources and information flow through aid chains?

c. What are the formal and informal rules that govern the implementation of the discourse?

3. How do deeper causal factors (both agential and institutional) sustain the discourse?

The research answers these questions by adopting an intensive qualitative research methodology and through the use of a case study approach that involves the perspectives of the various aid chain actors. While one can observe at a quantitative, statistical level how poverty figures change, and – though with difficulty – perhaps assess aid flows into the villages, understanding a complex process requires in depth research which takes into account the values, interests, and ideas of those involved, as well as their understanding of the rules which govern their behaviour. All of these factors pointed to the need for this study to adopt a qualitative case study research (Hajer *et al.*, 2003).

The critical realist approach allows an embracing of different yet valid perspectives to understand a real-life problem (NGO-led development in this case) and accepts the variations that exist in terms of the ways to explain reality. This CR approach considers the influence of all concerned stakeholders to provide a better and a more holistic view of the programme. The viewpoints of the NGOs, the government, and the beneficiaries are considered and perceived through different properties which include perspectives, interactions, rules, and institutions (Maxwell, 2012; Hoddy, 2019). These terms will be unpacked through the discussion of discursive institutionalism in Chapter Two.

This research is concerned with the current discourse of village development led by indigenous national Egyptian welfare NGOs. This study presents three national NGOs and a voluntary group as case studies; all of them perform NGO-led village development practices either directly and/or in collaboration with the government. Choosing to do the research through case studies is designed to cover the variations in how delivery takes place and the various actors and relations between those actors through an actor oriented aid chain (Silk, 2006). The choice of NGOs and a voluntary group as case studies rather than geographical areas was based on the need to comprehend various aid chains and, through this, to deduce the institutionalised processes. The qualitative research adopted herein used in-depth interviews and analysis of websites and media to understand how things work, why agents act as they do , meanings, ideas and interpretations (Mason, 2017). The participants include various actors along the aid chain including providers such as governmental

officials, NGO managers and fieldworkers, and villagers including intermediaries, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Gathered data was thematically coded using Nvivo and analysed. The methodological basis will be set out in detail in Chapter Four.

## 1.1 Research contributions

This study makes original empirical, theoretical and practice-based contributions. The research contributes theoretically to the knowledge about discourses and discursive institutionalism in addition to the role of religion in development. Empirically the research adds to the literature about the nature of NGO-state relationships in centralized and authoritarian states, rural development aid chains, the role of intermediaries in aid chains especially in Islamic countries, and the effect of religion on various agents' motivations and drives within aid chains. Practice based contributions, include the investigation of the under studied phenomenon of NGO-led village development in Egypt, and it adds to existent in-depth knowledge of the process, power dynamics and outcomes of such programmes in the less researched middle eastern countries. The research also draws attention to the beneficiaries' perspectives. Even though the Egyptian context is distinctive, the study also contributes to literature on the ways in which development discourses become institutionalised on the ground.

Egypt, being an authoritarian state, possesses a special NGO-Government relationship that seems to have impacted the development discourse and the policies that follow. The government and NGOs coexist in a compound multi-layered web of connections and institutional linkages (Lewis, 2013). In the Egyptian context, both the government and the NGOs respond to the same public with common goals which results in similar responses (Lewis, 2013). This close NGO-Government relationship makes the Egyptian model different than some other places like Ghana, South Africa and Uganda where NGOs are seen either as rivals to the government or as an easy path by which international organizations can influence a country (Gary, 1996; Hearn, 2001). Nevertheless, the idea of 'aid chains' and the methodology of exploring this through NGO case studies contributes to the broader knowledge about how development discourses work differently in an authoritarian state, and the findings may resonate in other highly authoritarian contexts (e.g. Ethiopia). Practically, the study is beneficial to NGOs and policy makers through its providing of additional knowledge pertaining to the reasons for the endurance of development projects and, through this, also comments on factors that could contribute to better planned interventions in the

future. The research would also be of significance to funders to help in improved resource allocation for local and international Aid funds, and academics through contributing to the field of knowledge of the under researched discourse in Egypt that could be generalized for Islamic authoritarian centralized countries.

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into eight chapters. This chapter introduced the story of an enduring discourse of development led by NGOs through reference to my personal experiences that motivated the research, and thereafter provided the research's aims, questions, and structure.

**Chapter Two:** ***Towards an institutionalist approach to rural development,*** provides the research's theoretical approach, divided into two sections. Section One presents critical realism as both the ontological and epistemological approach of the research. Then, a discursive institutionalist approach to the study is introduced through an explanation of the key concepts: discourse, institutionalism, agency, structure, and motivation theory. Section two engages with global literature on rurality, rural development, NGOs and aid delivery; shedding light on developments undertaken through NGOs and NGO-government collaboration. Special attention is given to NGOs and NGO-government relations in authoritarian states. The idea of aid chains and the relationships between their actors is studied to understand the interactions and effects of the same. The exploration of the processes and practices of development and development aid is set up to convey the realities of development including institutional factors and their consequences and influences on the execution and quality of development.

**Chapter Three:** ***Egypt, Contextual realities,*** presents Egypt as the context for this research. An exploration of literature on development discourses in Egypt, the NGO 'menu', and aid chains are presented and followed by a description of the rules, practices, and narratives of NGO-led development in Egypt. This chapter sets up the development environment in Egypt and what is known and unknown about the discourse. Through a discussion on the factors and relationships that exist around the discourse and its institutionalization, the chapter identifies under researched areas, as well as the challenges to development and the cultural and social considerations reported in the literature.

**Chapter Four*: Methodology,*** presents the conceptual framework. It draws on theoretical material and presents the research questions and methodology. The chapter explains the reasons for the

study adopting a qualitative case study approach as well as the use of semi structured interviews and observations as research methods. A thorough presentation of my positionality is provided along with a discussion of possible biases and practices to mitigate their effects. This chapter is followed by three chapters based on the empirical research.

**Chapter Five:** ***Perspectives on rural 'development'*** starts by explaining how development is envisioned by providers. The ideas behind the development choices are discussed, together with the categorizations of identified beneficiaries. The promoted interventions are presented followed by a discussion of the origins of the discourse. The chapter then shows what development means to the villagers through introducing their livelihoods, priorities and needs, and the connections between the two. Additionally, the similarities and differences between the promoted and the realised interventions of the development are identified and discussed.

**Chapter Six:** ***Actors and Institutional factors*****,** presents the processes of discourse actualization through narrating three parallel aid chains led either by voluntary groups or NGOs or NGO-government collaborations. The chapter then reports the processes of resource and information transfer in details as narrated by the involved actors, unfolding the formal and informal practices. Finally, the chapter provides the institutional challenges around and within the discourse.

**Chapter Seven:** ***An enduring discourse,*** provides a discussion of the possible reasons for the continuity of the discourse. In so doing it notes actors' ideas and motivations within social, political, religious and operational institutional factors that have caused the discourse to be self-perpetuating. Through so doing it also notes how this has led to the latter's institutionalization and continuity.

**Chapter Eight:** ***Conclusion*****,** integrates the findings from the empirical chapters within academic debates. The chapter presents answers to the research questions and a compilation of the research's empirical, theoretical and practice based contributions. The chapter also presents recommendations for practitioners and decision makers in addition to areas for further research.

# 2 Chapter Two: Towards an institutionalist approach to rural development

This chapter provides details as to the theories and key concepts used throughout the thesis to make sense of the studied world. The chapter is divided into three sections that are needed to address the research questions. The first section sets out the theoretical framework through defining the basic concepts around which the study is framed, as well as identifying the relations and levels between those different concepts used to unpack NGO-led village development in Egypt as a complex reality. The section presents a critical realist approach to structure and agency through presenting discourses and institutions as structures, and an explanation for the adoption of discursive institutionalism that acknowledges the causal powers of structures and agents. Agential motivations are further discussed, with a particular focus on religion that is to an extent specific to the context of a traditional, religious society. Section 2.2 explores existent academic literature about NGOs, aid chains and delivery and the relation between NGO and other surrounding structures. After doing so, section 2.3 presents the substantive topics of rural development, and development aid critique; this helps to structure the analysis of Egyptian NGO-led village development within its broader setting.

## 2.1 A Critical Realist approach to discourses and institutions

This section presents the theoretical approach that is adopted and introduces a language with the capacity to express and organize a complex social reality, in a way which enables partial explanation of the continuity of practices in the face of evidence that they are ineffective. This research adopts a critical realist (CR) philosophy that “combines a realist ontology with an interpretive epistemology” (Hoddy, 2019). CR acknowledges causal powers as an integral component to explain reality while avoiding over simplification of reality to what we know and acknowledge (Hoddy, 2019). Crucially, it rejects the idea that causality is simply the observable 'constant conjunction’ of events but insists on the existence of causal powers as intrinsic properties. A CR approach accounts for causal powers at different levels, these levels are those of the observed, ‘empirical’ world; the ‘actual’ world of events, whether or not they are observed or experienced; and the ‘real’ world of enduring structures and mechanisms, which may or may not

be observable directly, but whose effects are experienced (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016; Fletcher, 2017) (See also Figure 2-1).

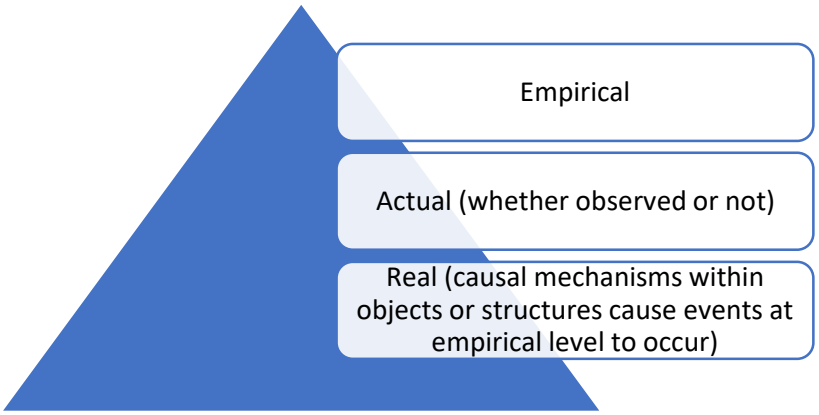


Figure 2-1: CR ontology, adapted from Fletcher (2017, p. 183)

NGO-led village development was explained in chapter one as the dominant set of ideas and practices currently in place that can be termed as a 'discourse' (Hajer, 1995). This discourse exists and is enacted within institutional settings and has institutionalized and stabilized over time, yet is clearly also something which is put into practice by individuals, who act in ways which reflect their own motivations and individuality as well as the obvious structures. CR sees structure and agency not as two poles of the same concept, but as closely linked but separate aspects that hold causal powers equally (Maxwell, 2012; Fletcher, 2017; Mason, 2017). Critical realism acknowledges the complexity that is associated with structure, agency, and causality. It addresses the linkages and causality formed by individuals living in structures that affect them, and equally acknowledges how those structures are affected by actors in a complex field. The causal factors addressed in this research are related not only to structures (including discourses and institutions), but also to individual agency as explained through actors' motivations within structures. CR allows an exploration of fundamental causal processes that also takes into account the author's positionality and interpretive role in the research. The following subsections further define and explore the categories rooted in the literature on CR, that are central to the reality studied by this research: discourse, institutions, and agency.

### *2.1.1 Structures: Discourses and Institutions*

This research is about an interplay between discourse, institutions and agents that has sustained a set of practices through time, despite radical changes in the social and political environment. The following sections will define discourse as a CR structure that will be used methodologically to identify the development discourse ideas and categories detailed in Chapter Five. Then the other CR structure 'institutions' that explains the rules both formal and informal that have helped in the formation and locking in of the discourse reflected in Chapters Six and Seven.

Between both concepts there is a long tradition of privileging discourses or institutions, and these two approaches have been rather separate. Discourse scholars view discourses at the centre for example Hajer and Versteeg (2005) would argue that the mechanisms and institutional factors that shape the discourse can be explained using only discourse because, for them, discourses are the primary components of social life, being both the outcome and medium of human action. Some discourse academics refer to institutions as simply the context of a discourse, and the output of the 'institutionalisation' of previous discourses (Hajer, 1995). Institutional scholars on the other hand view institutions as the main structure forming the rules that govern and affect individual and institutional actions (Lowndes, 2001). New institutionalism scholars present the range of phenomenon that comprise institutions including; rules, norms and shared practices (Sorensen, 2020).

As a critical realist aiming to comprehend the interplay between discourses and institutions whilst also acknowledging the causal powers of each, I view institutions as more than just the context but structures that hold real causal powers, similar to Pecurul-Botines *et al*'s (2014) critical realist arguments that recognise the distinctive nature and importance of institutions, and in particular their significant role in shaping discourses and the ways discourses are sustained or changed in specific institutional contexts. To be able to account for both concepts as structures the research works with discursive institutionalism DI in which "The institutions of discursive institutionalism, … are not external-rule-following structures but rather are simultaneously structures and constructs internal to agents" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 303). The use of DI accounts for the importance of both concepts in change and continuity, magnifies the significance of ideas in institutions and the analytical duality between both concepts (Arts and Buizer, 2009)

***Discourses***

Discourse has long been used as a concept in the environmental, political, and social fields of knowledge. Initially the concern of discourse was solely language and text, and it aimed to shed light on the role of language in shaping understandings of reality by allowing the discussion of a topic or idea in shared terms (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005).

Whilst this understanding is still used in some fields of knowledge, some scholars acknowledge a more comprehensive representation of 'Discourse' and argue that it represents "a set of categories and concepts embodying specific assumptions, judgments, contentions, dispositions, and capabilities. It enables the mind to process sensory inputs into coherent accounts, which can then be shared in intersubjectively meaningful fashion" (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2008, p. 481). It is Hajer's comprehensive definition of discourse as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer, 1995, p. 44) that informs this research project.

The stress here is on the meaning given to a combination of physical and nonphysical information that are shared, reproduced, routinized, and institutionalized. Discourse acts as an enabler and a constraint. This implies the acceptance of some practices and the exclusion of others to reach a combination of specific bits of information and practices that are normalized and institutionalized. Such manifestation of choice and what becomes common sense, indicates the presence of power (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2008). The rise of a specific discourse that becomes institutionalized over other discourses is, likewise, a result of power (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Such power can also partly be the power of cultural, religious, and procedural ideas. This understanding of discourses as a structure that is shaped but also somehow helps shape how we see the world rather than it being just a mirror of reality, helps to explain what came to life, and how the discourse is implemented. In the specific case of the studied development discourse that is addressed in this study, using the concept of discourse helps in the identification of the ideas, visions and procedures that have become routinized while also acknowledging the presence of other surrounding and less powerful ideas. Hajer and Versteeg (2005) would argue that the mechanisms and institutional factors that shape the discourse can be explained using only discourse because, for them, discourses are the primary components of social life, being both the outcome and medium of

human action. This reflects the post-structuralist roots of this approach to 'discourse' in particular the influence Foucault (Hajer, 1995, 2020; Sharp and Richardson, 2001). However, from a CR perspective discourses are one very important type of structure, but not the *only* ones: non-discursive structures, both social and material, operate alongside discursive ones (McAnulla, 2006). Like other structures discourses are causal, they affect and are affected by surrounding structures such as other discourses, institutions, as well as human agency.

***Institutions***

Alongside discourses, institutions are theorised in this research as structures within a CR philosophy (Arts and Buizer, 2009; Pecurul-Botines *et al.*, 2014). The research adopts the broad definition of institutions as 'rules of the game' (including both formal and informal rules). This was introduced by North (1991) with examples such as customs and traditions as informal rules, and laws as formal rules. Lowndes's (2001) new institutionalist approach which is accepted by this research acknowledges this definition while stressing that institutions hold causal explanations and "embody values and power relationships" (Lowndes and Wilson, 2003, p. 281); Lowndes' position is thus aligned with CR. New institutionalists accept the relational forces and influences exerted by and on institutions by other structures and agents. Institutions include power relations that affect the realization of one action over another, and/or the involvement of specific actors. This means that institutions play two roles: as social forces and products of human behaviour (Lowndes, 2001). Institutions are found within organizations and affect the behaviours of institutional participants, and they also operate within, between, under and around them (Lowndes, 2001). (Note that the understanding of institutions as 'the rules of the game' means that organizations are also, but only, one player of the game, comprised of sets of institutions and operating within an institutional context. This contrasts with the interchangeability of the words 'institution' and 'organisation' words in everyday language.)

Institutions evolve and change. Institutional change happens when an institution can no longer embody specific values, or its surroundings have changed (Whaley, 2018). Change implies that, over time, institutions can become more or less powerful. Some institutions are easier and quicker to form or change such as local institutions, which are empowered or suppressed by more powerful long living institutional structures, such as cultural norms, national laws or constitutions and so on

(Lowndes, 2001). Institutional change can also be explained by agency as a course of bricolage (explained later), where the influences are not always deliberate but are interwoven in everyday activities (Whaley, 2018).

Discourse and institutional theories both attempt to explain similar phenomena but with different focuses. Scholars have attempted to bring them together, working from the common-sense position that ideas and 'rules' both have roles to play in explanation. Dryzek (1996) introduced the idea of the relationship between discourses and institutions as he explained discourses as the institutional software while the rules, rights and processes were the hardware. Institutions matter and have a stabilising function; ideas also matter and can explain institutional change. In contrast to post-structuralist and other interpretivist approaches which struggle with the idea of causation (McAnulla, 2006), from a CR perspective both discourses and institutions can be viewed as structures with causal powers; influencing each other and enablers or facilitators and constrainers of agency (McAnulla, 2006). The next subsection will deal with the relation between them, presenting discourses as the ideas and processes which can have causal effects on actors, and institutions as another set of structures around and within those discourses.

***Discourses and institutions***

This research adopts the dynamic methodology provided by Discursive institutionalism (DI), and through so doing accepts and comprehends the power of discourses, the importance of ideas, and the role of agents in institutional processes (Schmidt, 2008). To unveil societal processes, as well as the interconnections and complexities that exist between discourses and institutions this research works with Arts and Buizer's (2009) CR-influenced approach which builds on Schmidt's (2008) work in discursive institutionalism in which institutional dynamics emerge when new concepts, narratives, and ideas are introduced and then institutionalized in society. These can help in comprehending the continuity and change that occurs in institutions and discourses. Arts and Buizer (2009) admit the hardships of operationalizing this analytical duality without one taking over the other, but they work together and yield novel understanding and perspectives of social practices over time.

According to Schmidt, probably the most influential figure in DI, DI explains a one-directional causal relation in which ideas shape institutions and discourses may become institutionalized (2008). Arts and Buizer have taken a more symmetric view, with a version of DI which explains

the interplay between institutions, discourses and actors that result in the sustainability or change of a certain combination of discourse and institutions (Arts and Buizer, 2009). While operating at a very different scale of interest (of international policy) their explanation takes a more complex view of the directions in which causation takes place. With a CR approach, this research discusses a reciprocal relationship between discourses and institutions in which the analytical duality gives each equal causal powers that produce or help in producing change or stability. The value of this approach can be seen in Pecurul-Botines *et al*'s (2014) study of development processes, which clearly show these reciprocal relationships without privileging either 'side' of the discourse/institution pair and allow a significant role for human agency.

### *2.1.2 Agency, motivation and other causal factors*

In CR, agents, like structures, hold causal powers. This means that the actors whether individuals or organizations –have the agency to sustain or change the reality or course of action (McAnulla, 2006). This research acknowledges the analytical duality between structures (discourses and institutions) and agency, and acknowledges that it is a game of interchangeable intervals of power mechanisms in which causal autonomy is not one-sided (Archer, 1995). Actors influence the emergence of structures which in return affect people and so on (Archer, 1995; Haigh *et al.*, 2019). Differentiating between actors and structures emphasizes people and their capabilities as one unit of analysis, and institutions and social relations associated with systems as another (Haigh *et al.*, 2019).

The balance between structure and agency is a complex and contested field. Some academics claim that individuals involved in structures are not able to make rational choices across those structures (Dryzek, 1996), while others give full agency to the actors (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). This research works in the middle ground, following McAnulla (2006) and Cleaver (2017) who (both working within critical realist frameworks) highlight the importance of emphasizing actors' agency and individual actions within institutional and ideational structures, and how this leads to the social construction of societal processes. The authors further clarify that the agency of current actors is featured in their practices and beliefs but cannot be the only cause of their actions as other structures help shape their decisions (McAnulla, 2006; Cleaver, 2017). Structures that affect the agents cannot be limited to what is currently observable because, according to CR's stratified ontology, former activities, relationships, ideas, other people, traditions, practices, and all social

institutions and structures are all possible components in explaining actors' agency (McAnulla, 2006).

The way in which actors channel their motivations into agency that holds causal powers which can affect structures can be explained through bricolage. A bricoleur uses whatever is in hand combining existing and new information to find new arrangements. The bricolage's fluid processes results in a specific combination of relations, rules, and meaning (Cleaver, 2017). Bricolage can help explain the agent's or bricoleur's agential power who is affected by surrounding structures in turn affects the processes in which they are involved (Cleaver, 2002). Hence, the prevalence of one structure over another is a result of power struggles, and depends on the power of the structure and supporting agents whether observable or not identified as institutional bricolage (Cleaver, 2002, 2017).

Upon accepting that agents have causal powers, here we question what explains the emergence of those causal powers – put simply, why do people do things? Scholars explain that individual agency is driven by motives. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, motives are "The general desire or willingness of someone to do something; drive, enthusiasm.", "the reason a person has for acting in a particular way" and "The (conscious or unconscious) stimulus for action towards a desired goal" (Simpson, 1989). Those stimuli are the results of social and psychological aspects, and the aspects give purpose and drive to a behaviour (Simpson, 1989). Motives are expressed to justify a position or as a response when asked about them, because a person naturally does not feel the urge to justify their motives (Peters, 1969). However, there is always a motive, and possibly more than one. While the routineness of some actions flattens the conscious motivation behind a decision, there is always motive and meaning behind an action (Peters, 1969). A person's motive is not just what they express but also the possible reasons, the end state, and the causal explanations. The nature of people is rule following, so those causal explanations might be norm governing social appropriateness, unconscious objectives, or a combination of the same in addition to structural past and surrounding mechanisms (Peters, 1969).This means that motivations, though unobservable, are situated in time and place, embedded in structures, and have causal powers on agency according to CR's stratified ontology. They form a crucial link in CR's 'causal mechanisms' by which social norms and rules (i.e. discursive and institutional structures) are internalised and acted upon by individuals (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Within these very general definitions there exists a huge range in terms of types of motivations. This research uses Schwartz's (1992) value motivational types as a guiding list to classify and understand the motives that drive the actors to specific actions. Schwartz's main concern is the goal behind a motivation, and he uses the idea of values to understand the criteria upon which people "select and justify actions and evaluate people" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 1). Schwartz (1992) identified 11 motivational types that theoretically include all probable motivations: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, spirituality, benevolence and universalism ( Figure 2-2 ) (Schwartz, 1992). In this approach, some motives hold, in practice, more than one motivational type: a primary motivational type and another secondary motivational type. For example, 'being influential' as a motive, which holds a primary 'achievement' motivational type and a secondary 'power' type. Similarly, social recognition is shared between power and achievement, and honouring parents lies between conformity and tradition.

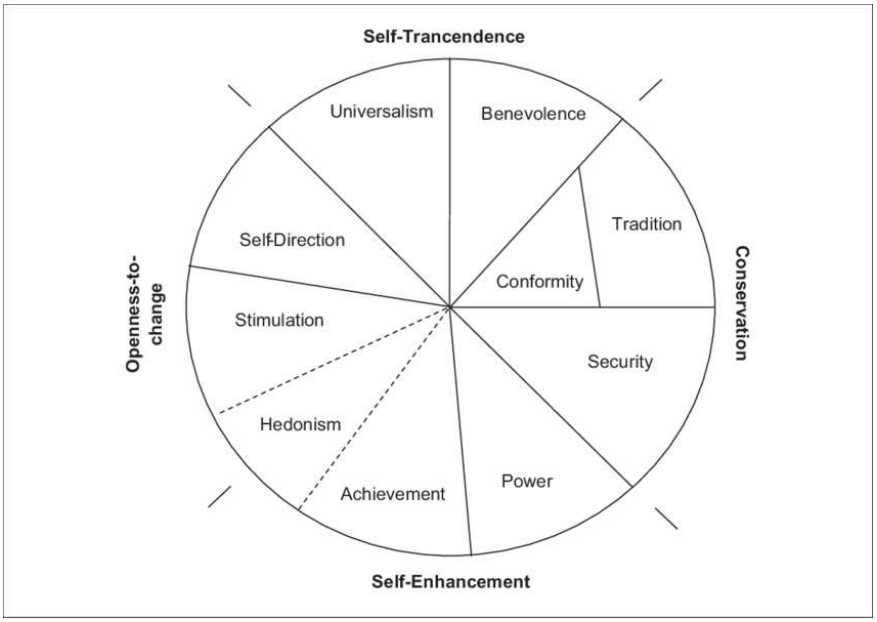


Figure 2-2: The circumplex model of values (Schwartz, 1992, p. 45).

Scholars accept that the equivalence of meaning is not uniform. This means that not everyone interprets motives and actions in the same way because people show individualistic differences in how they prioritize their motivations. However, actors' motivations are all within a universal set (Schwartz, 1992; Reiss, 2004a). Within the universal set, Schwartz (1992) investigates the reasons as to why people prioritize specific motives to be the guiding principles of their lives and how this

affects their behaviours and choices. It is however important to acknowledge that cultural, historical, political, and national differences inevitably affect the prioritization and understanding of motives (Schwartz, 1992). To overcome these differences, Schwartz (1992) does not put boundaries on how people interpret their values, leaving room for explanations when studying motivations. Given this, this research analyses verbalized and possibly observed motives while situating these in socio-cultural structures (Chapter Four).

One important category of motivations is the spiritual, which draws on important cultural and normative structures of religion, shared moral values, and understandings of the natural and supernatural worlds. As a result, in this research motivations based in the invisible aspects of the world are taken as seriously as the materialistic motivations with which they are intertwined (Ter Haar and Ellis, 2006).

This amalgamation of the invisible and the materialistic explains the work people put into developing their relationships with the invisible in pursuit of improving their material living conditions (Reiss, 2004b). Commenting further, Reiss (2004b) additionally notes , that spirituality provides people with an attractive bundle of values of motivational types to satisfy their desires in both strong and weak forms. For example, a belief in an afterlife may lead to relaxation or fatalism (Reiss, 2004b). This duality was also explained by Schwartz (1992), as he states that while hedonism is seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, hedonism combined with spirituality might be explained as the ultimate pleasure in connecting with God.

While volunteering can be viewed as an act of pure benevolence, Clary *et al.* (1998) clarified six motives for volunteering, which mix the spiritual with more material aspects of life: protective, values, career, social, understanding, and enhancement in feelings and language. Volunteers explained that the act of volunteering makes them feel less lonely or changes their mood, and that it helps them overcome the guilt of being more fortunate (Clary *et al.*, 1998). Volunteering also supports their genuine feelings of concern or compassion towards people. For some people, it is a good escape from their problems. Others perform acts of volunteering as those acts serve an important cause to them. Some people volunteer to enhance their skill set and expand their social network, or to help them explore career choices. Other reasons include peer pressure, enhancing skills, social skills and improving self-esteem (Clary *et al.*, 1998). All those different motivations called the volunteer functions inventory (Clary *et al.*, 1998) can be expressed by Schwartz's (1992)

values which drive agency affecting structures such as discourses and institutions. Volunteering according to Schwartz (1992) can cover both benevolence and achievement across from each other in (Schwartz, 1992). While the above gave an example of the motives to perform an action, the permanency to execute those actions requires a new set of motives such as positive experiences, recognition, fulfilment of original values, growth, and support. It follows that motivations to start may differ from motivations to continue (Same *et al.*, 2020).

***Islam and motivation***

People's perspectives cannot be understood without exploring their spirituality as another arm to the physical world (Salleh, 2013). For some time, religion was marginalized in development studies or combined with the notion of cultures, or simply viewed as added information or obstacles. However, Khan and Bashar (2012) argued that it is possible for religion and development to be complementary, since religion is in a lot of instances is the motivation and drive to peoples' acts and provides the moral guidance for development (Ter Haar and Ellis, 2006; Khan and Bashar, 2012). It is important to acknowledge the context of this research that differentiates case studies as Sullivan and Abed-Kotob (1999, p. 3) stated "that the scholars must expand their frameworks and theories" beyond the western eastern or north south, and be more specific to the country. Thus, the research gives an introduction here about Islam as the dominating religion and a powerful institution in the research context of Egypt.

Egypt is a religious country with a 90% Muslim and 10% Christian population (Hackett, 2011). While research usually stresses on the instrumental issues that govern and affect aid, religion is an important social institution that affects the everyday lives, motivations, actions, and perspectives of Egyptians. The culture of giving or the discourse addressed by this research cannot be explained without exploring the religious aspects that underpin the nation and how this influences the perspectives of actors, as a very significant set of discursive structures (ideas about religion and 'the right thing to do'), and the taken-for-granted norms and practices which structure everyday life. This section therefore introduces the religious basis that informs the practices of giving of the Muslim majority and the perspectives and motives of the actors involved in the discourse, and how Islamic philosophy tackles poverty.

Islamic teachings are built on *AlQuran* (القران, the word of God) and *Al sunnah* (السنة, the prophetic sayings). The five pillars of Islam are *Shihada* (الشـــهادة, the declaration of belief, God is the sole

creator and Muhammed PBUH is his prophet), *Salat* (الصلاة, prayers), *Zakat* (الزكاة, Alms), *Sawm-Ramadan* (صوم رمضان, fasting during Ramadan), and performing Haj (الحج, pilgrimage). Islamic values, however, are the ways in which an individual actualizes their faith by having the highest of ethics (مكارم الأخلاق). Those values include sincerity, love to God, self and others, sacrifice, professionalism, consideration, truthfulness, cooperation, care, humility, and equality (Rafiki and Wahab, 2014; Sahri *et al.*, 2014; Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015). Based on the foundational discursive resource of *AlQuran*, its institutionalisation in Islamic law governs the everyday interactions of people corresponding to God's requirements (Sahri *et al.*, 2014). The interactions cover all daily actions including spiritual acts such as prayers, as well as materialistic actions such as marital rituals including the giving of dowry, that is considered an insurance for the bride in cases of divorce or the husband's death (Anderson, 2007).

The purpose of life in Islam is to worship God. It follows, that it is important to have an intent in every action because it gives meaning to one's actions (Salleh, 2013), emphasising the significance of spiritual motivation. A Muslim is rewarded by God for their actions, and the intent in every action is key; having a sincere intention to any act makes it an act of worship, and the rewards for these actions could be received in this life or in the hereafter (Salleh, 2013). As the prophet PBUH said;

> *"He who removes from a believer one of his difficulties of this world, Allah will lighten one of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and he who finds relief for a hard-pressed person, Allah will make things easy for him on the Day of Resurrection; he who covers up (the faults and sins) of a Muslim, Allah will cover up (his faults and sins) in this world and in the Hereafter" (Al-Bukhari, 1978)*

This indicates that people undertake actions with the intent of seeking God's reward, both in this world and the hereafter. Giving relief will be rewarded on an individual level, however, the issue of poverty is tackled on multiple levels in Islamic philosophy.

> *"In one of his hadiths the Prophet PBUH says "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler is a shepherd and responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his household and responsible for his flock "(Al-Bukhari, 1978)*

Islamic philosophy tackles poverty alleviation by distributing responsibility on three levels: self, community, and state. Thus, it is important for this thesis to be aware of the practices with religiously expressed intents in day-to-day interactions and in efforts undertaken to deal with

poverty that possess religious influence. Senadjki and Sulaiman (2015) explained the theoretical foundation to eliminate poverty in Islamic philosophy. Islam acknowledges the stratification of society while encouraging social solidarity. On an individual level, each individual is responsible to generate income and sustain their needs (Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015). Begging or asking others is unfavourable especially when a person is healthy and can be productive. A prophetic saying indicates that the giving hand is better than the receiving hand (Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015), and whoever aims to sustain themselves God will help in attaining that goal. The community responsibility is articulated in the obligation of *zakat*, the encouragement to do *sadaqa* (صـــدقة, benevolence), and interest-free loans. Finally, the state is responsible for economic and income growth, and for providing equal opportunities.

In countries in which the state follows Islamic law, the state manages Islamic giving with the aim of filling any gaps left behind so that social justice can be reached, the wealth gap minimised, and social equality attained. The ruler and the state are responsible for the community wellbeing, and Islam links the legitimacy of the state to its ability to support those who are unable as well as its ability to sustain the community. The end result is an enhancement of wellbeing and an increase in income in addition to measures to ensure that production and productivity attempt to eliminate poverty (Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015).

A study conducted in Malaysia, a majority Muslim country, explained that people living in poverty perceive poverty either as the source of all evil or as a natural phenomenon (Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015). In the study, 80% of the participants believed that Islam did not allow poverty because it encourages hard work, while the other 20% believed that Islam allows poverty and explained that poverty is a test from God which examines an individual's contentment (Syukri Salleh and Osman, 1997). Another perspective on poverty is that it is beyond materialism, and that it comes as a result of the level of spirituality in which richness is measured by the purity of the soul. This explains why people, whether rich or poor, would be motivated to help others in whichever way they can (Salleh, 2013).

In an attempt to include the poor's perspective in poverty management, studies in Malaysia noticed that people who accepted *zakat* and s*adaqa* were not careful in spending as they were aware that they were not going to pay back. However, people who applied for interest -free loans were more

keen on their spending (Sahri *et al.*, 2014; Senadjki and Sulaiman, 2015). This concept helps analyse some responses to development interventions in this study.

Muslims within the community are driven by Islamic obligations to give back to other members in their community through *zakat*, and there are clear instructions regarding the amounts as well as who are the beneficiaries of *zakat.* The following provides some of the religious sayings and their understandings that would explain and encourage such behaviours. There are several types of *zakat*, for example *zakat* money, gold, agricultural land and others. *Zakat el mal* (زكـاة المـال, money alms) is the obligation to pay 2.5 percent of a Muslim's net worth savings (above a specific amount) that are idle for one year. *Zakat* is intended to benefit certain categories of people (Ab Rahman *et al.*, 2012).

> *"Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and In debt; In the cause of Allah. and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom" (Al-Quran 9:60)*

The above are the cases in which individuals are encouraged to pay money for specific categories of people in *zakat*. Such monetary handouts are significant in the charity and development field in Egypt (Chapter Three) whether with regard to the choices made in terms of interventions, or the aid chains and institutionalization of processes. For the individuals performing *zakat*, the primary aim is to fulfil the third pillar of Islam; cleansing and purifying one's wealth and managing one's greed and materiality through this purification, as explained in *AlQuran* ( خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَـدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا ) "Take from their wealth so that you might purify and sanctify them" (AlQuran, 9:103). Additionally, fulfilling *zakat* is a form of showing care for the wellbeing of the community and especially the less fortunate (Ab Rahman *et al.*, 2012). *Zakat* is not the only act of giving money in Islam stated in *AlQuran*, there is also *sadaqa* (صـدقة, benevolence). *Sadaqa* is not targeted to a specific group of people, and is an encouraged voluntary act of kindness such as giving money, in-kind charity, or services (El Daly, 2006; Khallaf, 2011).

People are motivated to give by the rewards that they can expect in this world and the hereafter, "Those who spend their wealth by day and by night, in private and in public, their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow" (AlQuran, 2:274). Muslims are also motivated by religion and love to send gifts to their deceased loved ones through acts of charity undertaken on their behalf. People base their choice of those acts on a prophetic saying that

explains that there are three ways to send rewards to the deceased in the hereafter which are knowledge that they produced and is beneficial, a son or daughter who prays for them, and sustainable *sadaqa* (صدقة جارية) whereby the benefit outlasts the moment of giving. For example, a water connection, or a mosque, or funding a room or a machine in a hospital (Khallaf, 2011).

While *zakat* and *sadaqa* are motivations for monetary giving in the form of purifying wealth and thanking for the financial blessings, volunteering is another act of alms to be thankful being youthful and healthy, and it is seen as a prophetic act (Iqbal, 2013). Muslims are encouraged to give thanks to God for his blessings of wealth, health, and knowledge by exerting efforts and giving wherever appropriate. As stated above there several motivations for volunteering such as development, altruism, career advancement and religion. In general doing good or volunteering from one's effort is encouraged in Islam (Sahri *et al.*, 2014). Salleh (2013) explains that people volunteer as a type of worship, to build a stronger relationship with God because religion tells people to do so and because it is a way to get a return from God in this world and the hereafter.

> *The prophet said "A Muslim is the brother of a fellow-Muslim. He should neither commit oppression upon him nor ruin him, and he who meets the need of a brother, Allah would meet big needs, and he who relieved a Muslim from hardship Allah would relieve him from the hardships to which he would be put on the Day of Resurrection, and he who did not expose (the follies of a Muslim) Allah would conceal his follies on the Day of Resurrection".* (Al-Bukhari, 1978)

While all the values noted in the above section can be used to understand what motivates different actors in an aid chain, it is clear that although the religious motivation is explained, some of the concepts are so deeply embedded and institutionalized in the Egyptian culture and legal institutions that, rather than being undertaken as a consequence of reason or informed religious intention, they are taken for granted. People just do them, either without thinking, or because it is expected of them. (From a more abstract perspective, this is a range between the starting point for motivation being explicitly discursive through to being entirely institutional, following a logic of appropriateness. In practice these are almost entirely entangled and inseparable.)

### *2.1.3 Conclusion*

This section has brought together a number of concepts and fields of thought within an overall CR approach to enable a greater understanding of the complexity and multiple causal factors operating

in the researched context. This research defines a discourse of development, which has been reproduced between NGOs and voluntary groups and institutionalized at a national level. The discourse examined here is 'hegemonic', in the sense not of being biased towards one sector of the community rather than another, nor that it exploits a specific sector (Stoddart, 2007, p. 208), nor that it is the *only* discourse present (Hajer, 1995) but rather that the ideas and practices which constitute it are is 'dominant' and incorporated into the world views at all levels of society.

The research investigates the possible processes by which this discourse has been and remains so solidly institutionalized, and the power that this institutionalized discourse has inflicted on institutions and other structures (Arts and Buizer, 2009, p. 340). Taking a CR approach, and following Arts and Buizer's realist version of DI, it is interested in how discursive and institutional factors interact with each other, and shape and are shaped by human agency.

Like structures, in CR, agents are seen to hold causal powers, and actors' agency has partial autonomy on its side when it comes to shaping those structures. One factor shaping an agent's causal powers is motivation, which forms an important part of the causal linkage between social structures (both institutions and discourses) and action. Motivations are shaped by many structures, and they affect the actions and perspectives of actors. Of particular interest, and significance in the studied context, are spiritual motivations. Islamic concepts were introduced to help understand the motivations of Egyptians as Egypt is a majority Muslim country, where both culture and governance are saturated with Islamic concepts and beliefs. The next section shifts away from these fundamental conceptual building bricks to introduce middle level theories about NGOs and how development actors and their actions are institutionalised in aid chains. Then rural development is presented together with its critique.

## 2.2 NGOs and Aid chains

This section explores the world of NGOs: definitions and structure and the possible relationships that exist between the government and the NGOs as partners within a system of authoritarian governance are explained in general. The focus on NGOs in Egypt will be in Chapter Three. The section also explores the processes of aid delivery by introducing the concept of the aid chain.

### *2.2.1 NGOs*

Non-governmental institutions, or NGOs, have embraced the role of developmental institutions and they have strong connections with rural development. The term NGOs was not used in the development field until the 1970s when it mainly referred to northern organizations helping southern countries to develop (Nafissa, 2000). The United Nations describes NGOs as non-profit units that serve communities based on a shared vision of the organization's members. Although widely used as a term, 'NGO' is ill-defined (Martens, 2002). It is a difficult term, in part because of the various ways in which an organization can be 'non-governmental', and in part because of the different things which such organizations do. Martens (2002) broke down the term NGO into its words, starting with 'non' and defining what NGOs are not, rather than what they are. He explained that what is shared about NGOs is that they are non-governmental not state led and generally do not possess a political stance, whilst being non-profit and non-violent organizations; the latter aspects differentiating NGOs from unstructured movements or protest groups (Martens, 2002). Before the 70s, scholars used various terms to refer to NGOs including; pressure groups, charitable agencies, private voluntary organizations (PVOs), civil society organizations and the independent division (Simmons, 1998; Martens, 2002). The range of different NGO activities and various motivations made NGOs' labels so many and so versatile. Adding to the complexity, NGOs also abide by a variety of juridical systems according to national laws and regulations (Martens, 2002).

In an attempt to unwrap this complexity, Simmons (1998) notes that those definitions include almost all organizations excluding radical, political or extremist groups, and so he proposed a taxonomy which breaks down NGOs according to their goals, funding, memberships, and activities.

| Goals | Membership & Personnel | Funding | Activities |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ultimate Goal?** Change societal norms; improve understanding; influence agendas; influence policies; implement policies; solve problems absent adequate government action<br><br>**For What/Whose Benefit?** Public interest (for single purpose or broad social Benefit); private interests of members or groups of firms; interest of the "non represented" (future generations, planet)? | **Members?** Individuals, organizations? Quasi-governmental, voluntary, open to every-One, etc.?<br><br>**Geographic Range?** Community, subnational, national, regional, transnational?<br><br>**Personnel?** Undifferentiated (voluntary), expert and professional, invited, elected, managerial? | **Sources?** Dues/assessments, donations, foundations, governments (grants or contacts), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)? | **Function?** Advocacy; information gathering and analysis; Information dissemination; Generation of ideas and recommendations; monitoring and watchdog role; service delivery; mediation/facilitation; financing and grant making?<br><br>**Area of Operation?** Community, subnational, national, regional, international?<br><br>Targets? Public, consumers, governments, IGOs, nonstate actors (including other NGOs, private sector)? |

Figure 2-3 Taxonomic method in understanding NGOs, (Simmons, 1998, p. 85)

The importance of identifying NGOs' goals and motivations lies in the fact that NGOs are influential and to some scholars they can affect political decisions and the activities of multinational corporations (Simmons, 1998) and vice versa. Petersen (2015) describes the importance of recognizing and accounting for an NGO's ideology, and explains what NGOs should do, not what they actually do, and how it is important to understand the ideology of those institutions. Understanding the ideology of an NGO provides an initial explanation of why some interventions are preferred regardless of the possibility of measuring the effectiveness of those interventions (Petersen, 2015). NGOs matter because they are part of the causal explanation for why things happen in a development context.

NGOs have many sources of funding. In some cases, funding is based on donations and in other cases it is based on membership, as well as through other organizations, governments, and/or grants from governments or international organizations (Simmons, 1998). Funding sources and ideology affect the direction of development and aid interventions (Petersen, 2015).

Defining NGOs' activities is no less difficult as NGOs cover a wide and diverse range of activities. While there are primary categories such as welfare, development, and advocacy NGOs, there is also sometimes overlap between these categories (Vakil, 1997; Risal, 2014). This overlap increases complexity when it comes to identifying fields of work, definitions and research which results in

unclear domains of action and limits possible alignments and assemblages (Banks and Hulme, 2012).

A part of defining the activities of an NGO is identifying the scale and location of its influence. This varies from community to national and international associations, and it also involves variables such as whether they are acting for their own communities or acting for others at either an international or local level, an example of international acting is Northern NGOs working in the south possibly through Southern NGOs, while urban NGOs working in a top-down manner in rural areas is an example of national level acting. Finally, in some contexts there are rural community-based NGOs which focus on their own communities. This research focuses predominantly on National Welfare NGOs in Egypt which function as welfare and development. The NGOs in focus are funded nationally by Egyptian individuals, corporates or the government, and their link with rural community-based NGOs, known as 'community development associations' (CDAs).

Despite both this level of complexity and the variations that exist in terms of NGOs' activities and funding, the dominant discourse is that NGOs are a good thing and can reach the parts that governments can't reach (Rugendyke, 2007). While in some African countries, NGOs have been critiqued for undermining the role of the state in development (Nega and Schneider, 2014), many scholars consider NGOs to be a substitute for governments and believe that NGOs have emerged in huge numbers to fill the gaps left by governments as a consequence of the latter's unwillingness or lack of resources (Fisher, 1997; Banks and Hulme, 2012; Mitlin and Bartlett, 2018).

NGOs have been celebrated and have increased in numbers all over the world. Reasons for this include their apparent objectivity and on ground experiences including their flexibility, innovation, efficient implementation, and quick responses (Rugendyke, 2007). Additionally, their ability to provide value for money interventions or services, and to perform the same activities as governments but using less resources have caused the rise in NGO numbers. NGOs are also known to tackle issues in distant or remote areas through their connections and they are able to work directly with poor people through bottom-up approaches. They may also possess better connections with beneficiaries and local government (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Simmons, 1998; Rugendyke, 2007). It is also argued that NGOs are able to emphasize on enhancing skills more than giving in-kind goods (Rugendyke, 2007).

Banks and Hulme (2012) explain the rise of NGOs from the 1970s until the 2010s. NGOs started in small numbers as northern, religious, relief organizations in the 1970s. Between the late 1970s and the 80s, NGOs started to play a promising alternative role due to the neoliberal decrease in state provided services incorporating grassroot approaches in service delivery and targeting empowerment and advocacy. In the 1990s, NGOs started to get critiqued, this was in parallel with the rise of the 'good governance' agenda and a renewed interest in the role of state (Banks and Hulme, 2012). In the 2000s, there was an increased focus on advocacy from physical interventions such as providing water sources and income generation projects (Rugendyke, 2007). By 2010 NGOs were critiqued for their inadequate results and more attention was given to specific type of NGOs specifically grassroots organizations. Despite the various changes, NGOs are still on the rise and they still have the power to influence institutions, reduce poverty, and enhance resource accessibility (Rugendyke, 2007; Banks and Hulme, 2012). All the reasons why NGOs are celebrated can be questioned especially as they do not always deliver the desired outcomes (Van der Heijden, 1987; Banks *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, NGOs often escape criticism as they are seen as faster alternatives to governments (Rugendyke, 2007); discussed further in the following sections.

### *2.2.2 Situating NGOs in broader structures and institutions*

NGOs that produce development programmes are organizations which are embedded in structures and exposed to change (Lowndes, 2001). Institutionalized processes are created by actors and institutions from within these structures; they serve as guides and impact future behaviours. Given this, it is important to read NGOs within their contextual structures and institutional relations. NGOs' connections are key to their rise. The relationship that is usually studied is that between Northern NGOs (NNGOs) and Southern NGOs (SNGOs). In this relation, the northern provides funds and the southern NGOs implement the agreed interventions and provide feedback with pictures and stories that result in more funding (Townsend and Townsend, 2004). Usually NNGOs work through SNGOs who have local knowledge, as the main strength of SNGOs is their grassroot linkages (Banks and Hulme, 2012). This is an unbalanced power relation with regards to funding, and uneven power relations also exist with regard to the size of NGO whether they are from the north or the south; very large NGOs tend to drive away smaller organizations as a result of their

domination of resources, and this sometimes becomes an obstacle to diversity and innovation in terms of approaches and aims (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). While the context of the research does not mirror the same organizational hierarchy as it does not include international NGOs, similarities can be drawn with reference to larger NGOs situated in the capital versus the rural CDAs.

The nature of the Egyptian context entails several partnerships between NGOs and other NGOs as well as the government and funding bodies. According to Bryson *et al*. (2015) partnership is when two or more organizations can work jointly to achieve results that one sector or organization will not be able to solely achieve. While collaborations between NGOs are complex, Benedetti (2006) explains that NGOs with different ideologies (religious in this case) could cooperate at the field level rather than on the higher organizational.

There is inevitably a relation between an NGO and the state, since NGOs are connected to the government - in some cases they may be rivals and in other cases may work in partnerships (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008). There is a growing body of literature about civil society and state relationships in some Southern nations and regions (Rugendyke, 2007). However, most of the research about NGO-government relations is based in democratic states, and also includes the 'usual views' with regards to the weakness and marginalization of southern states (Silk, 2006). Texts covering the nature of NGOs in authoritarian states in eastern Asia and the MENA region where political domains are autocratic and dictatorial remain limited (Lewis, 2013).

NGO-Government typologies have been presented by several scholars. Hodge and Greve (2005) question whether NGO-government relations are a public private partnership in which governments are "steering not rowing" (Hodge and Greve, 2005, p. 84) depends on the power that each organization has. Coston (1998) provides eight NGO-Government relation typologies by which to identify the nature of relations which exist and facilitate assessment of government-NGO interactions in specific setting. The nature of the relation varies according to the degree of formality and, consequently, the degree of government linkage, as well as the government's acceptance or rejection of institutional pluralism. However, Coston's categorization assumes that NGOs are relatively independent, and he presents only three possible typologies of NGO-government relations in which there is an asymmetrical power relation which benefits the (given) government. These typologies include repression, rivalry, and competition. Although it is contradictory to the

Northern views of NGOs, the NGO-government relation does not have to imply 'counterproductive' development (Ziegler, 2010; Lewis, 2013).

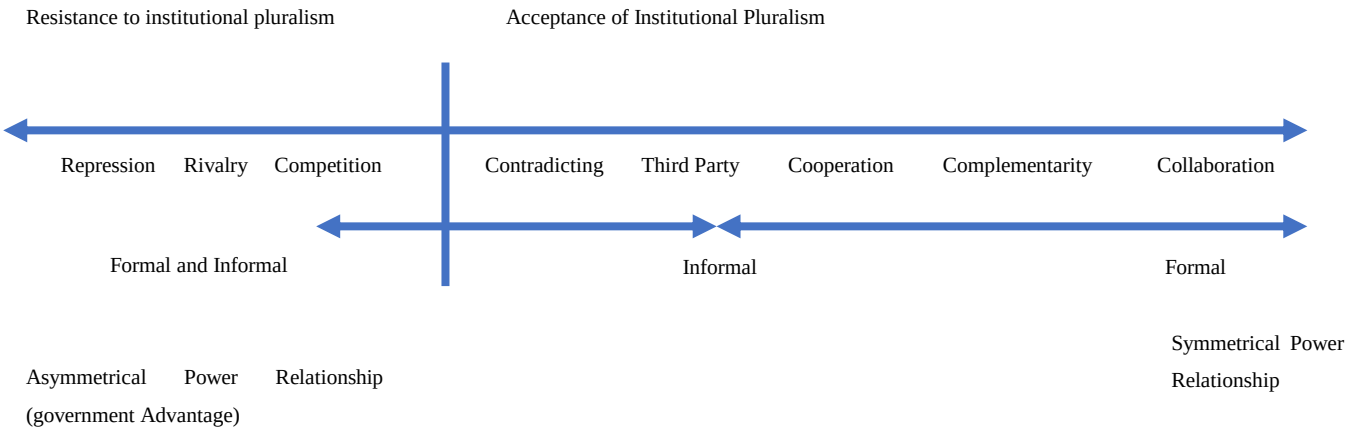


Figure 2-4: Model of Government-NGO relationships, (Coston, 1998, p. 363)

As this study is situated in an authoritarian state, a linear representation would be restrictive to the complexity of the possible relations and would eliminate the possibility that this relation can be both asymmetrical in power and collaborative. This is why this research adopts Najam's NGO-government relation explanation (Najam, 2000) Figure 2-1. "It proposes a four-C framework based on institutional interests and preferences for policy ends and means—cooperation in the case of similar ends and similar means, confrontation in the case of dissimilar ends and dissimilar means, complementarity in the case of similar ends and dissimilar means, and co-optation in the case of dissimilar ends but similar means" (Najam, 2000, p. 375). This explanation provides a more flexible outline to the possibilities dependent on motivations and institutions.

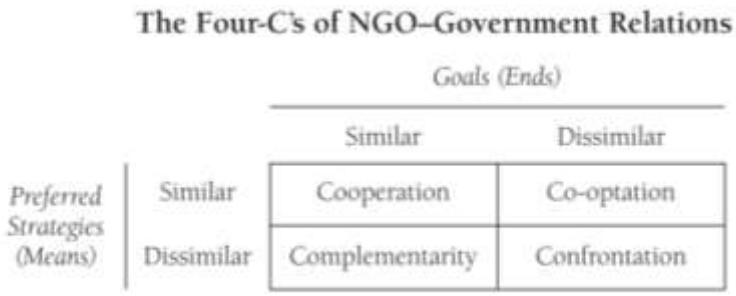


Figure 2-5: The Four-Cs of NGO-government relationships, (Najam, 2000, p. 383)

Lewis (2013) gives three criteria for cooperative relations between a state and the NGOs operating therein, in which the foundation is an authoritarian state that is able to control and regulate NGOs. First, a shared political view in which the NGOs reciprocate the same authoritarian regime in their own organizations. Second, a functionalist perspective in which the NGOs perform interventions that coincide with the government's goals. In this case, both institutions develop a reciprocally beneficial relation with symmetrical goals, in which NGOs see the government as a rich resource for funding and perceive it , therefore, as a beneficial partner (Hsu, 2010; Rose, 2011; Lewis, 2013; Alvir, 2018). Third, prioritizing NGO's sets of norms and attitudes more than structures and institutions, and in this case the government is aligned with the humanity and the motives expressed by the NGO. In some cases, both the NGOs and the government find a way to coexist. However, how these institutions coexist differ according to the power of policies, issues of funding dependency, and aspects of governance (Rose, 2011; Lewis, 2013).

Researching NGO-government relations in authoritarian states, Lewis (2013) implies the same as Najam (2000) by stating that the same government may prohibit NGOs introducing counter discourses while supporting other NGOs. The relation is a "complex and multi layered network of material transactions, personal connections, and organizational linkages" (Lewis, 2013, p. 326). This research is concerned with NGO-government relations when it comes to providing services and not with regard to promoting democratization or advocacy as possibly in those cases the institutional goals might not be similar which would imply funding restrictions and power struggles (Edwards and Hulme, 1996).

Some authors are critical of close government-NGO relationships, on the grounds of the difficulties that arise with government-funded NGOs relating to issues of autonomy and accountability to communities. Governmental funding can negatively affect accountability, performance, and legitimacy, and weaken NGO independence, and shift away from downwards accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). It also encourages the focus of the work of NGOs on service delivery away from advocacy and increases the stress on quantitative short-term interventions. Another major setback is the quality and long-term condition of services provided by NGOs (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). While NGO-government relations affect development directions, the flow of the development, the nature of the 'aid chain' also impacts the outcome.

### *2.2.3 Aid chains*

The 'aid chain' approach, also referred to as the 'resource transfer paradigm' is an actor oriented approach pertaining to the flow of resources and information that renders visible the complexity and the numerous hands that exist between the funder and the intended (Malhotra, 2000; Silk, 2006). It includes funding agencies, receiving institutions, and contractors. While aid chain literature in general is based on north-south interactions and movements of resources (Silk, 2006; Wilks *et al.,* 2021),this research builds on the concept while allowing for variations that arise from the research focusing on national NGOs which serve local rural villages.

Aid is not simply about funder-beneficiary connection, because it involves more actors. An aid chain covers all actors and organizations involved in the aid process from conceptualization to decision making and delivery, as well as the distribution of roles between types of actors depending on the context. The nature of these systems plausibly affects what gets delivered (since practices are shaped by the institutions and discourses of development). Some general patterns have been found in reality, and also reported upon within existent literature. However, these may not all be found in the Egyptian context. The information that travels upwards and downwards through an aid chain is never clear-cut, changes occur at every level, whether they are 'filtered' or added to by intermediaries' experiences or by the beneficiaries who know the correct words to attract funding (Watkins *et al.,* 2012). There is huge criticism of NGOs for not being representative or accountable to the poor. Bebbington (2005) suggests that this is a reflection of the aid chain trends, and the reason that the information that goes back up the chain is out of date are that local CDAs, as chain members, are weak. An aid chain is 'donor dominated' in terms of power over the processes and, as a result, the relation is uneven and biased upwards to fulfilling donors' needs but not the other way round (Silk, 2006). The rules and regulations that govern aid are sometimes more restrictive and eventually increase this uneven flow of resources.

There may be general tendencies in these relations. For instance, the power in social relationships affects the movement of resources and ideas along the aid chain; these may be specific to each actor and their position in the aid chain. It follows, that the movement of resources is sometimes dependent on the significance of 'who you know' rather than the knowledge you have (Corbridge, 2007). Swindler and Watkins (2017, p. 2) note with regard to aid chains that "all who want to do good—from idealistic volunteers to world-weary development professionals—depend on brokers

as guides, fixers, and cultural translators. These irreplaceable but frequently unseen local middlemen are the human connection between altruists' dreams and the realities of global philanthropy". Asymmetries of wrongful information increase for example when intermediaries and beneficiaries are afar, those asymmetries usually result in that the help is not being given to the poorest (Bebbington, 2005). However, some authors claim that, despite these problems, recipients of such aid find ways to maximize their benefits, challenge power, and control the information that is returned through the chain (Watkins *et al.*, 2012). NGOs are sometimes seen as the brokers between beneficiaries and donors. While brokers or intermediaries are crucial to aid chains and aid processes, literature upon them is limited (Swidler and Watkins, 2009).

Flows along the aid chain include not only material resources but other aspects such as compensation or recognition. Using Silk's gift theory, a defining concept in development work which distinguishes between a perfect gift that is purely selfless which does not include any exchange of benefits or a gift and one which is 'fully reciprocal' in which exchange happens in terms of resources and is managed by power, political relationships and institutional forces (Silk, 2006). Some members of the chains expect some sort of compensation such as institutional recognition, personal development, motivation, perception of their community participation and institutional relationship (Alfaro-Trujillo *et al.*, 2011).This in itself would provide some explanation for expected slippages of resources (Silk, 2006). Depending on aid chain and the actors within it, a change in balance and inequality could occur. However, even a gift with a benevolent motivation includes asymmetrical aspects that will increase unless all members of the aid chain, structures and surrounding institutions are altruistically compliant (Silk, 2006). The actors in an aid chain and the structures therein either result in the expected plans being met or the goals falling short.

So, the aid chains are actor oriented and possibly donor dominated. Within these aid chains resource slippage might happen, according to the above explained Silk's gift theory there are variations in between the purely utopian altruistic aid and the aid in which reciprocal exchange is expected. The importance of identifying the aid chain is tracking the actors involved and their roles in aid design and delivery. This research is concerned with aid chains in a local context and the power relations within the same with regard to actors and the effects that a stable aid chain has on discourses.

## 2.3 Rural development and the role of NGOs

This section provides a general discussion of rurality and rural development discourses and practices, shedding light on the development of rural communities and their transformations in global literature and the role of NGOs in development. Then, a critique is presented that covers development as an idea, development discourses, institutional structures of aid and the criticisms of the execution of development discourses on the ground: funding, limitations of development, collaborations, and monitoring and evaluation. The focus on rural development in the Egyptian context is discussed in Chapter Three.

### *2.3.1 Rurality and development*

44% of the world's population lives in rural areas: in the Arab world this figure is 41% , 34% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 57 % in Egypt (The World Bank, 2018). Although the percentages are falling, rural populations are increasing as natural growth is running at a higher level than out-migration (Lynch, 2005).

For a long time, rural areas were defined by administrative data sets pertaining to population, living conditions, employment and distance, and were characterized as remote, semi-natural or less developed (Bennett *et al.*, 2019; Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019). For example, Deavers (1992) characterizes rural areas as small scale and distant from cities. Those characteristics explain physical boundaries that limit mobility and economic growth, and decrease opportunities for economies of scale (Deavers, 1992).

This research adopts Gallent and Gkartzios's more flexible approach to define rurality that supports a changing rural context and is adaptable to the Egyptian rural context explained in Chapter Three. They define rurality as an "assemblage of material assets (patterns of land-use, economic activity, built form etc.) and immaterial qualities (their particular social life and the subjective experiences of being in a rural place)" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 39). This definition accounts for content and presents the diversity that exists in rural communities (Bennett *et al.*, 2019). Given the specificity of rurality in Egypt against many other parts of the world, this description is useful as it does not delimit settlement size or density but provides a fabric that can be tailored to context.

Until the 1970s, rural livelihoods were mainly agricultural. Thereafter, however, there has been a shift away from agriculture and rural areas across the world have become more reliant on service

industries, production, and manufacturing (Deavers, 1992; Berdegué *et al.*, 2013). This transformation and change can be explained as being a result of global and local changes, as well as drivers such as industrialization, and political struggles (Berdegué *et al.*, 2013). The transformation is also a result of the two-directional flows of interaction that occurred between rural and urban that include food, money, norms, and ideas (Lynch, 2005).

Scholars explain this transformation as "a comprehensive process of societal change, driven by global and homogenizing forces that interact with localized structures, institutions, and actors to produce uneven patterns and outcomes of development" (Berdegué *et al.*, 2013, p. 4). The degree of transformation or local 'rural futurology' depends on the degree to which the given rural area has been affected by economic, cultural, political, and social changes caused by movement and mixing (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019). Given this, it is important to understand rural areas in their specific contexts and times to make sense of the structures that surround the discourse of development.

***Development as a concept***

One cannot understand discourses of rural development without first interrogating the concept of 'development' which is complex, ambiguous, and contested. A dictionary definition of development is the "advancement or process of growth and change in something or someone" (Merriam Webster, 2018). However, the United Nations defines development as "a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development, and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development" (UN, 1993). Esteva (2009) states that although development in practice is very ambiguous with different meanings reflecting different ideologies and traditions, by adding 'context', development can have a clearer/more practical, and more definite meaning.

Underdevelopment as a concept was formulated in 1944 and was used by the UN in 1947 (Esteva, 2009), and this concept can be explained as the dominant development discourse at the time. Its real recognition cane after Truman's speech in 1949 when 2 billion people were classified as underdeveloped without any consideration of their peculiarities of differences (Esteva, 2009). From that day forward, countries grouped into this category have strived to escape the stigma (Escobar, 1995).

This categorization portrays underdeveloped countries as 'different', and as being in need of an independent domain of research devoted to their study. These same discourses tend to also characterize rural areas as especially 'undeveloped'. This categorization highlights the efforts made by developed countries to make underdeveloped countries similar to themselves by directing their enrolment into a global neo-liberal economic system (Corbridge, 2007). This discourse presented developed and underdeveloped countries with different targets which was dependent only upon according to how developed they were and without regard to their individuality (Kahyaogullari, 2013). Development theories and ideas to solve the problems of the Global South usually come from the Global North; with the North as "the point of reference" (Willis *et al.*, 2014). This view is still dominant and is driven by the big funding bodies of 'development'. This discourse has been heavily criticised. Kothari and Minogue (2001) explain that the development's main players, including the World Bank, are causing more damage and that they are only helping countries with pro capitalist views. To overcome the misrepresentation of the South, South-South communication and exchange of expertise has to be encouraged by producing first hand South data (Willis *et al.*, 2014). This polarisation of developed and underdeveloped is similar in a way to the urban versus rural, Chambers (1983) explains that there is a location unbalance in which urban areas are suffering unemployment while rural areas are underserved with professionals as they send their children to the urban areas for a foreseen better future.

***Discourses of rural development***

In 1971, the United Nations defined rural development as "the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among a given rural population whose converging effects indicate, in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned" (Adebayo, 2014, p. 98). Defining development by outcomes highlights what later becomes an issue in development critiques whereby measurable interventions and short-term projects become more favourable for funding bodies and development institutions (Nelson *et al.*, 2021).

Approaches to rural development have evolved over the last six decades. The sequence of evolution presented by Ellis and Biggs (2001) goes from community modernization, and the introduction of mechanization, to community development, liberalization, participation, and

poverty reduction strategies (Figure 2-6). Those stages display the evolution of rural development ideas from top-down state-led to empowerment and integration strategies (Ellis and Biggs, 2001).

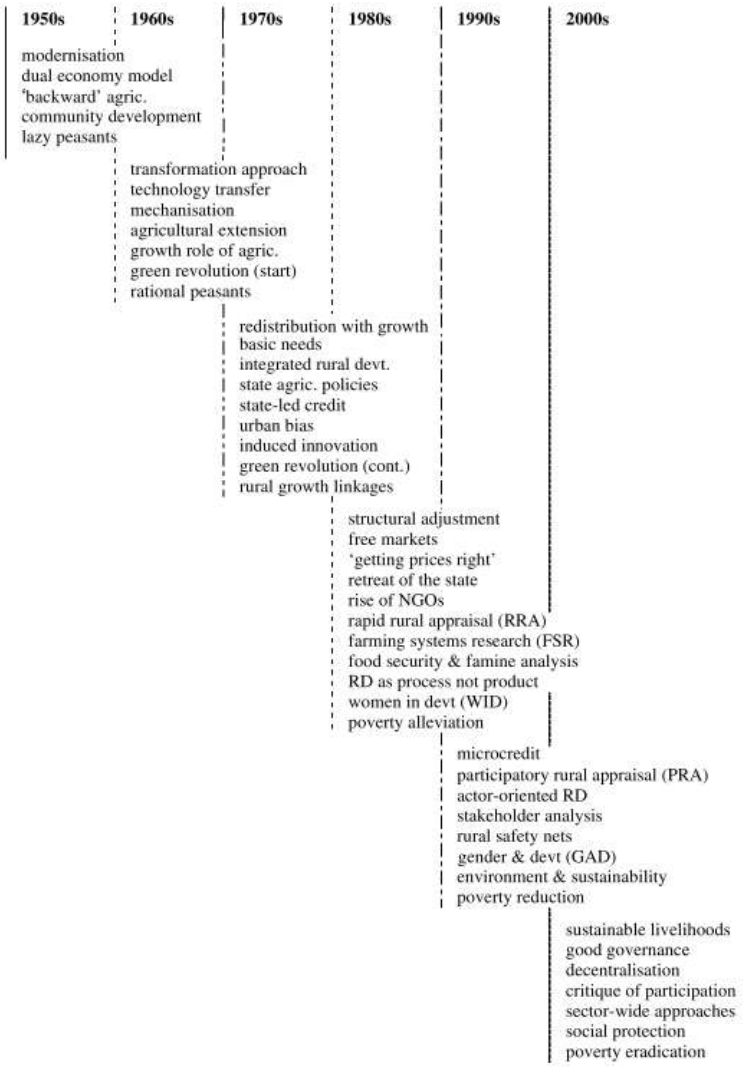


Figure 2-6: Rural development ideas timeline, (Ellis and Biggs, 2001, p. 439)

Ellis and Biggs (2001), identified three paradigm shifts of rural development starting from the small-farm as the working unit in the 1960s. This idea was critiqued for dismissing economies of scale and the idea of immigration to urban areas. Rural inhabitants migrated to urban areas in search for opportunities for wage labour as opposed to agriculture (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). Moving beyond economic enhancement 'Integrated rural development' approaches were initiated in the

1970s and then between the 1980s and the 1990s, participatory approaches were introduced to empower rural residents to take over and set their own priorities (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). This move included several points which all occurred simultaneously or interconnectedly; advancing farming systems research, acknowledging the abilities of the poor and validating the "indigenous technical knowledge (ITK)", "rapid rural appraisal (RRA)", "participatory rural appraisal (PRA)", and "participatory learning and action (PLA)" (Chambers, 1994). This was coupled with the liberal market movement which caused governments to withdraw from agricultural management. In parallel, the rise of postmodern thinking occurred. This accentuated community uniqueness and finally turned heads to the possible effects of rural politics on gender inequality, with aid donors deciding to pursue different partnerships which would lead to substantial growth in the involvement of the NGO sector (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). Ever since, NGOs have played a pivotal role in pioneering new planning methodologies (Chambers,1993).

Ellis and Biggs (2001) focused on the theories which sought to enhance the farmers' productivity levels and increase production and competitiveness (Ashkenazy *et al.*, 2018). Consecutively, Ellis and Biggs (2001) outlined a predicted future paradigm which involved agriculture and highlighted

the importance of various occupations as a new basis for rural development (see

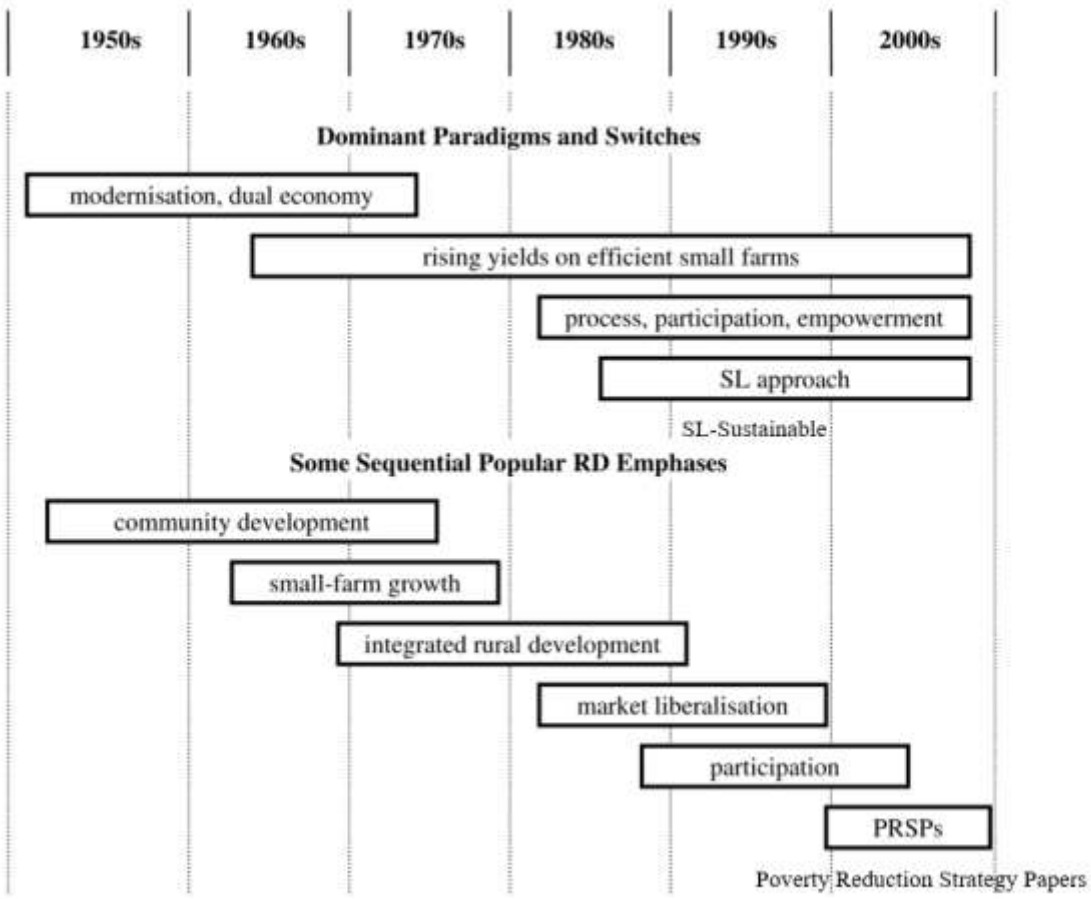


Figure 2-7). Zadawa and Omran (2020) confirm those predictions and presented the approaches used over the last 20 years to include an emphasis on small holder agriculture, local producers within the global chains, a focus on poverty elimination initiatives and sustainable farming systems. Ashkenazy *et al.,* (2018) simplified the last two decades to include resilience and environmentally friendly production. Scholars envisioned more comprehensive utopian models which would include social inclusion, accessibility, sustainability, innovation, adding value, community, planning, and enhancing rural vitality through health, education, services, facilities, and housing (Moseley, 2003). In accepting complexity, it is acknowledged that the preceding concepts were not necessarily reflected on the ground, additionally there were other parallel political and economic shifts that were not labelled as 'development' and dependent on the context. In summary, rural development is a long-term set of processes that remains, in some places, a top-

down process designed to enhance rural communities' economic, social, and cultural aspects. The identified dominant themes in rural development (see

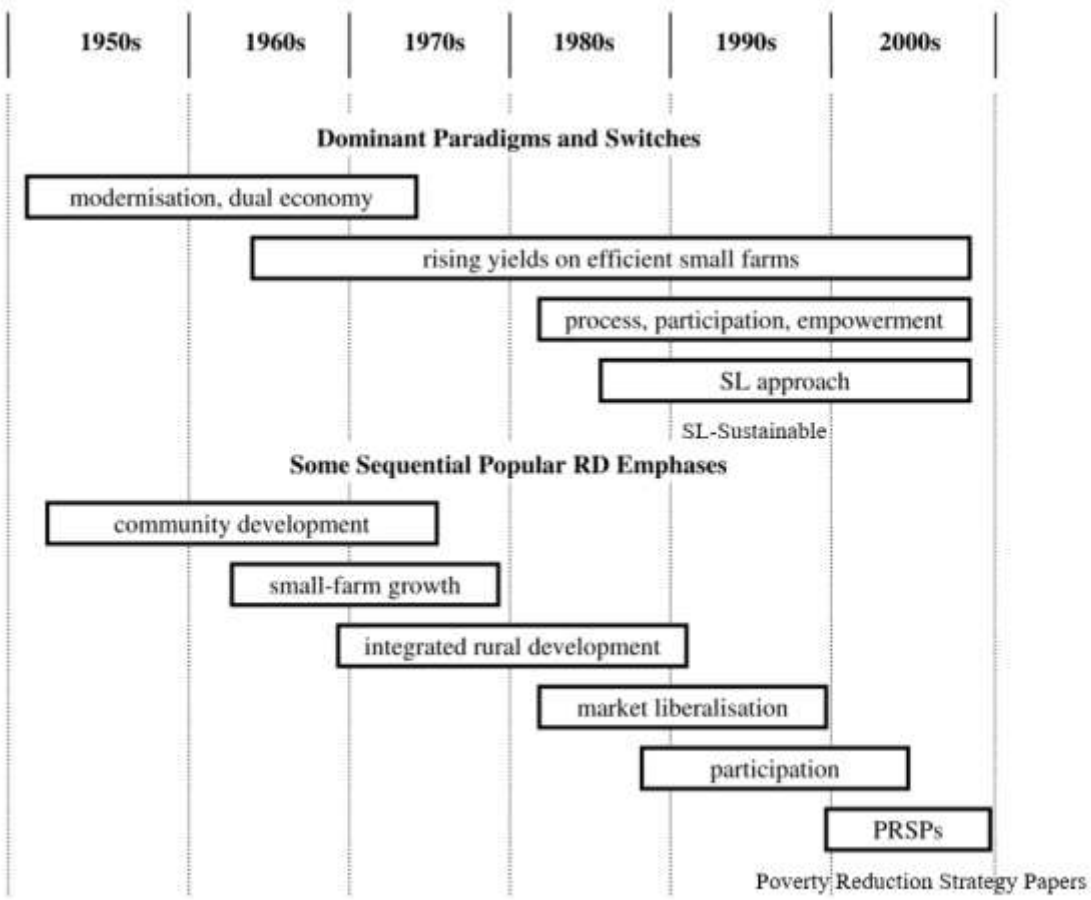


Figure 2-7) are used in Chapter Three as a reference to identify how Egypt has been either similar or separated from the major dominant ideas of development discourses. The next section provides reasons for the critique of development aid.

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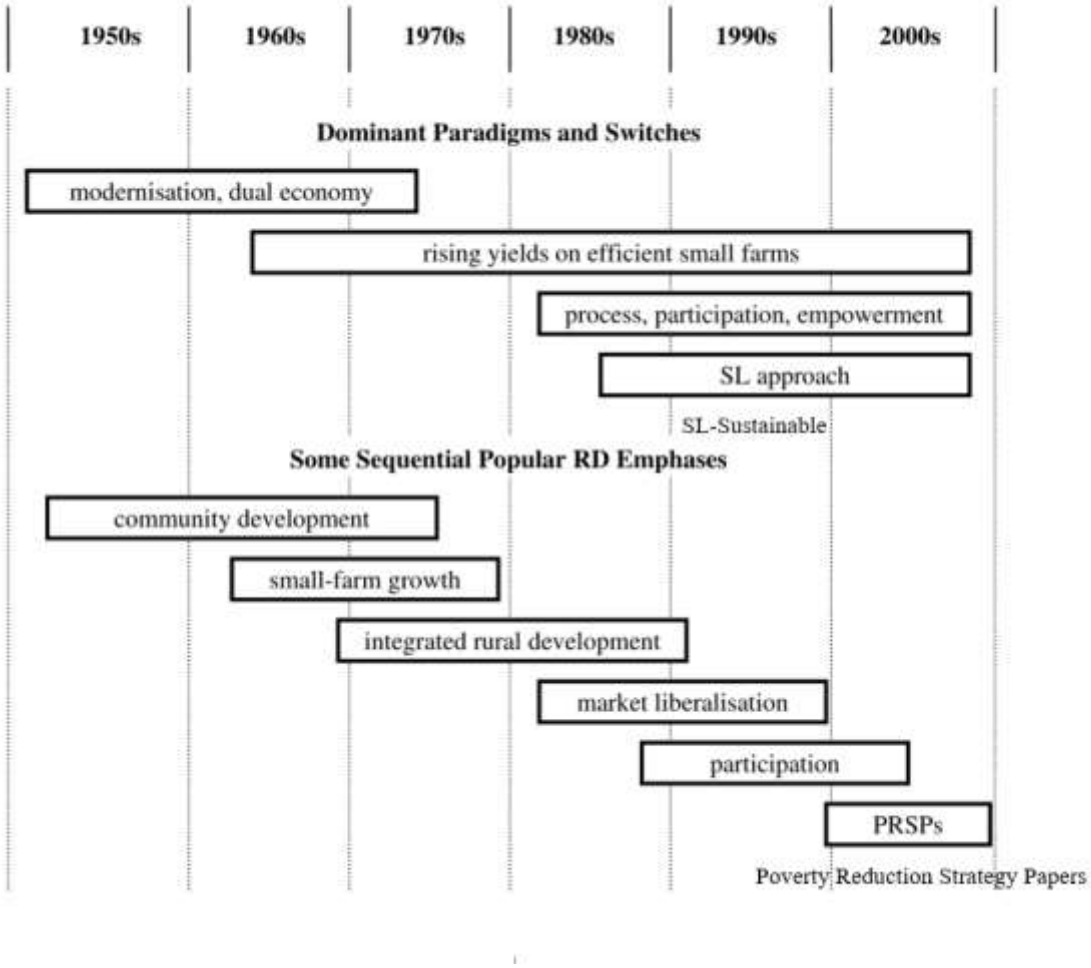



Figure 2-7: Dominant and sequential themes in Rural Development, (Ellis and Biggs, 2001, p. 442)

### *2.3.2 Development Aid Critique*

Post-development scholars have long argued that the promise of development has not been met (Escobar, 1995) and several scholars have critiqued both the idea of development and development processes (Hobart, 2002). The critique here covers three aspects: the whole idea of development, critiques of the institutional structures of aid, and processes or how development aid is actually carried out. All aspects of critique presented separately below in practice are interconnected and may affect one another. This complexity is only abstracted for analytical clarity.

Critiques of the whole idea of rural development include simplifying the complexities and variations that exist with regard to rurality and poverty, distance, and otherness. The simplification

and contextualization of rural development is criticized for several reasons. Critical scholars suggest that developments with an underlying assumption that it fits a general mould is problematic because it does not account for contextual individuality (Hobart, 2002). Context is crucial in recognizing the history, economy, and social norms as well as the governance and power in the world that is to be transformed (Hobart, 2002; Li, 2007).

Complexity in envisioning development can mainly be attributed to how actors in the aid chain perceive each other and how they perceive the development itself (Hobart, 2002). Chambers opens his book "Rural Development: Putting the Last First" with an old English proverb "What the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve about"( 1983, p. 1). Chambers conceptualizes the main problems of rural development as distance and otherness. Corbridge (2007) argues that development studies are based on an ideal outside, and a simple distinction between them and us. Chambers (1983) refers to academics -between a larger group of professionals- as the outsiders, the outsiders who impose their views on the rural inhabitants without living their lives or understanding their everyday struggles. The outsiders, who get their information about rural areas from short visits, Chambers (1983) continues to illustrate how being an outsider grows biases: urban, project, person, seasonal diplomatic and professional. It is not just a matter of north and south but a top-down relation that includes an outsider element expert, or an elitist (Chambers, 1983). It is an outsider relationship from both perspectives; villagers label outsiders as dishonest and untrustworthy, whilst the outsiders stereotype the villagers as gullible, incompetent, and naïve (Wilson, 1967; Chambers, 1983).

Scott explains that the modern authoritarian state views people and civil society as powerless and non-resistant to plans in a generalized and simplified way. This leads to a lack of true understanding of the peoples' needs and, as a result, interventions are "crude and self-defeating" (Scott, 1998, p. 2). Hobart (2002) gives a metaphorical example pertaining to how patients are engaged in their diagnosis and how, by contrast, in development issues people are passive recipients of an expert's knowledge. This relationship between experts and people is seen as paternalistic whereby the stronger (expert) who is presumably searching for an optimum solution for the people's problems wants to change the weaker and the weaker is only eligible to accept the help (Dudley, 2002).

Efforts have been made to change the top-down approach so as to empower more bottom-up approaches. However, some scholars claim that the results and schemes are the same because actions are still defined by the 'experts' from the North in many cases (Hobart, 2002). Nonetheless some scholars still view local knowledge as untechnical and non-scientific (Bicker *et al.*, 2003). Those views result in a perspective that there is an unjust representation of how poverty and rurality are portrayed, possibly triggered by elitest views of poverty (Reis *et al.*, 2005). Rurality is assumed to be similar, nonetheless, rurality is different even within the same country (Nelson *et al.*, 2021). As for defining the poor, they are either represented in explicit terms with specific characteristics or implicitly defined with silences in reports (Bebbington, 2005). These separate representations affect the visions of the various aid chain actors and the setup for development (Hobart, 2002)**.**

The institutional structures of aid are criticized for several reasons. They are mainly criticized for their top-down nature, being driven by funding bodies, and for being resistant to change. Organizations in development, such as NGOs, can be just as top-down in nature as governments (Banks and Hulme, 2012), and this again diminishes the importance of recipient voices. NGOs, as development structures, can be viewed as donor dominated and the choice and nature of aid becomes established based on donor preferences (and possibly regardless of the actual needs of the people). Embedded in structures, development organizations choose their institutional relations and organizational affiliations thoroughly as this directly affects funding. Van der Heijden (1987, p. 106), quoting a traditional African proverb, explains, "if you have your hand in another man's pocket, you must move when he moves", (cited in Edwards and Hulme, 1996, p. 967). NGOs focus on enhancing and maintaining relations with specific parties/organizations to ensure the continuity or growth of funding rather than seeking aligned organizational vision with greater development goals in mind. For example, southern NGOs working with northern funders will sometimes fear connecting with the state in case they harm their funding advantage (Silk, 2006). Another example, NGOs that have marketed a specific image for themselves would not change even if change was needed, as any change in the way of spending or link to the public sector might affect their image and thus their funding (Simmons, 1998). NGOs tend to pursue state or market plans rather than their own or those of the people (Tembo, 2003), and they also make institutional changes to become more desirable to funding bodies (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). Given this, NGOs may disregard the community that they are seeking to 'help' and offer projects that are more attractive

to donors because they have a higher chance of being funded (Osei, 2015). This limits the flexibility of NGOs for which they were originally celebrated.

While there is a theoretical focus on the lack of acknowledgment of complexities and variations in poor communities, intervening entities i.e. NGOs are still treated as one despite the fact that they are not homogeneous in either their ideologies or visions (Dudley, 2002). Treating intervening entities as one assumes that they all have a shared goal. Even if the goal were shared, there are no guarantees that working collectively would be an embedded skill. Development reports, however, usually recommend better collaboration and a more comprehensive multidisciplinary methodology. Consequently, collaboration between entities and having a 'shared goal' becomes just another checkpoint on a sponsors list (Dudley, 2002). It becomes an additional load on the fieldworker to juggle all the input and achieve this integration on a field level which was not managed in the planning phase (Dudley, 2002). This is an example of issues that are problematic at the conceptual level, whilst their effects are informally addressed at the field level.

Scholars have critiqued how development aid is executed. These views, however, do not criticize the idea of development but rather the on the ground processes and the procedures of aid delivery. Setbacks to processes include standardized frameworks, funding restrictions, tight timeframes, and a lack of feedback and evaluation. Some scholars criticize the systematic standardized frameworks used by development organizations for their lack of on the ground flexibility (Whaley, 2018). This is usually the case with large donations that come with excessive donor restrictions and detailed reporting requirements. The issue with standardization arises at an early stage when presenting proposals and ideas to donor bodies, with development organizations not tailoring development plans but rather pulling together development proposals from previous experiences in a 'collage like' process (Whaley, 2018). This results in standardized aid interventions to different communities and contexts (Tembo, 2003; Risal, 2014). As a result, the focus shifts from identifying a development problem and innovating specific contextual solutions to identifying problems for which available known technical solutions exist without a need for innovation (Li, 2007).

One reason to adopt the standardized solutions is to shorten timeframes and meet donors' requirements. The tight timeframes of actors and institutions in an aid chain have a major effect on planning, outcomes, relationships, and spending. According to Hobart (2002), working with

pre-established guidelines to finish a project in a short time indicates that development fits a general mould; a critique explained previously within this study. As stated by Edwards and Hulme (1996), short timeframes affect the choices of interventions as some donors are not invested in long-term, qualitative work that would have a positive effect on institutional development, and thus any activities with such aims are not supported. Despite the seeming advantages of having shorter-term projects which allow greater volunteer involvement, there are also drawbacks. The short timeframes may disrupt the continuity of the project or aid-chains as volunteers may come and go, and there may also be a lack of knowledge/expertise transfers, as well as discontinuity in relationships between people (Otoo and Amuquandoh, 2014). The time bound nature of development projects may include having to spend all allocated money in a given financial year which could contribute to a lack of innovation and the tendency to adopt standardized plans (Dudley, 2002).

One of the major setbacks of the development process is the lack of feedback and evaluation; monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and the consequences of development. Measuring development has evolved from an economic to a more comprehensive field which aims at social equity, active participation, and the inclusion of all sectors with stress on capacity building (Esteva, 2009). Despite these intentions, this is not the case on the ground. According to Scott (1998), interventions are only approved by governments and donor entities when the processes can be characterized by standardized or unified quantitative technical measures to ensure their convenience and state control. These calculated measures may not be sufficient to evaluate the development itself (Li, 2007). Constraints such as meeting poverty alleviation standards and extensive reporting push NGOs towards measurable, physical outcomes rather than finding alternatives to problems, and especially development which is what would have been expected (Bebbington *et al.,* 2008).

According to Watkins *et al.* (2012) although there are many ways to measure the efficacy of an intervention, even the simplest surveys are seldom used. From the beneficiaries' viewpoint, selection and biases are not accounted for, and the only means for beneficiaries' disagreements to be explained are via silence or refusing to engage. Intelligently, dominant villagers learn quickly the key expressions and thus use the terms to make reference to themselves as poor or deserving; this allows them to maximise benefit from the projects and causes the power hierarchy to dominate

even more (Corbridge, 2007). There is minimal reporting, monitoring, and evaluation (Cleary, 1997), and although interveners agree that failure is a learning process, NGOs often exaggerate successes and mask failures (Cleary, 1997) (Watkins *et al.*, 2012). This is a result of uneven accountability where upwards accountability is mandatory and downwards accountability has become a matter of choice (Townsend and Townsend, 2004). NGOs will hide any problems or issues for fear of losing funding (Bebbington, 2005). Moreover, they tend to only picture success when considering their own projects, while information of how or whether the interventions were successful is lost (Dudley, 2002). There is also an unacknowledged gap between the utopian, rational, and orderly world pictured by development entities and governments and the reality; unintended consequences are not accommodated (Hobart, 2002).

## 2.4 Conclusion

Section 2.1 set out the basic theoretical framework of the research. Within the overall critical realist approach, the research uses Arts and Buizer's (2009) version of discursive institutionalism as a lens to interpret and explain the interplay between discourses, institutions and agents that hold causal powers that can cause either stability or change. Section 2.2 has discussed relevant literature about NGOs, and aid chains. NGOs are a major player in aid chains and in the case investigated. There are different possible relations that may exist between the NGOs and a government depending on the similarity or dissimilarity of their goals and means. The relational results are either cooperation, co-optation, complementarity, or confrontation (Najam, 2000). In an authoritarian state NGO-government relation is important not only to examine the dominant narrative where NGOs are seen as an alternative to the government but for the possibly cooperative discourse and perhaps a social contract in which the NGOs are providing the services on the behalf of the government and the government is gaining recognized legitimacy (Loewe *et al.*, 2019) or a new combination of all of the above.

The way that 'aid' is transferred from donor to ultimate recipient can be thought of in terms of 'aid chains.' A series of actors are involved in the movement of resources and knowledge back and forth, during which slippage of resources and knowledge may happen, downwards and upwards, respectively. All actors involved in an aid chain demonstrate power, influence, and authority in various ways. Since one of the research aims of this study is to unveil the processes of NGO-led

rural development it is important to recognize the actors, hierarchy in such transactions, and how the actors carry particular ideas of development.

Finally, section 2.3, presented rurality, rural development discourses and practices, while critiquing development at three levels as a concept, as well as its institutional structures and processes. What is considered to be 'rural' has changed over time and it has moved away from a functional definition to the idea of contextual explanations. Those changes came together in the rural transformations that happened in some rural areas and exhibited a shift from agrarian nature to service delivery and industry. This means that there have been constant changes to multiple factors connected to rurality such as rural development.

Although 'development' according to the UN is providing a higher quality of life, the conceptualization of development is critiqued because of the categorization of a bundle of countries as underdeveloped which has affected those countries negatively in areas like poverty, deprivation, and dominance. This conceptualization of development reflects on the perspective of development stakeholders (widely northern or western), who understand the issue of development as one of similarity and difference, the north wanting the south to be like them, which does not account for context differences and ideologies. Similarly, some rural development professionals treated all rurality identically and measured rural development in a quantitative manner disregarding the fact that rurality is different even within a single country. Discourses of rural development have generally accumulated a series of discourses from community development to participatory approaches and sustainable livelihoods. While this was a global trend, the Egyptian case is presented in section 3.4.

It is important to recognise the limitations of the idea of 'development' itself, which might be one reasons why an ineffective discourse of rural development has been so dominant in Egypt. The ways in which academics define rurality and rural problem directs their approaches to development. This can be reflected in this research's case with reference not to North and South but to the dichotomy that exists between urban and rural. It is important to recognise the limitations of the idea of 'development' itself, which might be one reasons why an ineffective discourse of rural development has been so dominant in Egypt. Development institutional structures operate in ways that are affected by several factors including funding, maintaining relations, and power, hence affect an optimal development institutional environment. The processes of development,

shaped by surrounding structures, further alters ideal outcomes through the existence of limited timeframes, standardized interventions, and a lack of both monitoring and evaluation. These limitations that lead to the critiques of rural development can be extended to the Egyptian context, as the NGO-led village development discourse continues in spite of not achieving the communicated goals. The next chapter introduces Egypt as the context of the research undertaken herein and addresses available literature focused upon rural development.

# 3 Chapter Three: Egypt - Contextual realities

The previous chapter has engaged with literature about discourses, institutions, religion, development, and NGOs to set up the theoretical framework for the research. There appears to be a gap in research about the development in the Middle East and North Africa and middle-income countries for several reasons including that fact that they are lower-middle rather than low-income countries, also because of the political and security difficulties in doing development research in such authoritarian counties. Ismail states that there is limited literature about the current authoritarian state in Egypt, and explains that there is minimal literature about Egypt for the difficulty of conducting research in Egypt (Ismail, 2019).

To situate this research in wider societal structures, this chapter introduces Egypt as the context of the research. The chapter offers a description of the current governance structure under which the study was actualized to provide understanding of the basic formal institutional hierarchy where the discourse is taking place. The chapter provides a brief history of events that have shaped Egypt in the modern era and how these have impacted rural livelihoods and NGOs. The nature of the NGO eco-system in Egypt and the aid chains of development are discussed, presenting what is available on the subject and stressing the missing information that the research will provide. This chapter also covers the roles of NGOs in rural development in Egypt, and the relationship between NGOs and the government; this is done in order to situate the empirical work that is subsequently presented in Chapters Five to Seven. The chapter concludes by identifying some gaps within existent contextual literature and further pinpoints the research focus of this work.

## 3.1 Egypt and its governance structure

Egypt is a lower middle-income country, and home to 103 million Egyptians (World Bank, 2020b) (CAPMAS, 2022a). 57.6% of Egyptians live in rural areas within over 4,727 villages (SIS, 2022). Of the 57.6% of the population that lives in rural areas, 27% are living in poverty (CAPMAS, 2022a). Although the latest numbers show a decrease of overall poverty from 32% to 27%, the rising poverty indicator/line per person and economic changes are having effects on the poorest

members of Egyptian society (CAPMAS, 2022b). The most recent CAPMAS[2] report of 2022 does not specify details about poverty in each governorate. The general poverty percentages as mentioned are highest in rural areas (CAPMAS, 2022b). Poverty is highest in upper rural Egypt at 42.8%, less in rural Lower Egypt at 23.1%, and 14.7 % in Urban areas (CAPMAS, 2022b). While the total rural population has continued to rise, the percentage of rural inhabitants measured against the country's total population has remained constant since the mid-1990s (with a severe drop between the 60's and 80's which will be explained in the following sections) (World Bank, 2020b; CAPMAS, 2022a). Rural Egypt is suffering from poverty, a deterioration in natural resources, insufficient education, unequal access to education and health facilities, limited employment opportunities, and poor infrastructure (Shalaby *et al.*, 2011). Despite this, public spending is still concentrated in urban areas; 17 % of the population received 33% of public spending in 2014 (2014 is the latest year for which figures are available) (Ghanem, 2014; World Bank, 2020b; Armanious, 2021; CAPMAS, 2022a).

Egypt is comprised of seven regions which are subdivided into 27 governorates. The seven regions are Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Delta, Suez Canal and North, Central and Southern Upper Egypt (SIS, 2022). The 27 governorates are either entirely urban, entirely rural, or a combination. The four urban governorates are Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and Port-said (SIS, 2022). Like most constitutional states, the Egyptian state rests on three pillars: the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive. The legislative pillar is represented by the parliament. The judicial pillar is manifested in the constitution, and it executes its power through the courts of justice. The executive pillar includes three divisions: the central administration i.e. Ministries (based in the capital, Cairo), elected local councils, and appointed officials of local administrations. Local administration can be broken down into 4 levels: governorates, cities, districts/centres, and neighbourhoods/villages. If the governorate is all urban, then the subdivisions are cities, districts/centres, and neighbourhoods. If the governorate is all rural, then the subdivisions are districts/centres, mother villages, and hamlets or satellite villages (called 'Ezba' in lower Egypt or 'Nage' in middle and upper Egypt) (see Figure 3-3). The mother village is the smallest administrative unit in a rural or a mixed governorate, and the village size can range from being as small as 500 inhabitants to more than 20,000 inhabitants, the larger settlement size of the Egyptian villages is one aspect that makes

[2] CAPMAS: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics

the Egyptian case unique, or at least very different from most other countries (Mahmoud, 2012; ElShafie *et al.*, 2018). This research focuses on hamlets/satellite villages.

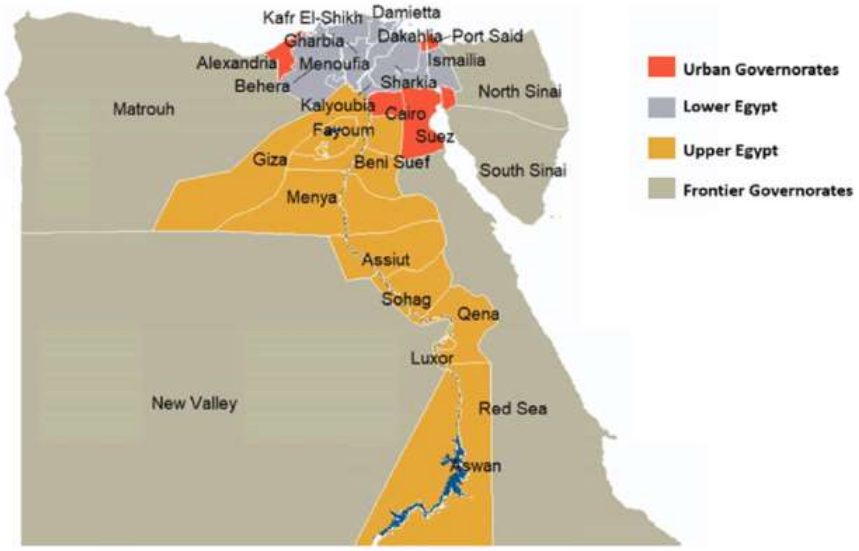



Figure 3-1: A map of the Egyptian Governorates' classification , (Pugliese-Garcia *et al.*, 2020, p. 3)


Figure 3-2: An example of the administrative levels in rural governorates Source: Google maps with researcher additions.

One example of the hierarchy is Ezbet Arafa (*عزبة عرفة*), Ezbet Rai, Ezbet Khulusi, satellite villages/ Hamlets, Fanus (*فانوس*) a Mother village, and Tamiyyah (*طامية*) Centre in Fayoum (*الفيوم*) governorate.

Local administration and local councils are designed to create the conditions of a dual administration so that at each level of the structure there are appointed and elected representatives. The number of elected representatives is designed to be proportional to the number of inhabitants who live within a given unit. However, the local councils have not been operational since 2014 due to the political turmoil that has existed in the country since the 2011 revolution. Starting in 2020, efforts have been made to return local councils to their full formal roles. The executive leaders of local administrations such as governors or district principals are recruited by the central government i.e., appointed by the president. The ministries are represented through respective directorates in each governorate, and each ministry director at this level is instructed by both the relevant central government minister and the governor (Mahmoud, 2012; ElShafie *et al.*, 2018).

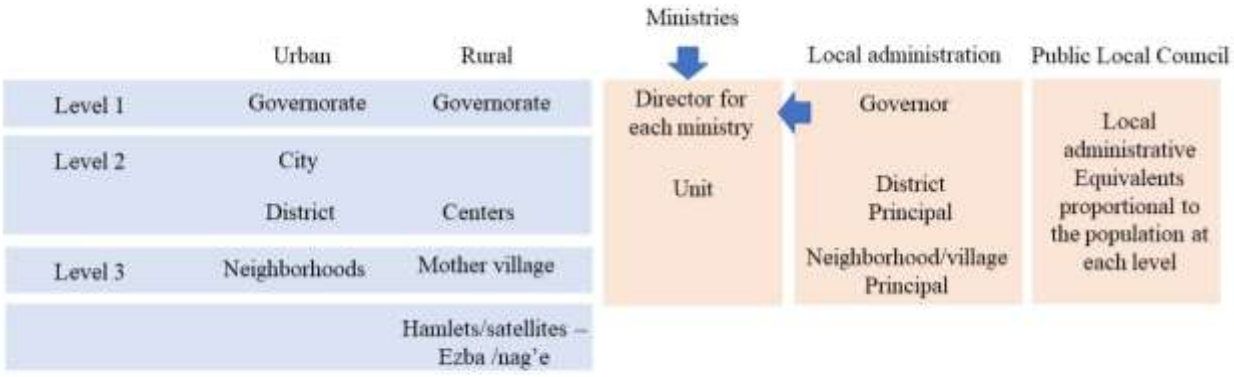



Figure 3-3 Egypt's sub-national administrative hierarchy, adapted from Elmenofi *et. al.*(2014, p. 287).

Egypt has had a highly centralized government since ancient times (Cruz-Uribe, 1994). Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that Egypt's governance system passed through trials to incorporate decentralization approaches to the well-established centralized system. The current central authoritarian state was built on a national legitimacy that goes back to the colonial eras (Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Adhering to the centralization of the state, the hierarchy of decision making is extremely bureaucratic and centralized. This results in almost all issues at the village level (even very minor ones such as granting construction licenses) going up through the series of sub-divisions via the directors and governors at the governorate level to central government to be

decided (Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Elmenofi *et al*. (2014) gave an example regarding applying for a construction license and they explained that the decision goes from local council at the village through the head of the local until it reaches the ministry's construction department director. Another example, an educational issue at the village level would be communicated through the village committee, then to the district committee, followed by the governorate committee, and finally the ministry of education officials and it could even go up to the minister of education to take the necessary decision (Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). This flow would take place with any issue to their respective ministries.

## 3.2 Modern Egypt: a brief history

In the past 100 years, since its independence, Egypt has passed through several phases, regimes, revolutions, and changes: from colonialism to independence and socialism, to an open-door policy and capitalism.

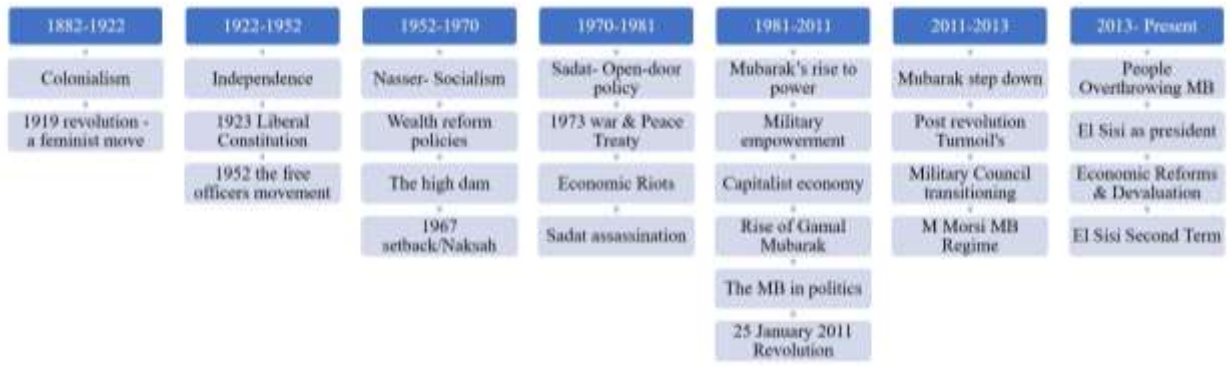



Figure 3-4: Egypt's modern constitutional History

Source: Author's own

These changes have impacted Egypt's political, economic, and social structures. In 1882, Egypt became a British colony. In 1919, national public revolutions sparked discussions of self-ruling and Egypt gained its independence to become a monarchy in 1922 (Perry, 2015). Nominally independent from British authority, Egypt's first constitution was established in 1923 in parallel with the first elected parliament. In 1952, the 'free officers' movement led by Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew the King and Egypt became a republic. This commenced the Nasserist era of socialism.

Nasser described the nation as the 0.5 percent nation, meaning that half a percent of the population had all the power financially and politically (Diener *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, this period witnessed severe wealth reform policies and rises in taxation, and while there was no cap on the land ownership before that time, land reform policies were introduced in 1952 to limit maximum agricultural land ownership to 200 feddans[3] per person (Diener *et al.*, 2009). In 1965, there was further agrarian reform whereby the maximum number of feddans was further reduced to 100 per family or 50 per person. All excess land was distributed to the *fellahin* (farmers, الفلاحين) five feddans each, and peasants owned agricultural land for the first time in Egyptian history (Mahgoub, 2001). Land ownership took the form of controlled rent agreements between the state and the *fellahin*. Hence, the state would guarantee revenue generation for the villagers through specifying the production to particular crops that would be sold to the government (Hinnebusch, 1993). This shift in ownership increased the number of owners, and over time their number multiplied further due to inheritance and the splitting of land between male heirs (Hinnebusch, 1993).

Nasser initiated the construction of the High Dam in Aswan in 1960 to manage floods, and produce electricity through hydropower; the goal was to increase the industrial output of the country so that it moved away from its agrarian base (Biswas and Tortajada, 2012). Prior to the High Dam, the Egyptian economy was fully agrarian but, in the years, following the completion of the High Dam in 1970 in Egypt witnessed a rush of agricultural changes that took place parallel with industrialization and a movement towards import substitution. The Egyptian officials were interested in producing all sort of goods locally, and the national industrial motto/slogan at the time was 'from the needle to a rocket' (من الابرة للصـــاروخ) (Sayyid-Marsot, 1985). In 1967, Egypt went through the Alnaksah (النكســـة, the setback) of the Arab-Israeli war through which Egypt retreated from the Sinai peninsula (Hinnebusch, 1993). This event negatively affected the country's economic situation. While Nasser died in 1970, the authoritarian and dictatorship state continued (Hinnebusch, 1993).

Following Hinnebusch's historical summary, Sadat a member of the 'free officers' and the vice president at the time, became the president. Sadat continued with the same efforts as Nasser in terms of the industrialization and efforts to grow the economy for some time when the primary

[3] 1 feddan = 1.03 acres.

focus of his regime was to return the Sinai Peninsula under Egyptian rule. In 1973, Egypt reclaimed the Sinai Peninsula after the 6th of October War with Israel followed by a peace agreement that was made collaboration with James Carter the US President. This agreement was followed by a surge of USAID funding that substituted a long history of aid with the USSR. The mid-70s witnessed political changes and the adoption of an economic open-door policy. There was a move away from Nasser's socialist ideas to a more capitalist ideology which accepted private investments, and the government's economic control was loosened. In addition, the maximum agricultural land ownership was allowed by a single person reverted to 200 feddans per person. (Hinnebusch, 1993). Sadat's limited liberation of economic freedoms – the state maintained a strong authoritarian grip – and the legislative changes that were introduced resulted in n increasingly unbalanced wealth distribution and the influence of the wealthy was further enhanced. Despite this, the concentration of power was still in the state's hands and, more specifically, the president's hands; as reflected in the 1971 Constitution (Hinnebusch, 1993). The constitution presents the President of Egypt as the head of state, the supreme commander of the armed forces, and as the head of the executive branch of the state (Beattie and El-Meehy, 2001).

In 1981, Sadat was assassinated by a member of the Muslim brotherhood (MB) (Zahid and Medley, 2006). The MB was established in 1928 with a vision of incorporating Islamic law (شريعة, Sharia) initially into education but its goals thereafter expanded in the direction of both politics and power. The MB followed a similar structural and institutional process as those usually used by communist movements, such as training programmes, attention to publicity, secret communications, and a huge youth base; all managed through ideas of regulation and obedience (Zahid, 2010). The MB in Egypt expanded their base through great dedication to welfare, with members of the MB undertaking charity work and community services in dispersed areas all around Egypt. This later seemed to help them to establish a political party which was founded in 2011. The MB targeted the 'syndicates' (professional associations) as hubs of the middle class, their control was limited later by a law issued to minimize their dominance. In 2005, they held a little over 20% of parliamentary seats (Zahid and Medley, 2006). The influence of the charitable associations of the MB influenced the NGO environment presented in section 3.5.1.

After Sadat's assassination by the MB, the authoritarian state was passed down to Mubarak who came to power in the 80s (Mirshak, 2019). Despite the rulers having been Egyptian since 1954,

scholars explain that “the governments that came after 1952 were too insecure to adopt a truly representative government, and so opted for an authoritarian and repressive rule” (Sayyid-Marsot, 1985, p. vii). Those governments represented the interests of specific elites rather than the majority (Mirshak, 2019). Mubarak ruled for 30 years, Amin (2013) refers to those years as the worst era for the Egyptians, for while Sadat had consciously exerted efforts to remove the military power from state governance to demilitarize the state, Mubarak welcomed the military back and gave military leaders an advantage in running the country in terms political and economic privileges (Mumtaz, 2011). In addition to the political and economic decline, Mumtaz (2011) explains that there was a severe social deterioration under Mubarak’s regime for three main reasons: an increase in income poverty, a decrease in purchasing power, and deterioration in the labour market especially that for educated youth. Policy and politics in the early 2000s were led by the neoliberal Vice president Ahmed Nazif and were dominated by the National Democratic Party (Elnour, 2012; Verme *et al.*, 2014), with the army playing a huge economic role (Warner, 2012) and till this day. This could be viewed as civil military capitalism era.

Despite the population almost doubling during the period of Mubarak’s reign, the shift in agricultural focus was maintained to focus on planting high economic value export crops while there was not enough local production to meet the growing needs of the people which caused social and economic fractures (Warner, 2012). During the same period, inflation led to a change in the middle- and lower-income Egyptians spending, with food becoming a larger portion of overall spending and an overall sense of deprivation spreading within society (Mumtaz, 2011). There was also changes in the Egyptian labour market; informal employment grew from 57 percent in 1998 to 61 percent in 2006 (Mumtaz, 2011).

Until 1977, revolts were mainly against foreign occupation; whether against the French in 1800, the British in 1919, or Israel in 1972. In 1977, the first ever demonstration against the national government took place because of inflation. The Egyptian government at the time had decided to almost double the prices of main household goods (such as rice, meat, and cooking oil) by removing subsidies [4] (Springborg, 1982). The demonstrations resulted in casualties, but the government did also reverse the increases in prices. The Egyptian economy was slowly moving

[4] The demonstrators chanted “ "سيد بيه يا سيد بيه كيلو اللحمة بقي بجنيه" “Oh Mr Sayed Mr Sayed, the price of a kilo of meat is now 1 Egyptian pound” and Sayed Marei was a famous politician and a close companion of Sadat (the president at the time) (Springborg, 1982).

from socialism towards capitalism and there was also a shift from nationalization towards private enterprise. More minor revolts happened between 1977 and 2011, and there were food riots due to inflation in 2008 (Mumtaz, 2011). Towards the end of Mubarak's 30 years regime, Jamal Mubarak, his son, and his associates in the National Democratic Party (NDP), sought to gain political control in addition to their economic influence, and it is believed that, in so doing, they were challenging military leaders with a strong economic agenda which conflicted with the military's own corporate agenda (Mumtaz, 2011). The Egyptian people were still, however, in the same deteriorating social and economic conditions and now also faced an additional sense of insecurity from police brutality and unjust welfare distribution between the two opposing powers, the corporate elites including Jamal Mubarak and his inner circle, and the military leadership (El-Ghobashy, 2021).

On the 25th of January 2011, the Egyptian people took to the streets against police brutality, the inheritance succession to Mubarak's son, the country's economic conditions, the degradations in the quality of subsidized education, corruption, and issues pertaining to lack of freedom (El-Ghobashy, 2021). The revolts called for political and economic change. The peoples' needs were 'عيش حرية عدالة اجتماعية' "bread (i.e. livelihood), freedom and social justice". People asked for a more equitable distribution of wealth. The Egyptian people were ready to get rid of the regime responsible for the problems and hardships that they were experiencing (Mumtaz, 2011). The Egyptian military chose to side with the millions of Egyptians that took the streets rather than the regime (Mumtaz, 2011). Mubarak stood down and Egypt was ruled by the military council under the supervision of Tantawi the minister of defense; this was followed by elections and the presidency of 'Morsi' a member of the MB, the first publicly elected civil president in modern Egypt. Due to Morsi's lack of experience, his affiliation with the MB, and the interventions of the MB in the ruling, and with the support of the then Minister of Defense, ElSisi (the current president) millions of Egyptians protested Morsi's ruling in July 2013 and his government was overthrown. The country was temporarily ruled by the head of the constitutional court until Abdelfattah El Sisi was elected as president in 2014 (Aly and Monem, 2014). After El Sisi was elected as president, the government started to go back to being an authoritarian regime according to Hamzawy (2017). El Sisi embraced a typical style of military ruling with a movement towards a hegemonic centre and all decisions regulated by the state (Ismail, 2019). Military associations became dominant in the industrial sector in Egypt; around 40% of the Egyptian economy is controlled by the military (Ismail, 2019).

The 5 years that followed the 2011 revolution witnessed political instability and overall insecurity until El Sisi gained control over the Egyptian state (UNDP, 2021). The political instability and changes cumulatively caused a decrease in Egypt's GDP of 12.04% between 2011 and 2017 (Echevarría and García-Enríquez, 2020). This is why El Sisi started enforcing economic reform policies right away so as to promote economic stability and increase job opportunities (Helmy, 2020). The first steps of the reforms included the devaluation of the Egyptian pound in 2016, added taxes, and removed food subsidies (Helmy, 2020). Those punitive economic and social reform policies since 2014 have been over-stressing the population financially (Helmy, 2020). Politically, whenever the state is faced with opposing political powers, the state ensures its dissolution since like any military ruling accepts only minimal opposition (Ismail, 2019). In 2018, El Sisi was elected for a second term and constitutional changes took place that will allow him to remain as President until 2030 (Mirshak, 2019).

There are various views of literature written about the past decade, some opinions communicated the narrative of nationalism and the heroic actions of the military to save the country from the MB. Opposing views narrated a story of increased state control and the rise in human rights crimes from an advocacy perspective (Hamzawy, 2017). Having lived through those turbulent years, it is extremely hard, and complex to sort out these competing narratives. Throughout those changing times the NGOs have passed through a series of changes however the discourse under research seems to be continuous (chapter 7). All the previously explained historical changes have influenced multiple aspects of rural Egypt explained hereafter.

## 3.3 Rural livelihoods: change and transformation

This section presents the aspects of rural livelihoods that are relevant to the research and could be seen as the socio-economic reflection of the historical events explained in the above section. It will cover the physical changes in Egyptian rural villages, the progression of rural livelihoods including income generating activities and social practices.

As noted, 57.6 percent of Egyptians live in rural areas. Traditionally, villages were located on higher ground/hills to avoid the Nile's seasonal floods. Villages had a mosque at the centre with a dense streets network connecting the single floor houses to the mosque and the village's borders (Giangrande and De Bonis, 2018). A village was surrounded by agricultural land with the market

and graveyards located at the edges of the village (Mahgoub, 2001; Giangrande and De Bonis, 2018). Rural houses were built from dried mud from agricultural land, and the roofs were made of palm tree branches and palm tree wood. Houses were located close to family or kinship (Mahgoub, 2001). Up to the late 1800s, the expansion of villages was limited by the Nile flooding until Mohamed Ali, the then governor of Egypt, started to tame the Nile by building dams and barrages to control the flow of the Nile for agriculture (Mahgoub, 2001). All natural restrictions to village expansions were removed after the construction of the High Dam (Mahgoub, 2001). However, new environmental consequences have arisen due to the building of the Dam; such as differences in the salinity of the soil and erosion of the Nile's banks (Biswas and Tortajada, 2012). Issues arising from the increase in the country's rural population and peasants owning agricultural land after 1952, as well as the growing need for expansion of housing, was solved vernacularly through building on agricultural land using materials like those used in informal Cairo (steel and concrete) with wooden roofs, and for large and more financially able families in the villages incorporated steel and concrete roofs (Mahgoub, 2001). Built informally, houses do not follow building regulations and they are not connected to services. As a result, people wait anxiously for their agricultural land or house land to be included within urban boundaries. Once land is marked within a village's urban boundary, buildings become legal, land prices rise dramatically, and the buildings become eligible to be connected to public services (Mahgoub, 2001). Although roads have been added to connect rural and urban areas, the infrastructure of rural areas is far from complete. The water sources are polluted by house waste and garbage due to a lack of sewerage and garbage collection systems. With the growing population, there is a rising need for housing, and to address this need the people are building against the law. In so doing they use agricultural land and sometimes build inadequate or unsafe homes (Mahgoub, 2001; Giangrande and De Bonis, 2018).

Income generating activities for villagers have also been affected by the population growth, as well as by political changes. The land reform policies after the 1952 revolution, the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and the adoption of the open-door policies in the 70s, all affected the nature of work and income of those living in rural Egypt. Land reform policies in the 1950's caused the division of land, and 12% of agricultural land was lost in separations between fragmented land plots (Ghanem, 2014). These policies ensured controlled rent prices to be paid by the villagers, and with the increased need for housing to meet population growth, people further divided the land to smaller parcels for houses (Diener *et al.*, 2009). Other factors such as houses

built on unsafe flooding land or agricultural land, and farmers selling their land to build a house to help marry a child led to each farmer ending up with a fragment of the already divided land (Diener *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, the government restricted the crops to basic crops in the 50s which were to be sold to the government, and this was not changed until 1986 (Ghanem, 2014). In 1992, the government introduced new reform policies that were market led with freedom in crop choices and enabling the transfer of ownership with increased rent prices (Hinnebusch, 1993). The higher rents caused a shift in crops from basic crops to export crops, and village economies moved away from self-sufficiency while export crops yields were restricted to bourgeois producers (Hinnebusch, 1993; Helmy, 2020). Expectations rose and reliance on local hand-made products shifted through enhanced imports and industrialization. Overall, the reform measures in 1992 negatively impacted the poor because it exposed them to extra costs and informal charges (Tadros, 2006). It was expected that villagers would not be able to pay the new rents and would eventually move away from agriculture which is what happened (Hinnebusch, 1993).

Adam (2002) categorizes rural income in Egypt into 5 sources; four farming income activities: farm production or wages, livestock, transfers, and rentals, and one non-farm income like service provision. Despite the difficulties that women face in addition to being expected to handle domestic work, they are involved subsistence work, in farms or even nonfarm particularly livestock (Keo *et al.*, 2019). Lately, nonfarm sources of income have accounted for 60% of rural income in Egypt. Rural households have embraced non-agricultural forms of income and employment by sector in rural areas has shifted from 42% in agriculture, 21% in manufacturing and 37% in services in 1989 to 32%, 23% and 45% in 2008 respectively. This shows a decrease in agriculture and an increase in service and non-farm employment (Abul-Magd, 2017). Additionally, total income per capita from agriculture has decreased in spite of an average 1.7% annual increase in productivity between 1984 and 2014 (Ghanem, 2014). Rural society has transformed over time, and so have some of its needs.

In the 1970s, Sadat removed restrictions on migration and labour migrated for economic reasons starting 1971 (Tsourapas, 2018). Labour travelled back and forth, bringing about a new different set of ideas influenced by the Arabic Persian Gulf culture and rendering remittances as a main source of income for the Egyptian villages. Remittances from Gulf countries altered the socioeconomic levels (Adams Jr, 1989). Eventually, the need for Egyptian workers decreased in

the Arab Persian Gulf and the returning workers formed a new middle-income population with a new culture and ideologies (Amin, 2001; Giangrande and De Bonis, 2018). Additionally, the migration of workers to cities, and the shift to industrialization altered the way in which people lived and set standards higher regarding houses, appliances, dowries, clothes, and so on. Rural workers returning to their villages introduced new urbanized lifestyles that included displays of wealth through architectural styles in their houses and via a shift from traditional villagers' identity (Amin, 2013). The new ideas together with the industrialization had an impact on shaping the rural Egyptian household from clothing to the introduction of electrical appliances that later became a must in marriage and bridal essentials (see below). The newly introduced lifestyle with its social and cultural attributes, led to increased pressure on the rural poor to meet the requirements of modern life (Mahgoub, 2001). While remittances are still one major income source (Tsourapas, 2018), in the 2000s, unemployment for both educated and uneducated increased and the youth started the illegal immigration to Europe (Abdou and Zaazou, 2011; Amin, 2013). Though Nasser's plan was to erase the polarization in social classes, his poorly thought out wealth reforms, followed by Sadat's open-door policies and the corruption during Mubarak's period of rule caused an even more stratified class based society and gave rise to a new phenomenon; the educated poor (Amin, 2013; Giangrande and De Bonis, 2018).

In addition to economic and societal changes, migration also increased the burden of marriage in rural Egypt. Marriage is still the only socially and religiously acceptable way to form a family unit in Egypt (Singerman, 2007). Egyptian villagers view having lots of children as a sign of pride, and security (Krafft *et al.*, 2019). Marriage is also considered the most important investment in a lifetime. It is an important economic venture that is thought through and finalized over time (Singerman and Ibrahim, 2001; Singerman, 2007). Marriage and having children are the source of future security for families (Sholkamy, 2003). Long ago rural marriages were simple; a young man would go to the head of the family and ask for the girl's hand in marriage and they would form a union (Sholkamy, 2003). The rural norm is marrying from inside the family (this would go as close as first cousin marriages) rather than an outsider or stranger as close as first cousins. Kin marriages are supported by society as they provide security especially for the female or mother and her children as they secure a safety network of relatives that will take care of them in the event of any unforeseen circumstances and for wealth especially agricultural land consolidation with inheritance (Sholkamy, 2003). Today, rural marriages are not as simple, and while kin marriages

are still a norm, marriage costs have become a major economic burden and load on both families. According to Salem (2015), the high costs of marriage are not well researched, Nonetheless, they are heavily discussed in the media with preachers encouraging lower bride prices or NGOs responding by providing mass wedding ceremonies and helping with *gihaz (*bride's trousseau or bridal essentials, الجهاز); detailed in Chapter 5 (Singerman and Ibrahim, 2001; Sholkamy, 2003). Demands are high for both the bride and groom's families, who are pressured to meet socially accepted standards that are different in each social class. Expenses included both social and religious expenditures. The typical agreement would be that the groom and the groom's family pay an agreed upon bride price to the bride and her family, which is an Islamic tradition and it is regarded as an insurance for the bride in case of the husband's death or in case of divorce (Anderson, 2007). The groom and his family are also socially expected to secure a house, present jewelry gifts, and cover the celebration and other expenses. The bride's family would buy the *gihaz*. On average, the groom and his family contribute two thirds of financing the marriage. Research has identified that one of the major hardships of marriage is buying a house and it is customary that a marriage is not finalized until the house (or room in the family house in some rural areas) is completed. The cost of marriage in 1998 was 4 times the GNP per capita in rural areas, or 2 times the house hold expenditure in a year (Singerman and Ibrahim, 2001). In 2007, the financial costs of marriage in poor households living below the poverty line reached 15 times the household's expenditures (Singerman, 2007). According to Honwana, the time between childhood and adulthood, 'Waithood', is the time to save for marriage costs by the youth(Ramadan and Assaad, 2008; Honwana, 2012). In rural Egypt, the youth, to be married, are financially dependent on both families to fulfil the marriage costs placing additional burdens on the villagers with the intent to minimize waithood (Singerman, 2007, 2020).

Helmy (2020) explains that El Sisi's regime further affected the entire nation including rural livelihoods. Farm related sources of the national GDP have further decreased to 14% in 2018 from 40% in 2006. Generally, rural livelihood has moved away from agriculture to the informal service sector, and livestock raising leading to an increased dependency on social protection and assistance programs (Helmy, 2020). In addition to the shift from agriculture, rural households have chosen to move away from formal sources of income, to informal sources of income to avoid the difficulties accompanied with access to formal employment that can make it unattainable (Helmy, 2020). The gradual removal of universal energy and food subsidies, the devaluation of the

currency, the introduction of value added taxes, and tight monetary policy have contained the excessively high rate of inflation (IMF, 2021), but there have also been further increase in the levels of poverty in rural Egypt despite the expansion of social protection programs.

To mitigate the various effects of changes and transformations on rural Egypt that have been discussed in this section the government has attempted several rural development strategies. It is to these that this study now turns.

## 3.4 **Rural development in Egypt**

The idea of developing rural areas has been around for a long time, and yet the nature of the Egyptian state politics as an authoritarian centralized state has limited targeting development to initiatives that are primarily led by the government. The Egyptian elites and intellectuals have long portrayed rural inhabitants as regressive and in need of development (ElShakry, 2007). This elitist view might be one reason why the decision makers feel entitled to decide for the rural inhabitants, disregarding local knowledge and cultural aspects (Mitchell, 2002). The section provides the Egyptian trajectory for 'rural development' affected by the above-mentioned historical events, with focus on comprehensive rural development programmes and initiatives since 1994 to date and their criticisms. The section concludes by finding parallels between the national and worldwide rural development paradigms to identify the Egyptian standpoint on rural development ideas.

### *3.4.1 History of rural development: colonialism, liberalization, and the open-door policy*

Between 1882-1922, the British, as colonizers, were concerned with agriculture as it was the main source of state income, and cotton crops in particular were (and are) the raw material for Egyptian cotton and textile production. The government focused on agricultural production through irrigation and infrastructure projects. Since the main aim was to keep production going, development targeted training accountants, book-keepers, and agricultural technical experts (Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). However, the masses working in agriculture were overlooked except for health improvements, this facet again being motivated by the need to keep production moving (Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Each mother village was appointed a mayor who was concerned with everyday incidents rather than development (Nawar, 2006). The political awareness of the rural inhabitants started to increase around 1919 with the beginning of

revolts against the British occupation (Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). In 1937, the idea of rural social centres (RSC) were first introduced through the Egyptian Association for Social Studies (EASS) a voluntary association, with the aim of involving the people in various aspects of reforms and also ensuring the integration of different aspect of reforms (Johnson and Johnson, 2006). In 1939, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), currently The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS), was established with a special section for rural livelihood improvement (LaTowsky, 1997). In 1939, the director of the EASS was appointed in the MSA and utilized the RSC idea through the MSA (Johnson and Johnson, 2006). In the 1940s, the initiatives were dispersed between the Ministry of Health , the Ministry of Social Solidarity (social affairs at the time) and the Ministry of Agriculture all working through their directorates in the governorates and then through health units, social centres and agricultural cooperatives with no coordination (Nawar, 2006). Although scholars such as Johnson and Johnson (2006) see that the RSCs were successful and that there was no need to change, Nawar (2006) and others explain that there was a lack of coordination and that, therefore, the idea of a collective rural unit was introduced in 1946 under the *fellahin* department in the MSA. This unit would bring together the work of the directorates and coordinate the scattered work of several units (health, agriculture, and education) (Johnson and Johnson, 2006; Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Johnson and Johnson (2006), view the rural development visions prior the 1952 to be the most successful, as they focused on health, poverty alleviation, and education After 1952, Nasser's regime supported the idea of the collective unit (in line with the socialist ideas then dominant), and 250 collective units were established by 1958. However, the plan was not completed due to financial difficulties and the 1967 Setback (LaTowsky, 1997; Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). In parallel, Community Development Associations CDAs managed by the MSA were established to cover social development aspects, but there was no coordination and this resulted in both duplication and competition (LaTowsky, 1997; Nawar, 2006; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Between 1960 and 1973, agriculture was still a major source of income, however, the government forced farmers to grow specific crops and sell them to the government at standard prices. The government was concerned with education and health with minimal attention to rural infrastructure (Mahgoub, 2001).

Between 1973 and 1993, the state embraced an integrated rural development approach, and enhanced infrastructure. 1973 witnessed the formation of the Organization for Reconstruction and Development of the Egyptian Village (ORDEV) as the national rural development agency led by

the prime minister. The aim of ORDEV was to coordinate the design and implementation of strategic executive plans for Egyptian villages and monitor the authorities responsible for the implementation of each aspect (Nawar, 2006). Elmenofi *et al.,* (2014, p. 288) summarise the 1980s, noting that social and economic stability resulted in attracting foreign funded projects which "aimed at achieving – partially – economic and social changes in rural Egypt, but it lacked coordination and integration from one hand and overall development philosophy from another hand".

Foreign funding, especially from the USAID, started in the 50s but increased drastically after the 1979 peace agreement with Israel. The USAID fund was designed to be spent on economic enhancements, military support, and other aspects (Kotb, 2018). An average of three quarters of the total aid went towards military aid with a quarter going towards economic enhancement. Later, the regulations for spending included various departments and multiple geographical areas. Despite this, the aid was primarily spent in Cairo and Alexandria rather than poorer governorates. The departmental aid was distributed between various public sectors such as education, health, democracy, agriculture, investment, and infrastructure. There was a particular focus on democratization and infrastructure. In his research, Kotb (2018) investigated the effects of the USAID on the development of villages in the governorate of Asuit and claimed that the aim of the various interventions was to create mass publicity for the US. The beneficiaries were asked about the aid and 94% said that the aid was needed, but only 5% were involved in the projects. While they acknowledged the importance of the projects, they stressed that other needs still needed to be met (Kotb, 2018). During this period the aid chains through which development was delivered were very similar to other countries involved in the provision of aid programmes – a foreign, governmental donor (in this case USAID), with funds channelled down to rural areas through various central and sub-national government departments.

### *3.4.2 National rural development projects 1994 to date: Comprehensive rural development and the growing engagement of NGOs*

In the 1990s, the government adopted the then widespread participatory approaches. The ORDEV presented its pioneer project Shorouk (الشـــروق, 'sunrise') a national integrated development programme that targeted the old rural areas funded partially by the USAID in 1994 (Elsaid, 2007).

The programme aimed to bring together the government and the public in an integrated participatory process to ensure real development (Nawar, 2006). The highlight of this programme was that for the first-time people's priorities were going to be reflected. The 'Shorouk Program' was mainly concerned with upgrading the quality of rural life to match that of city dwellers and sought to transform rural citizens from receiver to partners as a means of ensure the sustainability of the project (Elsaid, 2007). The main aspects of El Shorouk's interventions were infrastructure, human resource services, economic development, and the empowerment of rural women. The programme ended in 2004, and within the ten years that it ran , 76,138 projects were completed with 1.8 billion EGP (187 GBP-315 million USD at the time) of funding; 75% from the government and the remaining from foreign agencies being spread between infrastructure, human development and economic development projects with a funding split of 75.8%, 16.3% and 7.8% respectively (Elsaid, 2007). The largest number of projects were clean water and sanitation projects (22,948 projects) and those related to animals and poultry production (20,106 projects) (Elsaid, 2007).

The developmental work of 'Shorouk' was, however, critiqued as not being sufficiently comprehensive, for there were only 4,129 projects (representing around 5% of the projects) related to human development (Elsaid, 2007). The program displayed a lack of coordination between involved stakeholders and departments and – despite the apparent engagement with the international participatory development agenda – there was a lack of involvement of villagers and local government authorities (Assaad and Rouchdy, 1999). 'Participation' seemed to consist of engagement with officials and planners at the decision making level (Connelly, 2009). In addition, and contrary to the goal of avoiding building on agricultural land, agricultural land was used to build service buildings (Abdellatif, 2020). The USAID withdrew from the programme in 1999, thereby removing the external funder from the chain, and then due to financial difficulties the programme was stopped in 2004 (Johnson and Johnson, 2006; Nawar, 2006). Despite the large number of projects reported, some scholars such as Assaad and Rouchdy (1999) mentioned that more than 75% of respondents to a poverty assessment survey undertaken in 1996 across 16 villages had never heard of the Shorouk program, and only 3% were directly involved in its projects, a narrative also told by Johnson and Johnson, (2006). There were also discrepancies across published sources as to the number of projects with quoted figures ranging from 76,138 to 93,498, and there was also limited impact evaluation (Assaad and Rouchdy, 1999; Elsaid, 2007).

In the early 2000s, poverty alleviation through strategic targeting was at the top of the political agenda. The state then merged the Ministry of Social Affairs with the Ministry of Supply into the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) so as enable better allocation of resources, minimize duplication, and enhance service to the poor (Johnson and Johnson, 2006). Geographical targeting in addition to proxy means testing were suggested as mechanisms by which to solve poverty locality (Roushdy and Assaad, 2007). In 2007, the president introduced 'the poorest 1000 villages' programme (ENID, 2015). The World Bank and the Egyptian government's reports formed the basis by which 1000 villages were chosen. Through geographical targeting the programme aimed to provide basic services and infrastructure to those who were less fortunate (Elnour, 2012). In addition to state funds, the programme attracted foreign funding and the programme's implementation was planned to include joint efforts from all relevant ministries with government execution (The World Bank, 2012). Local governments were expected to both implement and monitor the process using 17 indicators (mentioned as 12 in other sources (Soliman and Gaber, 2010)). Those indicators included "levels of civil society participation, basic services, electricity, health services, emergency health care, basic education, social security, the environmental situation, solid waste, new job creation, sports services, literacy levels, fire services, civil defense, public roads, urban planning and development of human capital" (Elnour, 2012, p. 155). However, in contrast to the Shorouk programme, the Minister of Social Solidarity at that time, Ali Meselhy, encouraged businessmen and NGOs to engage in both the funding and execution of the poorest 1000 village initiative: thereby establishing a more complicated aid chain. The minister stressed that the goal was not only development but sustainable development (Yassin, 2008).

The project was divided into three phases. The first phase began in 2008 with 153 villages, followed by 912 villages in the second phase, and finally 78 villages in the third phase. The project was expected to be completed by 2017. In phase I, total expenditure ran to 305 million Egyptian pounds and was disbursed as per Figure 3.5 (Elnour, 2012).

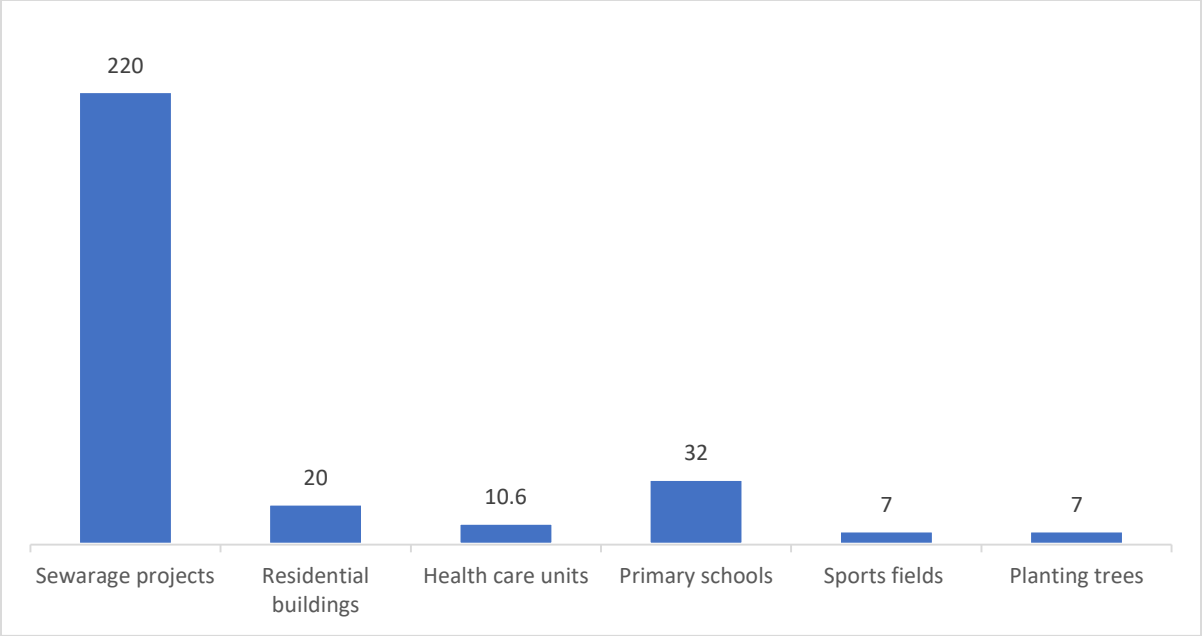



Figure 3-5: The poorest 1000 village project Phase one fund distribution (in Millions) aspects illustration based on Elnour (2012, p. 153)

There is no reference as to whether the plan continued during 2011 revolution, and there is limited information about the details of implementation. Although the plan seemed comprehensive, the problems during implementation were major according to Elnour (2012). The facts established that upper Egypt is the poorest region with 40% of its villages having a 50-70% poverty level and that 95% of all poor villages in 2006 were in upper Egypt. Nevertheless, the 1000 village project included villages which were not amongst the 1000 poorest villages. Within the same governorate, the officials chose to put forward some of the villages that were better off than the poorest villages as a start such that when the higher-ranking officials would pass by they would visit villages that were not so poor and thus would praise the local official, who would be demonstrating their success in completing their tasks (Elnour, 2012).

According to Elnour (2012), this reflects corruption and biases in the choice of the villages, and he explained this to be a result of possible political power influences by the decision makers to show villages with a better status than they were. Moreover, the monitored spending in the above figure was all on the physical interventions, which highlights the lack of focus on education, environmental concerns, health impact and finding job vacancies as primarily advertised for the project. Another problem was the divergence between what the people wanted and what was

provided, for example the project provided flats in 4 storey buildings, however the people wanted village-style farmhouses to accommodate their agricultural activities (Elnour, 2012). An additional setback was how the programme dealt with village hierarchies. The local village unit and the sub village caused inconsistencies as the poverty maps were based on the mother village level units rather than subdivisions which were poorer. This resulted in dismissing subdivisions in mother villages outside the poorest 1,000 (Elnour, 2012).

The newspapers at the time noted similar critique (Sharafeldin, 2008), and there were comments on the evaluation system in place which focused only on graphs and numbers with no feedback from the people on what had changed in their lives (Sharafeldin, 2008). The programme was stopped due to the political changes during the 2011 revolution. Between 2011 and 2014, similar programmes aiming at comprehensive village development were started by NGOs; a number of these continue to this day and these are the focus of this research (Alorman, 2018; Misr Elkheir, 2018; Resala, 2018).

Generally reflecting on rural development in Egypt, a number of scholars have stated that the management system is very complicated, and that there are no clear definitions as to the roles of each level of administration in the bureaucratic and centralised system. There was clear duplication of efforts and this led to inefficiency and duplicated results (Mahgoub, 2001; Zaki, 2014). In addition, participation, market liberalization, and poverty alleviation were still top-down in nature in the Egyptian context (Khalifa and Connelly, 2009; Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014).

The economic reform policies in 2014 included a social protection cash transfer programme *Takaful wa Karama* (تكـافـل و كرامـة, Solidarity and dignity) that provided the directory for the programmes that followed (Ministry of Local Development, 2020). In 2018, MOSS initiated and funded the *Sakan Kareem* (سـكن كريم, A dignified house) programme which aimed to provide a proper shelter and improve the health and environmental conditions of poor families in rural Egypt by improving the infrastructure of their homes.


Figure 3-6: *Sakan Kareem* logo, (GoE, 2022)

The programme targets the families already listed in the database of *Takaful wa Karama.* The households eligible for the programme were chosen according to the following set of criteria: families live in the poorest villages according to poverty maps (CAPMAS), villages nearby/ adjacent are connected to drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, and family homes do not meet the requirements of the *Takaful wa Karama* program (MOSS, 2018).

*Sakan Kareem* aims to instal sanitation, provide a clean drinking water source, construct roofs and restore houses, build service buildings and add electricity metres within the most in need villages in the targeted governorates. The expected impacts on beneficiaries include: improved health indicators, better housing and infrastructure conditions, increased job opportunities for both genders, and stronger and more empowered NGOs in local communities (MOSS, 2018). The programme is executed through 7 national NGOs, approved by MOSS, and have signed a joint protocol with the MOSS and private corporations as funders in specific cases. The Ministry of Planning puts the social economic development plan, so it approves the money allocated to other governmental branches. The Ministry of Education is funded to build schools and the Ministry of Health is funded to build health care units. The Ministry of Local Development is in charge of coordination, compiling information from all the other ministries, monitoring the execution of programmes every month, and presenting the results to the prime minister and the presidency (Ministry of Local Development, 2020; GoE, 2022).

*Sakan Kareem* programme funding is 80% is through the government, or from private institutions who have also signed the protocol to join in the funding of the programme (Palm Hills, and Sawiris Foundation for Social Development) (SFSD, 2022). NGOs are in charge of the execution of the

programme and providing the remining 20% of the funding. NGOs involved include Misr Al-Kheir, Alorman, Egyptian Food Bank, and Resala (only nationwide NGOs were signed). Finally, the holding company for water and sewerage is responsible for completing those connections.

According to the Ministry of Local Development, the achievements of the programme until 2020 included providing 2,229 households with clean sources of drinking water in villages in Upper Egypt, and 1,792 households were provided with sanitation facilities in the governorates of Alminya and Sohag. In addition, other villages were also provided with sanitation taking the total number of households to benefit with regard to the same to 21,768. The achievements also include covering some of the need for sewerage in Upper Egypt's governorates. This was financed by the Ministry of Planning through the Holding Company for Water and Sewerage. Finally, the programme finished renovating 280 homes in several governorates across the country with the support of Palm Hills and Alorman (Ministry of Local Development, 2020; GoE, 2022).

Despite the presented numbers and promoted successes, it is difficult to know what these achievements represent with respect to what was intended because of the limited data available. Furthermore, there is no information about the flow of resources and information or the aid chains of the programmes except for the identified organizations.

In parallel with public health and protection programmes, in 2018, the president launched the *Hayah Kareema initiative* (حيـاه كريمـة, A Decent life) soon after in 2019. The *Hayah Kareema* initiative was built on the apparent success of *Sakan Kareem*. However, *Hayah Kareema* was intended to be more comprehensive. Like *Sakan Kareem*, the initiative would be funded to the tune of 80% by the national budget (or through collaborations with private corporations) and 20% by the NGOs. Executed by the NGOs, the initiative covers not only the built environment but also medical, economical, and educational support. Phase I ended on the 30$^{th}$ of June 2020, then the first days of 2021 witnessed a large number of articles in newspapers covering the development of 1,000 villages by the 6$^{th}$ of January the number became 1,381 and 1,500 villages in other sources (Abdelalim, 2020; Atef, 2021) The media showed pictures of meetings including those of governors involved in the programme. Figure 3-7 portrays the involvement of government officials in the initiatives. The president tweeted 'Phase II will impact 18 million inhabitants and it will cost 500 billion EGP (25 GBP-31 million USD) (Abdelalim, 2020; Atef, 2021).

Figure 3-7: Officials' involvement - *Hayah Kareema* (ELhawary, 2021), Figure 3-8: (Kheirallah, 2021)

Compared with the international rural development trajectory identified by Ellis and Biggs (2001) Figure 3-9, the Egyptian trajectory is similar, passing through community development via RSCs and CDAs, and then integrated rural development, market liberation, and participation or trials of participation. Scholars have critiqued aspects of rural development in Egypt and have shown that the rural development projects do not sufficiently reflect the needs of the people (Elmenofi *et al.*, 2014). Over the past 5 years, it seems that NGO village led development programmes specifically *Hayah Kareema* is the main development discourse in the country. This is why this research focuses on these programmes.

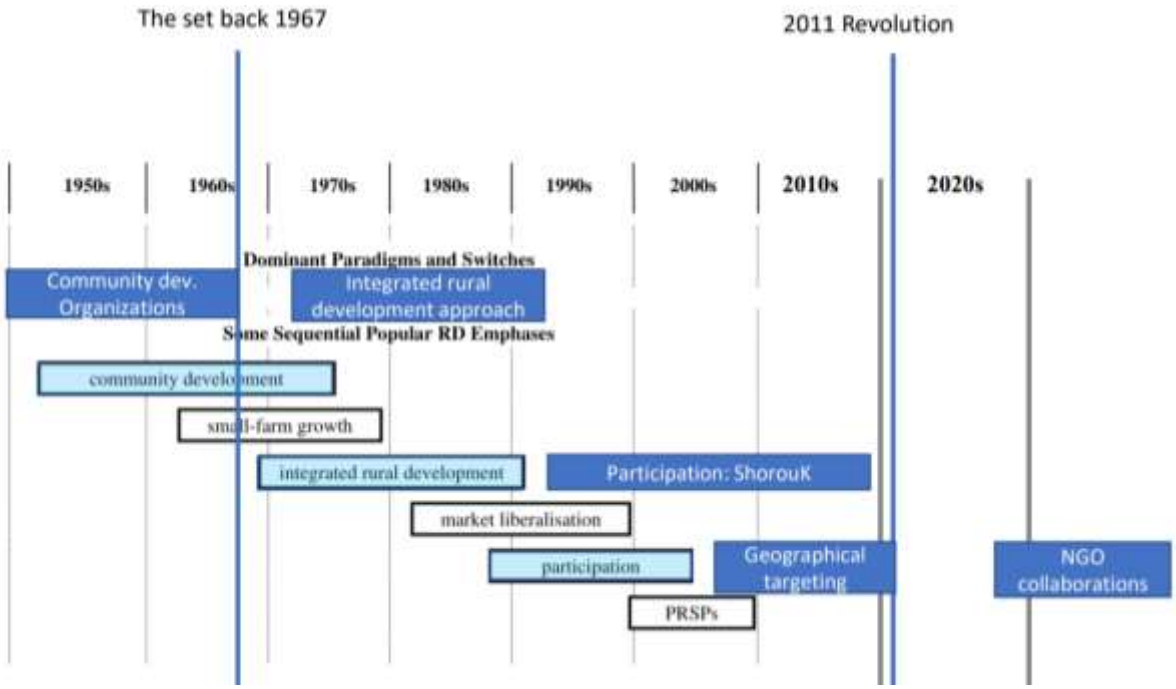



Figure 3-9: Rural development, global and in Egypt, Source: Adapted from Ellis and Biggs (2001)

## 3.5 NGOs in Egypt

NGOs have played an evident role in the rural development in Egypt. A possible starting point for this role could go back to the initiation of the Rural Social Centres (RSC) in 1937. Those voluntary RSCs were the spark for the concept of the CDAs (Community Development Association) or the quasi NGOs that are managed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) to better serve the rural poor (Johnson and Johnson, 2006). In some villages, CDAs are the only visible NGO to the eyes of the beneficiaries with a great deal of influence (Johnson and Johnson, 2006), to the extent that they are seen as a substitute for the local government roles (Brechenmacher, 2017). The role of CDAs and then larger NGOs grew throughout the years to become greatly involved in national rural development initiatives such as *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema*, and to the extent that in the Egypt 2030 strategic plan NGOs were stated as a key player in a three direction plan that encourages an intended partnership between the government, the civil society and the private enterprises to attain development (GoE, 2013).

All Egyptian NGOs must be registered with MOSS (Nafīsah, 2005). According to the Ministry of Social Solidarity, there are 3 types of civil society organizations: associations, foundations, and regional or geographical unions (a group of 10 or more associations and/or foundations). Associations are bound by a geographical area but foundations can work on a national level (MOSS, 2018). While this is a macro level classification, scholars provide a more detailed classification of NGOs in Egypt categorizing them into 5 groups; development associations, religious, welfare, private/businessmen associations and scientific/cultural organizations (LaTowsky, 1997; McGann, 2007). Other academics categorize NGOs in Egypt according to their philosophies; Islamic [5], Coptic, CDAs, advocacy groups and businessmen associations (Abdelrahman, 2004; Atia, 2008). Each category implies specific interventions, sources of funding, and history. Berger (2003) explains that all welfare NGOs in Egypt are somehow faith based, and that faith based NGOs are known for their charity and service delivery activities (Nafīsah, 2005).

Scholars have not settled on a 'best way' to describe the categorizations; this research follows Simmons's (1998) taxonomy of understanding NGOs that was explained in Chapter 2. As will be recalled, he prioritizes "understanding what they do, who their members are, and where their money comes from" rather than defining them (Simmons, 1998, p. 85). Using this taxonomy this research focused on national welfare non-governmental regional foundations that have been involved in village development programmes. Welfare NGOs are charitable organizations that make minimal or no contribution to political and social mobility fields (Nafīsah, 2005). They receive their funding from donations, state funding, corporate funds, foreign funding, and any other source allowed by MOSS (Nafīsah, 2005).

### *3.5.1 History of NGOs in Egypt*

NGOs and CDAs (also termed as CDOs) have always played a major role in service delivery in rural and poor Egypt (Khallaf, 2011), In order to understand how and why NGOs have this unique role, we need to look back over the history of their development, and how this relates to the

[5] The MB are categorised as political rather than an Islamic NGO, in Atia's (2008) sense, especially after founding a political party in 2011. However, the current context, although the MB no longer exists, it is inevitable to acknowledge their earlier role in the welfare NGO rise.

development in a centralized, authoritarian and under-resourced country. NGOs in Egypt go as far back as the 1800's. The first non-governmental organization was formed in 1821 as a civil organization for the middle class to speak for themselves. Until 1922, NGOs thrived in the shape of trade unions, cooperatives, political parties, and female-led organizations. After the 1952 revolution, the government supervision increased, and a law was passed that gave the state the authority to reject the registration of any civil organization (LaTowsky, 1997). Thereafter, in the 1970s and 1980s, NGOs shifted from political/social agenda to service provision such as giving in-kind goods (Rugendyke, 2007). The nature of foreign funding followed the historical narrative, from the soviets in the Nasser era to the USAID after the peace agreement that followed the 6$^{th}$ of October war (Herrold, 2020). In the 1990s, USAID focused on political liberation and democratization (Altan-Olcay and Icduygu, 2012) which caused growth in the number of CDAs. After two decades, pro-state citizens and public media's scepticism grew around that role but the number of NGOs in this field continued to rise. By the year 1997, Egypt had the largest NGO sector in the Middle East and the Global South with 14,600 registered NGOs - though a quarter were reported as inactive (Hassan, 2011; McGann, 2007).

Between the 1990s and early 2000s, NGOs were founded and led by businessmen who enjoyed close relationships with the governing sector. They founded NGOs or CDAs to fulfil their religious obligations and design their preferred routes of donations (Khallaf, 2011; Herrold, 2020), and the donors were in no way interested in causing any disturbance to the status quo. They also avoided any politically connected issues (Herrold, 2020). NGOs in Egypt were eligible to receive funds through fundraising, or donations from within Egypt or abroad, however, these needed to be authorized by MOSS and were closely monitored (Hassan, 2011).

An important shift occurred via new NGO legislation in 2000 and 2002 which used 'ambiguous language' which allowed the government to control funding, ban political interventions, freeze assets without court order, and prohibit members from the NGO board (Mirshak, 2019). The law allowed the government to prohibit individuals or institutions that would cross their 'redlines' for example opposing the ruling regime (ICNL, 2021). The Egyptian government at the same time motivated the rise of NGOs so that they would be partners that could help to better serve the substantially poor population and consolidate authoritarianism (Abdalla, 2007). Abdallah (2007) claimed that that NGOs themselves were becoming part of the government's strategy for

"controlled liberation". She added that this is why the government welcomed NGOs that did undertake welfare or development, rather than those which concentrated on human rights and advocacy (Abdalla, 2007). McGann (2007) highlighted the fact that although the government might seem to be NGO friendly, nonetheless, this was case specific.

Despite the restrictive laws, by 2007, Egypt had 30,000 registered NGOs working mainly on welfare (day care, sewing classes, women's clubs, and artisanal skills training) (McGann, 2007). Herrold and Atia (2016) claim that the primary reasons for the growth in NGO numbers was that the state focused primarily on private investment and thus the gap for welfare provision was filled by NGOs especially those with a philanthropic nature. According to Abdalla (2007), NGOs are more effective when it comes to helping the poor and delivering aid across the country as they are believed to be relatively faster, more flexible, and efficient in implementation. The key to the endurance of those welfare NGOs in Egypt besides service provision is continuous communication between the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) and the NGO (Abdelrahman, 2004). Abdelrahman (2004) explains that this communication also allows the Ministry to ensure that an NGO is following the higher goals set by the government.

One of the major in-depth studies relevant to the context of this research was a survey done by the Centre for Development Services which was the only in-depth research funded by the Ford Foundation between 2003 and 2007 (El Daly, 2006). The study in Cairo showed that 45% of voluntary giving in Egypt had a religious motive or was undertaken to fulfil the *zakat* religious obligation, a similar 45% was performed as a consequence of the motive of carrying out charity or *sadaqa* for the sake of God, whilst the third largest aim was to eliminate poverty (El Daly, 2006). Although the research by El Daly (2006) in Egypt showed that the prime motive for giving charity was religious, the research also showed that there is lack of religious knowledge that affects the channels people decide to donate to. For example, although projects for economic benefit is one path that can be used spend *zakat*, it is overlooked in favour of other paths of spending. This overlooks one of the main aims of *zakat* which is to promote self-sufficiency. As a religious obligation, *zakat* forms the basis of funding for charitable and development organizations (El Daly, 2006), this is why NGOs are keen to apply for officially stamped certification for each of their projects from the Islamic council so that they may collect *zakat* and *sadaqa* money for their work (Khallaf, 2011). Although there is a *zakat* organization in Egypt that has financial and

administrative independence, people are not obliged to pay their *zakat* to this specific institution (this is different than other countries) and while people trust civil society organizations in Egypt as per El Daly's research, 64% distribute their religious obligations directly or individually. While this may cause problems with regard to planning, it also reduces leakage, admin costs, and reliance on incompetence (El Daly, 2006). Businessmen and women also found their own charities or development foundations connected to their companies' CSR so that they are able to distribute their religious obligations as they wish. This approach can also sometimes enable them to obtain media coverage to promote their companies (El Daly, 2006).

Although the UN and other international entities promoted NGOs as a way to promote democracy (Beinin, 2014), the 2011 Egyptian uprising was not a result of the growing number of NGOs nor a consequence of an organized civil society push. Rather, it was built of protests involving diverse sectors of the society (Beinin, 2014). After the 2011 uprising, NGOs saw an opportunity to rise and act further with regards to democracy. Those years witnessed a rise in advocacy and democracy NGOs. According to Herrold (2020) some advocacy NGOs achieved success in promoting human rights, however, this success was focused on a specific sector of professionals and educated citizens not the public in general.

Following the civil-military coup in 2013, civil society and especially advocacy NGOs and MB were seen by the government as an enemy to both the government and the people (El Assal and Marzouk, 2020), and many members of those NGOs were arrested (Herrold, 2020). Nonetheless, welfare organizations continued to fulfil their goals as vital partners to the government (Hassan, 2011). At the same time, welfare NGOs, associated with the MB and religiously related CDAs (ElGam'eya ElShareya), were negatively affected despite the benefits that they had brough to healthcare and other services provision in more than one thousand villages (Herrold, 2020). Some were obliged to minimize their service provisions whilst others had their assets frozen after being accused of diffusing radical ideas (Davidov *et al.*, 2008; Davis and Robinson, 2012; Brechenmacher, 2017).

Law No. 84 for the year 2002 regulated civil society in Egypt until 2017. In 2017, El Sisi passed a new NGO, law 70, that imposed an even a more restrictive set of regulations - and especially with regard to foreign funding (Buyse, 2018; Mirshak, 2019). As a consequence of these laws, NGOs are audited by 5 institutions - MOSS, the Central Auditing Organization, the General

Intelligence, the Administrative Control Authority, and the private external auditors (Seda and Ismail, 2019). Resultantly, NGOs faced funding limitations and especially NGOs that were reliant on international funders after more restrictions were added with regard to accepting foreign funding. While it may have been difficult for some NGOs to receive funding, other NGOs collaborated with the government as the main source of funding to maintain their activities (Brechenmacher, 2017). As an important note highlighting the centralization of the government, when NGOs raised some issues concerning the Law in several contexts and media, there was no response until the same were raised in front of the president, only then did he call for studying changes to the restrictive additions in the law in 2019 (Seda and Ismail, 2019). Notwithstanding all this, by 2019 Egypt had more than 48,000 registered NGOs covering a wide variety of activities all under the state's control for registration and audit (Figure 3-10).

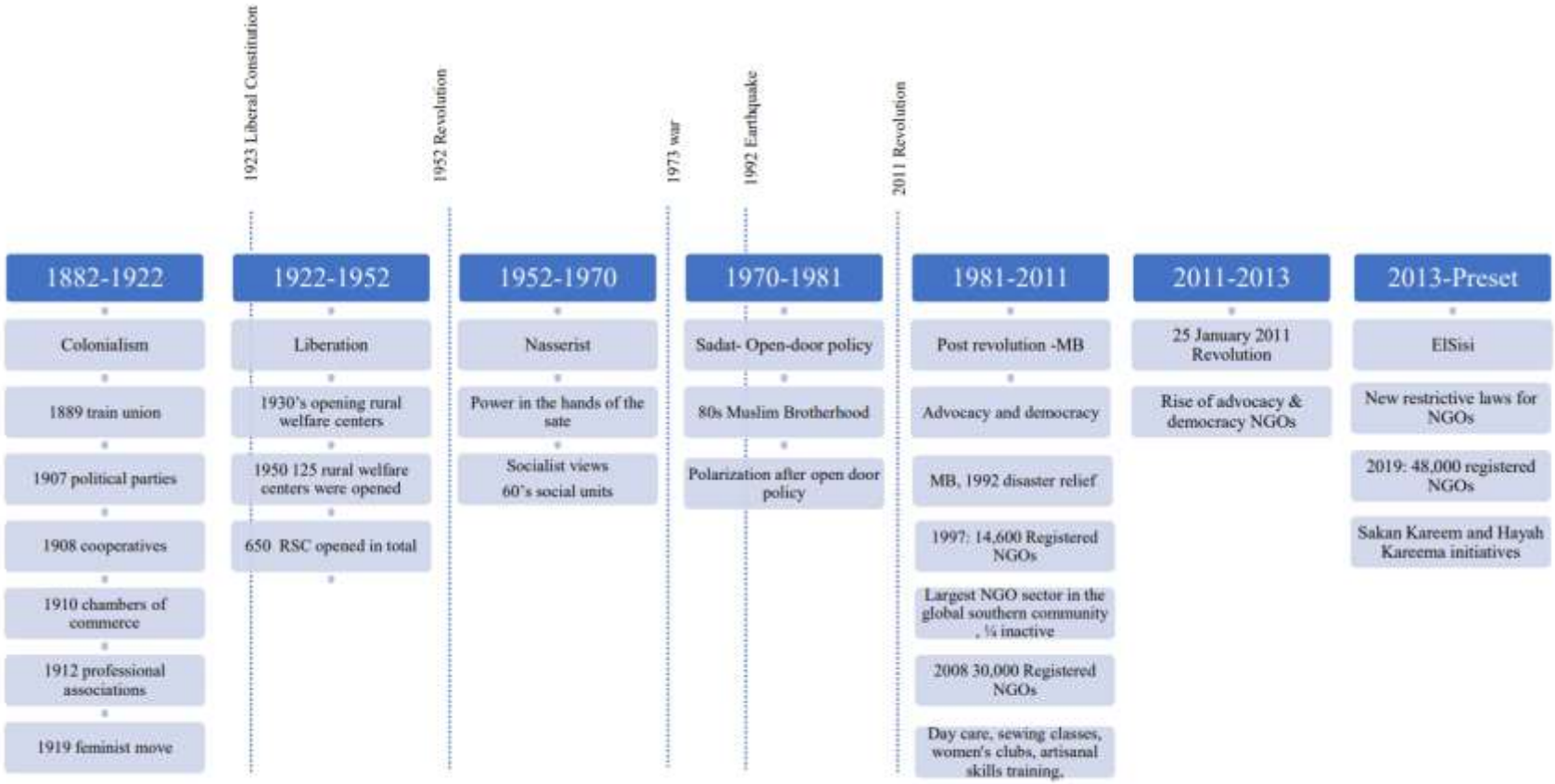



Figure 3-10: History of NGOs in Egypt

Source: Author's own

The Egyptian government motivated the rise of NGOs as partners to help serve the country's substantially poor population (Abdalla, 2007), and to help fill gaps in the services that the government could not or did not fill (Fisher, 1997). All philanthropic organizations in Egypt are registered with MOSS. The scale of civil society organizations vary along the spectrum from national foundations to CDAs. NGOs or CDAs are largely referred to as 'Ahli Associations' (Gam'eya Ahleyya) rather than civil society organizations with 'Alhi' translating to the larger family. This makes those institutions more friendly and less labelled as governmental (El Daly, 2006). This research refers to national development and charity organizations as 'NGOs' and community-based development associations as 'CDAs'.

### *3.5.2 NGOs and comprehensive rural development in the present day*

Several researchers, especially post the revolution, have focused on NGOs' role in encouraging democratization (Herrold, 2020) or resistance (Mirshak, 2019). However, the focus of this research is national welfare NGOs that provided a great deal of service delivery interventions before the revolution and have continued to do so thereafter (Herrold, 2020). There are currently dominant national welfare and development NGOs which lead the NGO field in Egypt and collect huge sums through donations. In 2014, MeK alone collected 346 million Egyptian pounds[6] in donations, 140 went to the Egyptian food bank, and 107 to Alorman (AlMasry AlYoum, 2016).

The following presents some of the largest welfare NGOs that are working on village development; they are arranged according to their establishment date. Alorman was founded in 1993 by businessmen with the aim of transforming the unprivileged from deprived to productive and sufficient (Alorman, 2018). Resala (message) started as a student club at Cairo University, in 1999, and grew into an NGO registered with MOSS within a year (Resala, 2018). The Egyptian food bank (EFB) was founded in 2006 by businessmen and, as evident from the name, seeks to end hunger in Egypt, however, its activities have grown to cover most of fields (Egyptian Food Bank, 2018). The fourth such NGO is MeK (Goodness of Egypt) a fast-growing NGO that was founded in 2007 by several people including the former Grand Mufti of Egypt; it also covers various activities (Misr Elkheir, 2018; TMF, 2018). Finally, LMF -Life Makers development Foundation was established in 2011. LMF aims to encourage young people to participate in development (Life Makers, 2023). The diverse activities undertaken by these NGOs include improving infrastructure,

[6] 346 million Egyptian pounds represent approximately UK£17 million in 2014.

providing food and medical services, building houses and roofs, connecting houses to the sewerage system and clean water networks, and creating job opportunities (for example; providing sewing machines and sewing classes, offering cattle and kiosks) (see, for further, Appendix A: NGO interventions, the 'menu'). Across the different organisations, the range of interventions is very similar and there is, in this regard, almost a 'menu' - a more or less standard list of interventions from which organisations choose a selection (with little variation). These limited selections together constitute the categories of interventions of the discourse. All the mentioned NGOs work with poor villages and offer services from 'the menu'. In addition, each of the NGOs have their own interpretations of comprehensive village development, and their programmes incorporate their own interpretations of the menu items or a specific set (Misr Elkheir, 2018; Resala, 2018; TMF, 2018).

These programmes were self-initiated by NGOs, and they started before both the *Sakan Kareem* and the *Hayah Kareema* governmental initiatives. In December 2011 (that is, soon after the Revolution), the EFB started a programme funded by international corporations. The programme aimed to build schools, youth centres and polyclinics; improve infrastructure, provide clean water supplies, electricity, and roads; enhance the human development factor through providing illiteracy classes, vocational training and micro finance project loans; and organize health awareness campaigns and medical convoys. The EFB partnered with CDAs in order to reach disadvantaged people in all of the governorates of Egypt (Egyptian Food Bank, 2018). In 2015, Misr El kheir initiated a programme called comprehensive village development which was funded by banks and other corporations. Then, in 2017 Resala initiated 'Our village is the best' (karyetna ahla) with a vision to eliminate informality (urban and rural) in general and enhance education to transform poor areas into healthy societies. An approach which, it was hoped, would provide a decent life for the less fortunate, and pave the way for a new generation capable of developing their own society and leading advancement within their region. Alorman did not design its own comprehensive village development programme. In 2018, Alorman compiled different projects from their portfolio and joined *Hayah Kareema* initiative in collaboration with Palm hills, Tahya Misr[7] and the National Bank of Kuwait as funders (Alorman, 2018).

[7] Tahya Misr fund was initiated by the president in 2014 where he decided to donate half of his salary and his capital to help Egypt pass through the rough times, he encouraged Egyptians inside and outside Egypt to donate to the fund as well (TMF, 2018).

### *3.5.3 NGO limitations and government relations*

Despite the huge amount of work the NGOs are doing, they are not fully capable of covering the needs of the rising poor population (Clark, 2000; Hassan, 2011) and there is minimal critique the work of those NGOs (McGann, 2007; Seda and Ismail, 2019). This section presents the critiques of NGOs' work in Egypt in general, in addition to commenting on the limitations and obstacles which they face. NGOs in Egypt are challenged by several limitations including legal, economic, and political limitations that hinder their ability to freely make decisions (Hassan, 2011). According to the 2008 UNDP Human Development Report , Egyptian civil society suffers from a lack of funding, poor public awareness policies and participation, and a lack of coordination and cooperation between NGOs and each other as well as private sector beyond aspects of funding (Khallaf, 2011). NGOs in Egypt work in a legislative environment governed by a set of formal and informal rules, that result in either a collaborative or a restrictive environment according to the alignment of the goals of the NGO with the state (as discussed in Chapter Two). In case of misalignment with the state's objectives, the government might add pressure to the NGO through legal or funding restrictions or additional extensive monitoring (Nafīsah, 2005).

Egypt thus seems to be a good example of how an NGO may be 'turned' into a government tool rather than being a private organization if the NGO maintains both formal and informal communication and accepts cooperation with the government (Gubser, 2002; Abdelrahman, 2004; Beinin, 2014). Some NGOs have built strong relationships with regimes as a means of avoiding any mistreatment and so as to enable them to get on with their work without any disturbance (McGann, 2007; Herrold, 2020).The government narrows down the accepted interventions to those which are aligned with the state priorities, and this implies accepting service provision interventions and restricting democratization and advocacy activities (Mirshak, 2019). Thus, welfare NGOs in authoritarian contexts are not paths to democratization but rather sometimes they stabilize authority (Herrold, 2020). In cases where there are different aims between the NGO and the state, and with the help of the restrictive Laws, the government can always control NGOs whether formally or informally though restricting registration, controlling advocacy activities, implementing penalties (financial or detainment) and adding bureaucratic hurdles such as extensive documentation, and supervising access to data (Mirshak, 2019). For example, data collection without a CAPMAS permit can lead to detention or fines, whilst projects and interventions that involve awareness can be denied for national security reasons that are either not

explained or rather ambiguous (Seda and Ismail, 2019). The current NGO Law enables tighter restrictions to foreign funding (Mirshak, 2019; Seda and Ismail, 2019) and as previously noted, any foreign funding must be accepted by the ministry first so that it can be sure that it aligns with the states' plans; NGOs must find the common ground between the regime's agenda and the foreign aid programs as governmental approval is a must for international and some local funding since the law 70 for the year 2017 (Mirshak, 2019). To overcome extensive audit and restrictions, some NGOs decide to register as legal firms or as limited enterprise which means that they forgo some of benefits of being an NGO, for example this would result in additional financial burdens via being taxable, but allows them more freedom of operation as they would not fall under the MOSS umbrella (Mirshak, 2019; Seda and Ismail, 2019). The restrictions are possibly also why other people and institutions decide to communicate directly with beneficiaries instead of setting up separate organizations or working through existing organizations (Seda and Ismail, 2019).

Funding is a major issue for NGOs in Egypt. NGOs receive funding though numerous ways, religious giving, *zakat* or *sadaqa* as discussed in Chapter 2. The funding sources and organizations somehow dictate flows in the aid chain. Funds include donations, foreign funding, program funding (businesses or foreign entities funding a specific program) and government funding through protocol signing for national initiatives such as *Hayah Kareema*. While MOSS discloses that the government provides support for the NGOs, there is minimal information shared about what the government provides support for so the process becomes one of 'word of mouth' rather than being formally disseminated (Seda and Ismail, 2019). Although in general Egyptians trust NGOs, (El Daly, 2006) they still prefer to give directly to people in need (Khallaf, 2011). Lack of funding causes the NGO environment to become more competitive over available funds, and this leads to less cooperation between NGOs according to Mirshak (2019). Religious periods such as Ramadan are considered as pivotal times each year for NGOs to collect funds and donations to use throughout the year. NGOs tend to use mass media advertisements to fulfil their targeted donations (Elshahed, 2019). In recent years, NGOs have invested in enhancing their websites to accept online donations which may cause inequality in funding between larger NGOs and smaller scale ones that cannot afford media coverage (Elshahed, 2019). Similar to western NGOs working in the south, local NGOs use visual aids that convey grief or victimizing and guilt to push people to donate (Elshahed, 2019).

While NGOs have the structure and some characteristics of independent bodies, they are in fact enmeshed in dependencies. NGOs in Egypt are tightly bound into aid chains, and highly dependent on the external environment whether for donations, volunteers, government approvals or other forms of resources. Moreover, this external environment is, in the Egyptian context, highly uncertain and volatile (Wassif, 2020). This has led to criticism from acadamics on a number of grounds. The pressure of the government and funding bodies may push NGOs to implement those institutions' own agendas rather than their own and to abide to time constraints that may impact the quality of the delivered interventions (Shah, 2005), and without the NGOs having a prior set strategy it is easier for them to drift away from their main objective (Nafissa, 2000). While the pressures (e.g. from UNDP) might also push the NGOs towards positive concepts such as participation (Connelly, 2009), the ways in which the NGOs perfom those requirements tend to be undertaken in a manner so as to ensure that they fit with funding criteria – as previously noted. These requirements may also result in the unequal distribution of benefits which is reflected in the choice of interventions. For example, many initiatives focused on providing drinking water across Egypt are able to display that all of the population has either formal or informal access to clean drinking water, yet sanitation is still bias towards urban rather than rural areas (Abdel-Gawad, 2007).

Most NGOs are also themselves similar to the government (Abdelrahman, 2004) in that they possess extensive bureaucratic measures and corruption at different levels (Seda and Ismail, 2019). Wassif (2020) highlights that the government-like structure of NGOs leads to a gaps in hierarchy between management levels of NGOs with focus on individualistic rather than a participatory culture. According to some scholars, NGO staff in many cases have insufficient training, lack of management skills, biases, and wage inequality where there is an evident wage inequality between NGOs and other private enterprises (Chambers, 1983; Handy and Kassam, 2006). Those bureaucratic institutions suffer from a lack of coordination and data sharing; NGOs reproduce or duplicate the mistakes of the state such as concentrating on urban rather than rural areas or consulting specialists rather than professionals (Nafīsah, 2005). The lack of coordination and a connected database causes overlaps and duplicated work, (Newcomer *et al.*, 2013), and any evaluations are usually driven by the funding institution. This is why the ENID (Egypt Network for Integrated Development) identified a need for mapping interventions, sectors, stakeholders, needs and resources so that an integrated development process might be achieved. The ENID also

stressed that this mapping might call for an independent entity to manage information, resources, and connections to governmental and civil entities, and they recommend moving away from separate interventions to an overall strategy (ENID, 2015). Another similarity to the government that is critiqued by scholars is that NGOs are centralized in the capital rather than being distributed across the country closer to rural areas (Abdel-Gawad, 2007).

The relations between NGOs and beneficiaries is also critiqued by scholars; as NGOs are considered elite institutions and they are accused of the formation of a dependency relations with their beneficiaries (Mirshak, 2019). Despite the seeming proximity and involvement of NGOs and beneficiaries, some scholars express that there is a disconnect between the provided help and the needs of the people due to the lack of participation and feedback from the bottom up. With this in mind, there arises a need for further study of the beneficiaries' perspective in aid chains, and development discourses implemented by NGOs in Egypt. However, there are also suggestions that there is an inherent difficulty in exposing any issues or areas for improvement as beneficiaries usually speak positively of what they receive regardless of their actual needs (Abdelrahman, 2004). This may present itself as an issue when interviewing the beneficiaries during the fieldwork, this is addressed in the methodology in Chapter Four and within the empirical Chapters Six and Seven.

## 3.6 Conclusion

Rurality in Egypt is unique to some extent, given the settlement size of the smallest administrative unit, the close connectivity and the wide availability of water and electricity services. For the aforementioned reasons the research had adopted a more flexible approach to define rurality that is adaptable to the Egyptian rural context an "assemblage of material assets (patterns of land-use, economic activity, built form etc.) and immaterial qualities (their particular social life and the subjective experiences of being in a rural place)" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 39). Over the past hundred years, Egypt has passed through a series of political, economic, and social changes. Those changes have had a great effect on rural Egypt. Economic reforms and industrialisation have caused a shift away from agriculture with regards to income generation. There have also been social transformations, and currently the majority Egypt's rural population is suffering from poverty.

Nominally, aligned with foreign agencies and funding bodies in many time periods, successive governments have attempted various rural development techniques to tackle rural poverty, however, the overly ambitious plans tend towards infrastructure enhancement which seems to be the state's vision of poverty alleviation. With reference to the trajectory of rural development presented in Chapter Two, it can be suggested that Egypt is stuck in a 1970s top-down integrated rural development paradigm presented by Ellis and Biggs (2001), with additional culture-specific aspects that are discussed in Chapter Five.

Until the 1990 most major development initiatives were led and implemented by the government. Following that, NGOs have joined and between the NGOs and the government there have been a series of similar initiatives despite the limited literature available. NGOs have a long history in Egypt and a huge role in charity and poverty alleviation, nonetheless, most literatures especially post 2011 seem to focus on discussions of NGOs and democracy, or NGOs and foreign aid. The focus of this research is the ongoing work of nationwide local development NGOs, funded by national donors and the government, like the latest *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema* governmental and presidential initiatives. While those initiatives could be designed for autocratic state legitimacy, similar to the concept introduced by Loewe *et al*. (2019), this possible legitimacy is not the focus of this research. The seeming collaborative relation between the government and a specific typology of NGOs could be explained through Najam's 4 Cs, presented in section 2.2.2. Nonetheless, there is a lack of critical on-the-ground research about this NGO-government relation in middle eastern authoritarian countries. Even with all the development efforts by all involved stakeholders, poverty still endures and is on the rise, and a specific discourse of rural development has endured with poverty, and this is the primary drive for the research.

As explained aid is delivered through aid chains, yet again there is limited literature about the aid chains of the village development programmes in Egypt and the formal and informal practices and processes, and the various actors involved and their motivations which are not incorporated in the understanding of the process. This lack of available detail explains the importance of questioning the nature of the aid chains. The village development programmes in their design seem to provide a full set of the possible areas of development; yet the reality from the limited previous research shows that while the disseminated plan might include all the aspects, there is a gap in implementation. Elnour's critique of the differences in service provision, inequality and help to

mother villages versus subdivisions or hamlets, informed the choice of hamlets as the poorer of the divisions for my research (Elnour, 2012). The inequality in service provision, the focus on measurable outcomes and the focus on developing urban rather than rural areas is in line with the development aid critique presented in 2.3.2 (Chambers, 1983; Dudley, 2002; Li, 2007). Additionally, similar to global literature and the critique of development initiatives, it appears that the opinions of intended beneficiaries in Egypt are marginalized, and several scholars have expressed the need for incorporating and considering the voices of the intended beneficiaries and the civil society specially in planning (Ghanem, 2014). There are some efforts to incorporate beneficiary 'voice' that seem to be tokenistic, and accountability is still being dominated by issues of donors and governments. The lack of beneficiary participation and feedback is the reason why this research was designed to include beneficiaries' perspectives.

The research fills a gap by exploring the rarely examined institutionalized discourse of development and charity that is accepted by the regime. In addition, this research aims to provide a better understanding of the aid chains and the discourse on the ground, and the factors that have caused the continuity of such programmes. especially regarding the informal aspects of it. The next chapter will put forward the research methodology that was followed to find answers and to increase the knowledge about NGO-led village development and the reasons for its persistence.

# 4 Chapter Four: Methodology

In a context of change, both political and socio-economic, why has the approach taken to rural development in Egypt remained constant despite the overall lack of progress in tackling poverty? Chapter 2 reviewed the international literature that provided a base for the key concepts and ideas, and Chapter 3 presented the context and institutional setting. This chapter firstly brings together the literature and theories previously noted in order to set up the theoretical framing. Thereafter, it revisits the research questions introduced in Chapter 1, followed by a formulation the methodological framework. In the third section it provides a justification for the choice of methodology and describes the methods used in detail and the specifics of how this was put into practice to answer the questions raised. Fourthly, it addresses issues of ethical concerns around the research including positionality, access, and consent.

## 4.1 Theoretical framework

The development of rural Egypt is being implemented in a specific way, a hegemonic and enduring *discourse*, defined by Hajer (1995, p. 44) as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices". The discourse examined is not built on external input or ideas but has rather evolved from within the available discourses and institutions. This discourse seems to have become hegemonic in a way that it is institutionalized, internalized by various actors, and has been continuous for years through both political and economic changes. The discourse exists at different interlinked tiers, and operates across scales involving state, NGOs, and independent actors. The discourse (the ideas, visions, practices and development processes) as well as the actors are embedded in complex societal structures such as religion, state policies and socio-economic factors that influence the actors' motivations, priorities, and the relations that exist between them. Those structures and agents appear to have caused the discourse to become locked in, that is, institutionalized. In theory, discourses are shaped and stabilized through the institutions of a societal context, and vice versa, the institutions are affected by the hegemonic, continuous, stabilized discourse.

This research adopts as previously noted, the dynamic approach provided by Discursive Institutionalism (DI) (section 0), accepting and comprehending the power of both discourses and institutions, and the role of agents in institutional processes (Schmidt, 2008; Arts and Buizer, 2009). The research incorporates and accepts two dualities; discourse and institutions, and structure and agency, and the interplay that exists between those concepts as well as how they affect each other. For example, how structures affect and motivate actors' agency and how it promotes a specific set of interventions.

To understand the complex configuration of the pair of dualities, this research adopted a critical realist (CR) ontology and epistemology that acknowledges causal powers at different levels. From a CR perspective, agents such as structures hold causal powers, which means that the actors - whether individuals or organizations - have the agency to sustain or change the reality or course of action (McAnulla, 2006). The actors involved in the aid chains have different motivations depending on their position in the chain and their affiliations. Those individuals are, therefore, not free-standing but interactive and relational actors who behave within specific contexts. Therefore, even moral motivations cannot be comprehended without situating them within their surrounding structures and understanding the power relations between other actors and structures (Silk, 2006). Similarly, structures are not detached from the individuals, and they hold causal powers. Aid institutions, for example, are not purely humanitarian but rather a derivate of political agendas, commercial interests, and government plans (Silk, 2006).

CR adopts a nonlinear retroductive strategy to uncover these structures and mechanisms where the research is situated in historical pre-existing structures and accepts additions from empirical sources in an alternating fashion (Melnikovas, 2018). This strategy allows back and forth iterations between theories and empirical data in an intertwined manner (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

This research explores the nature of a hegemonic village development discourse, the institutional factors, and the actors' motives that have caused the institutionalization of the discourse. Using the concept of aid-chains as a label for the organisational structures, this research explains the flow of resources and information through formal and informal rules that govern, control, and manage the flow. As presented in Figure 4-1, in this specific development discourse, the discourse is situated within complex contextual social structures, including institutions and other discourses in addition to agency influence the discourse. While acknowledging the possible influences of other

structures, this research puts focus on a few institutions such as religion, social economy, and political factors including state policies in addition to actors' agency. Actors' agency is similarly motivated by the surrounding structures and vice-versa. For example, religion (the least examined of these structures in the development literature) as an institution is also a structure in CR's terms, which affects other structures and agents at different levels. Religion affects the actors' motivations for benevolence, influences the NGOs' legal framework for collecting donations, and helps the promotion of specific choices for the interventions.

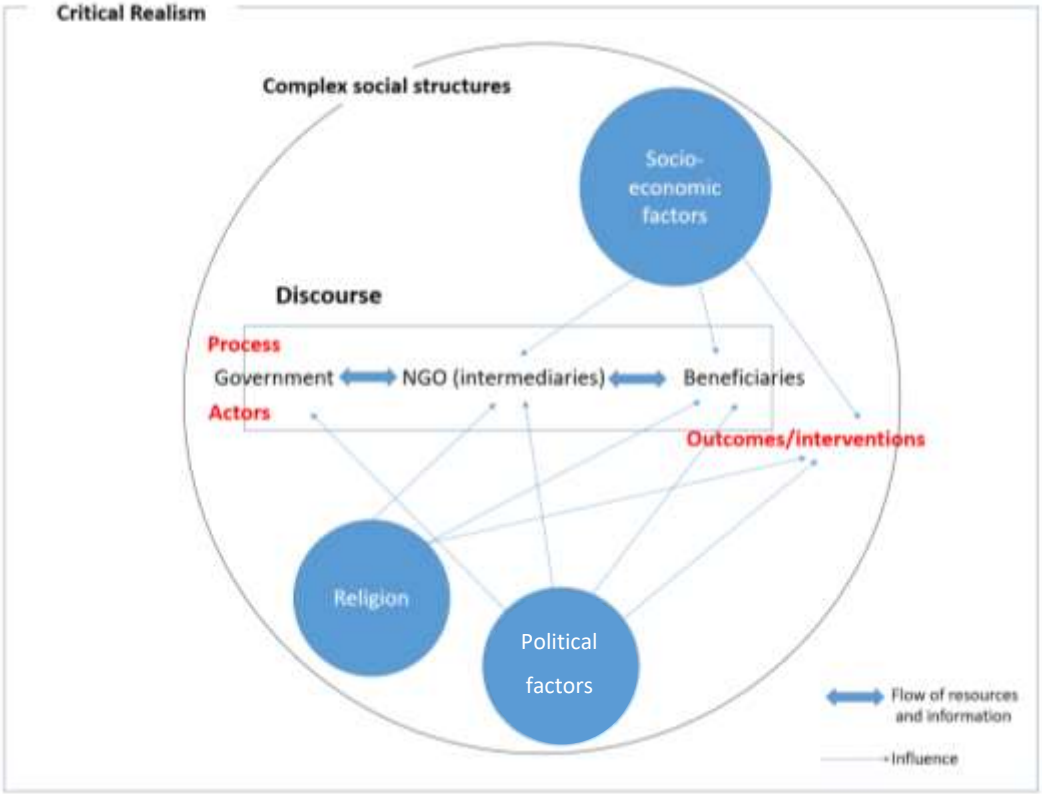



Figure 4-1: Theoretical framework, Source: Author's own

## 4.2 Research aim and questions

Years of continuity of an unevaluated discourse of NGO-led village development encouraged this research. The research questions started developing during observations while volunteering between 2011 and 2016 and were developed throughout the research time. There is minimal recognition of motivations in the development literature (Cleaver, 2017) and a need to "understand contextual realities" (Risal, 2014). With limited literature resources and Elnour's unusual critique

of the 1000 village programme (Elnour, 2012) in particular a question is raised of why do the ideas, visions and processes continue if there are many possible negative aspects.

Hence, the research aims to address the processes, actors, and motives involved in the reproduction of a dominant discourse, in a quest to unveil the reality of its' continuation and institutionalization in the Egyptian context. This research also aims to reveal the realities of NGO-Led village development in Egypt, putting emphasis on the voices of the aid chain actors, beneficiaries, and locals, voices which have often been neglected with existent research. Using discourse analysis and discursive institutionalism the research describes in detail the aid chains of village development and the institutional and discursive factors that have led g to the formation and institutionalization of the discourse. The main research question answered by this thesis is 'How do actors and institutional factors interact to sustain a discourse of NGO-led development in rural Egypt?' The research answers the previous through responding to the following sub questions.

1. What ideas, categories and practices constitute the NGO-led village development discourse in Egypt?
2. How do individual and organisational actors work within institutional frameworks to put the discourse into practice?
    a. Who are the actors involved and how are they organised in aid chains?
    b. How do resources and information flow through aid chains?
    c. What are the formal and informal rules that govern the implementation of the discourse?
3. How do deeper causal factors (both agential and institutional) sustain the discourse?

This research can be considered to be exploratory-descriptive research because it is seeking to find out what is happening with a detailed report of actors and processes (Robson, 2002; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Comprehending the discourse's ideas, visions, and processes of aid transmission, as well as the aid chains and institutional factors helps this research to unpack the hegemonic discourse for future evaluation and changes. To achieve the above-mentioned a qualitative methodology was employed.

## 4.3 Research methodology

The 'research onion' (Saunders *et al.*, 2016) shown in Figure 4-2, presents a summary of the research methodology and methods used within this study. The research philosophy adopted is

critical realism. The approach to theory development is retroduction. The methodological choice is qualitative. The study uses 3 different NGOs and a voluntary group as case studies, the time horizon is cross sectional, and the primary data collection methods used are semi-structured interviews and observations. The following section will show in detail the rationale behind those methodological choices.

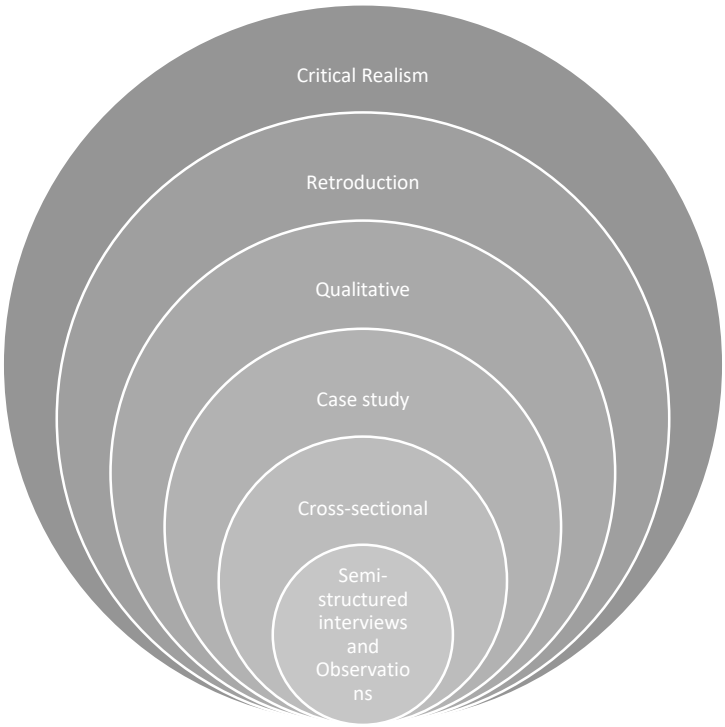



Figure 4-2: Research Onion, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2016, p. 130), adapted by researcher

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study as it places a high emphasis on exploring various social factors (experience, perceptions, and participation). Such factors are meaningful in social contexts, and they are powerful tools to understand development projects in depth. Hence, qualitative research allowed identifying "how things work in particular contexts" (Mason, 2017, p. 1). As causality is primarily local and "general causal claims must be grounded in site-specific causal explanations" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 40) the qualitative field research was conducted through an intensive case study framework analysis. Robson defines a case study as "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (Robson, 2002, p. 178) reflecting that a phenomenon is inseparable from its context.

To study NGO-led village development, in the hierarchical structure presented in Figure 4-3, the NGOs (Alorman, MeK, LMF, and the Benebny Hayah voluntary group) viewed in Figure 4-3 and their village development activities were chosen as the research's case studies. It is important here to acknowledge the diversity of NGO types in the Egyptian context while emphasising the fact the research focuses on the widely accepted, long living, national welfare NGOs rather than the advocacy or international NGOs working in Egypt. These NGOs' planning and execution of village development activities are embedded in structures. It follows, that governmental officials and representatives from MOSS and the governorates were integral to the research, with the actors at the village level being a principal focus which include intermediaries, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries. Additionally, some, but much less, information was collected from a wider range of NGOs and professionals to enable consideration of a broader range of aspects related to village development. Single interviews were conducted with people engaged with other NGOs such as Resala, The Rotary club, Outreach Egypt (Social development consultancy firm), and *Nahdet Benisuef* (نهضة بني سويف, Development of Benisuef).

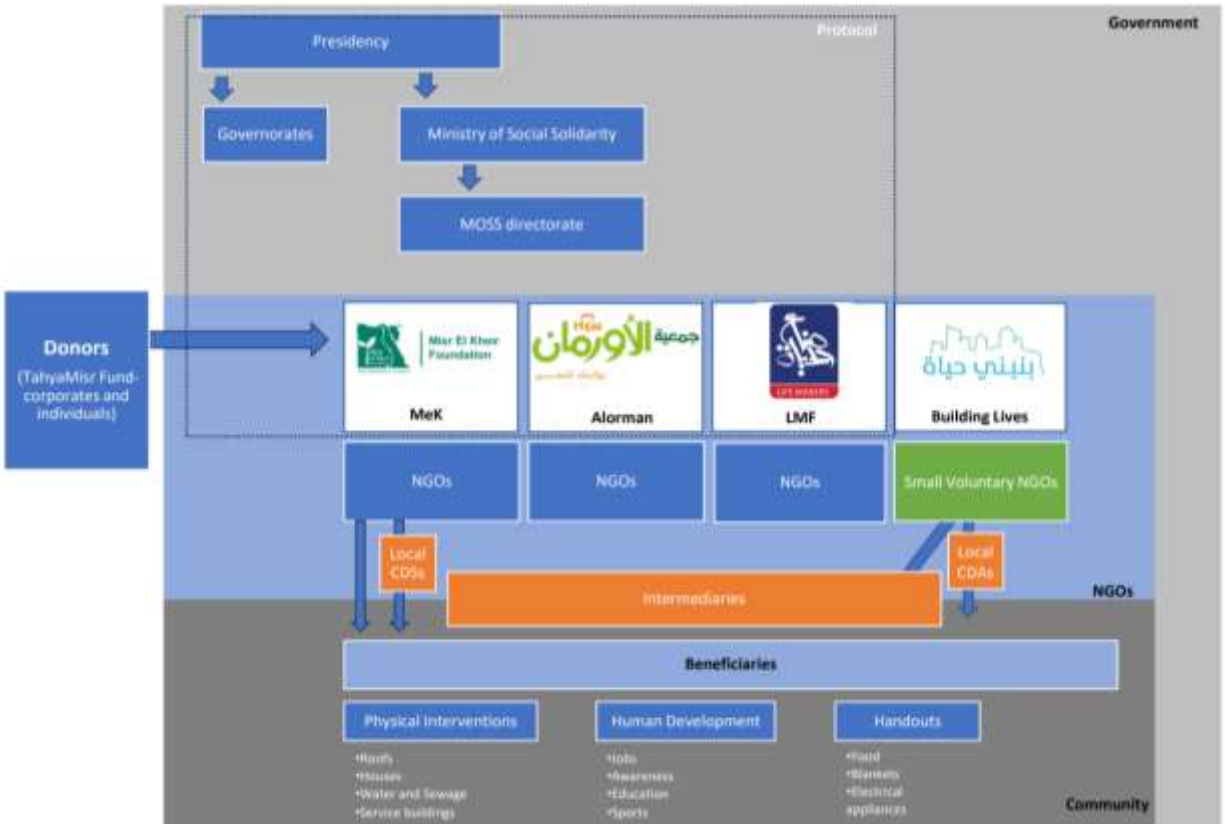



Figure 4-3: The simplified hierarchy of NGO led village development in Egypt. Source: Researcher

The selection of the three specific NGOs as case studies was based on the following criteria: that they were leading Egyptian NGOs, nationwide, involved in village development programmes, signed protocols with MOSS for *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema* and were well known in Egypt. Additionally, for practical reasons, the three NGOs were selected because I had access to them. Whilst the voluntary group did not fit the above criteria, it was included so as to represent a smaller scale village development programme that technically did not have the same institutional pressures as larger registered, regulated and audited NGOs. This therefore enabled examination of institutional leakage as well as the copying of ideas in a different institutional setting. Studying a range of organizations, and various locations allowed a broader understanding of the aid chains to be developed, and also allowed consideration of the similarities and differences in the processes and outcomes of the discourse. It also meant that there was more potential for the research's results to be generalisable.

The NGO selected were Alorman, MeK, and LMF; and the voluntary group was Benebny Hayah. The NGOs self-describe as follows. Alorman is an Egyptian non-governmental, non-profit foundation. Established in 1993 with MOSS, Alorman aims to serve the neediest groups without any religious or political discrimination. The association depends for its financing on in-kind and cash donations from Egyptians inside and outside Egypt. Alorman has branches in 22 governorates and more than 10 in Greater Cairo. The donations collected by Alorman amount to nearly 4 billion Egyptian pounds each year (350 million GBP) (AlMasry AlYoum, 2016). Initially Alorman was known for its orphanages, however it also covers all aspect of the standard NGO 'menu': building houses, distributing meat, food bags and blankets, offering small projects such as kiosks, heads of livestock, providing loans for the widows and those without income and paying off debtors' debts. In the medical field, they support heart and eye operations, and the delivery of prosthetic devices and prostheses (Alorman, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 3, Alorman signed the protocol with MOSS for *Sakan Kareem* in 2017 and the *Hayah kareema* in 2019 (Alorman, 2018).

*Misr El kheir* (MeK) was established in 2007, and is an Egyptian non-governmental, non-profit foundation, that aims to develop Egyptians comprehensively through health, education, scientific research, social solidarity and other aspects of life. MEK has branches in 10 governorates in addition to 27 branches in Greater Cairo and collects 5 billion Egp (435 million GBP) in donations

each year (AlMasry AlYoum, 2016). MeK is well known for its educational and scholarship programmes (Misr Elkheir, 2018). It also performs all the usual 'menu' interventions of welfare NGOs in Egypt. MEK has signed both *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema* with MOSS.

LMF-Life makers development foundation was established in 2011. It is a voluntary based Egyptian non-governmental, non-profit organization, non-religious foundation. LMF aims to encourage young people to participate in development. It has branches in 24 governorates, and covers six areas: action, education, livelihood, health, environment, basic needs and youth engagement (Life Makers, 2023). LMF is also part of both *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema*. The voluntary group, Benebny *Hayah,* is based on a group of young volunteers who have been doing village development since 2012, and it is the group with which I volunteered. *Benebny Hayah* is self-funded through friend and family donations. The group was initially led by Dr.Amr Khalid an Islamic televangelist. *Benebny Hayah* stopped acting as an organisation in 2016 but the members continue to perform 'menu' interventions and village development.

The choice of the hamlets where the NGOs work was not intrinsic for the uniqueness of the hamlets as cases, but instrumental to provide knowledge of the case studies and permit generalizations (Silverman, 2011). To begin with hamlets where I had volunteered were excluded to eliminate possible biases. Two hamlets representative of each case study NGO were selected. The selection criteria were typical hamlets in upper Egypt (with the highest poverty levels), with 250-400 families per hamlet. While the initial hamlet choice criteria also included that the hamlets would be only 2 to 3 hours away from Cairo, and thus limited to Fayoum and Benisuef governorates), during the fieldwork the research expanded to include Sohag and Alminya as well following the locations where the NGOs were working or had worked on village development programmes near to the fieldwork. Other practical reasons for the selection of the hamlets included accessibility and the availability of gatekeepers. The hamlets studied include;

- *Fayoum* (الفيوم) governorate, *Tameyya* (طامية)Center, *Fanous* (فانوس) Mother village, *Ezbet Arafa* (عزبة عرفة) satellite village/ Hamlet.
- *Benisuef* (بني سويف) governorate, *Alwasta* (الواسطة)Center, *AlHaram* (الهرم) Mother village, *Ezbet Abo Elnour* (عزبة أبو النور) satellite village/ Hamlet.
- *Alminya* (المنيا) governorate, *Samalut* (سملوط) Center, *Dafsh* (الدفش) Mother village.
- *Sohag* (سوهاج) governorate, (طهطا) Center, *Nage Idris* (نجع إدريس) Mother village.


Figure 4-4:Fieldwork locations -Google maps with researcher's additions

***Data collection***

To bring peoples' perspectives, ideas, opinions, perceptions, experiences, and relations to the forefront of this research, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with two main categories of participants: the providers and the villagers. The providers include government officials and policy makers, NGO managers and fieldworkers. The villagers include intermediaries, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries. In addition to the interviews, the research also used available documentary governmental data to understand the history of the projects. As for the NGOs concerned, there was limited data on the NGOs' websites and reports, so the research resorted to social media for details of their fields of work, general project definitions and so on. While the NGOs' social media had similar aims, it was easier to track posts over time. As a result, data sources include people, media, and texts.

Having a critical realist ontological and epistemological stance meant that meanings and experiences were important and knowledge was contextual. Interviews were essential to convey those understandings. Fluid social interactions in the form of semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders (Mason, 2017). The research makes sense of the world through the narratives told by the agents. Narratives are the stories that help us understand the world, can be seen as an integral part of institutions (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013) and are the core data for defining discourses (Hajer, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews are guided interviews which "serve the useful purpose of exploring many respondents more systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action" (Jamshed, 2014, p. 87). Initial interview structure guides were designed as seen in Appendix F. However, the interviews questions were altered slightly throughout the process to correspond to the nature of the fluidity of the conversations and the category of the participants. The topics and questions were covered in different arrangements to reflect the flow of the individual interviews. Interviews were undertaken face-to-face to build trust, and were complemented through observations of peoples' reactions and body language, and field notes (Mason, 2017).

Personal introductions were always the starting point to identify a common ground between myself and across all actors to build trust. As in Appendix F, with government and NGO officials, the primary topics of discussion would include how they view the origins of rural development programmes, their role, the main interventions, and the end-to-end process from decisions to physical interventions and evaluations. Other topics discussed are their motivations, the pros and cons of the discourse, their relations with different actors, and their general reflections on how to enhance the existing process. In the villages, the interviews were based on probing questions. The presence of a gate keeper was key. The intermediaries would typically be present at the start of the interviews until trust is built. The beneficiaries were generally willing to open up about their personal life and experiences, however it took more time for them to be critical about the interventions (this will be further explained in the empirical chapters). After conversations about personal life were concluded, the beneficiaries were asked about the nature of the interventions that reach the hamlet and the selection and operational processes. The beneficiaries were also asked about how they felt towards the experience, the involved actors and the end result. The main

themes covered with the intermediaries were what the interventions were, what the process was from their experience and how they felt about the process. The interview guide was changed throughout the fieldwork to make sure the questions were comprehended as aimed to fit each category. For example, at the beginning I asked the beneficiaries what would you have wanted rather than the received interventions but I gathered that the interviewees did not want to be critical or reject anything that was given to them, this is why I rather asked if you were given the same amount of the intervention what would you have done differently. By asking the same question in different forms I was able to better understand the participants views. At the end of the interviews, all participants were asked if they had any additional thoughts or reflections that they feel was covered or wanted to share.

The PhD commenced in October 2018, and the main fieldwork was conducted between August 2019 and February 2020. Pre and post fieldwork visits were also conducted and the research data collection was broken into three phases in accordance with the view of Fletcher (2017). Phase one was 'pre-fieldwork' and occurred in May 2019; three interviews were conducted with NGO members and directors to ensure issues of access, secure permissions, and validate questions in agreement with Robinson (2014). Phase Two intensive was the data collection phase, 'the fieldwork' and this was undertaken, as noted, between August 2019 and February 2020; 61 semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face. Phase Three was conducted at a later stage of the research to confirm and validate the data previously collected. In September 2021, at that time *Hayah Kareema* phase one was finished and 21 interviews were done to cover this specific aid chain case on the ground and to cover lurking issues and topics that needed digging through. During this phase some were conducted over the phone (due to covid-19 restrictions) and others during a site visit in Sohag (see Table 4-1:Participant table further detailed in Appendix B)

Interviews were conducted between Cairo, Fayoum, Benisuef, Al-Minya and Sohag governorates (see Figure 4-4). Most governmental and NGO management interviews took place in Cairo. The interviews were generally in-depth and face to face, and a typical interview usually extended between twenty minutes and an hour, except for a few that spread over 2 to 4 hours.

*Access*

My volunteering experience provided me with connections in the project locations that made the fieldwork safer and allowed easier access to participants. Access was developed incrementally

(Saunders *et al.*, 2016). First by ensuring familiarity and researching the organizations before contact, then explaining the purpose and consequences. Access to participants was planned using existing contacts and using the snowballing technique to contact more participants. Three paths helped to connect me to the participants: contacts from when I was a volunteer, contacts from friends working in the NGO field, and directly contacting participants about the research and asking them to be involved. Securing interviews with governmental officials was achieved through either personal contacts or through NGO managers.

My previous experiences also highlighted issues with timing for hamlet visits, such as, men are usually unavailable during the working day so Friday (i.e. weekend) visits were arranged to meet them after prayer time. However, it was easier to chat with women on the streets in the morning on weekdays. Through my previous exposure to the rural communities in Egypt, it was easier to respect issues of etiquette as well as cultural norms with regard, for instance, to what to wear, choice of words, and understanding rural dialects. For example, I learnt that offering of food and drinks is a sign of welcoming and that such offers must be accepted irrespective of their time or frequency.

*Selection of participants*

At the field the referral process was snowballing sampling, theoretically planned till saturation was reached (Robinson, 2014). The sample was stratified to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as both the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the interviews were valuable for the accountability of the research (see Appendix B -participants' information: anonymised name, gender and code). I attempted to include a large number of participants including a variety of ages and marital status to expand understanding of local experiences. The interviews with the villagers were not always one to one; in some cases, the interviews were conducted in groups of two or three as I was invited inside the house where the whole family engaged in the conversation. When interviews were conducted in the alleys of the hamlet, villagers crowded around, and the interviews evolved into a focus group of more than 2 to become 3 or 4 in some instances. In the villages it was observed that a large number of participants wanted to share their views, either so that they had had an opportunity to share their experience or to help me out as an acquaintance of the gate keeper, or because they speculated, even after the project introduction, that they might get any help later. Interviews with villagers stopped at saturation whereas interviews with NGO and government

officials and intermediaries continued so that as many views as possible were recorded. Acknowledging reality requires admitting that "people do not always report the real motive but sometimes it is the socially approved principles and culturally accepted norms" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 50). Similarly when expressing needs, there is a question of whether those are true needs or false needs constructed by the elites or other factors (Stoddart, 2007). From the perspective of this research, both motives and needs are real (causal) and include the expressed and the causal effects shaped by individual agencies and surrounding structures. This research recognizes those limitations, and as a result, the interview questions were – in all cases - asked in multiple ways to ensure better understanding.

All interviews but one (the latter a consequence of the participant's request) were voice recorded so as to avoid the possible unreliability of written notes and to enable verbatim transcriptions; an approach advised by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016). Interview recordings were transferred to an external encrypted hard drive with password protection. Interviews were conducted in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. The interviews were translated to English and transcribed verbatim simultaneously by the researcher. The transcription included comments of voice, side conversations, and facial expressions (Mason, 2017). In cases where Arabic terms were used that do not have one direct translation in English, the words were left in Arabic and explained in English. Throughout the empirical chapters I have kept the Arabic words (in transliteration) for several key terms. Thematic codes were identified and categorized, and then information was sorted and theoretical themes defined (Maxwell, 2012). Data was then coded into the identified themes using Nvivo.

To avoid rigid themes, initial codes were treated as provisional ones, and I was open to new themes that emerged during the conversations; for example, the effect of neighbours on the perspectives of beneficiaries. Themes were then added, deleted, or replaced, and then grouped. Allowing time between the initial thematic analysis and the re-evaluation allowed reflexivity on the fieldwork (Berger, 2015). Using retroductive reasoning, the research worked in a spiral pattern between empirical material and theoretical literature; constantly finding new explanations, relations and concepts in an iterative flexible process which enabled the theorizing of new relations, concepts and procedures resulting in analytical generalizations (Sayer, 1992; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013). Initial themes included: the development programme into a discourse, similarities and

differences in processes between NGOs, different relation and the beneficiaries' perceptions of the interventions. Added themes included religion and relations to God, how the villagers referred to themselves and others, references to the programme as the known rules of the game, and the importance of the intermediaries and their role in the chain.

Table 4-1:Participant table

| **Category** | **Entity** | **Occupation** | **Organization** | **No. of Interviews** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Providers (20) | Government Level | Vice Minister of Social Solidarity | MOSS | 1 |
| | | Executive director of *Hayah Kareema* | MOSS | 1 |
| | | Executive director of *Sakan Kareem* | MOSS | 1 |
| | | Vice Governor | Governorate | 1 |
| | | MOSS directorate director | Governorate-MOSS | 1 |
| | | MOSS vice directorate director | Governorate-MOSS | 1 |
| | NGO level | Head of sector at Misr El Kheir | Misr El Keir | 1 |
| | | Branch Manager | | 1 |
| | | Branch employee | | 1 |
| | | Fieldworkers | | 2 |
| | | Head of Department at Al-Orman | Alorman | 1 |
| | | fieldworkers | | 1 |
| | | Branch manager | LMF | 1 |
| | | Fieldworkers/volunteers | | 3 |
| | voluntary group | volunteers | | 2 |
| | | Former Village Development project manager (currently head of volunteering in a major NGO) | | 1 |
| Villagers (72) | Community Level: Intermediaries | Intermediaries and CDA managers and members | | 7 |
| | Community Level: Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries | 50 Beneficiaries and 15 non-beneficiaries | | 65 |
| | Total number of Interviews | | | 92 +12 additional interviews |

Figure 4-5: photos from the fieldwork, Benisuef 2020

***Ethics and positionality***

It is crucial to acknowledge my experience and biases (Marvasti, 2004). I volunteered for five years from 2012 in village projects and, as a consequence, I had high expectations and a strong emotional connection to the communities and projects. For this research, I needed to set aside my previous encounters and possible prejudices and adopt a more objective perception. To accomplish this, an ongoing process of self-critiquing and reflection was undertaken, especially during the field work phase alongside constant inclusion of explanations and arguments in a manner in keeping with that advanced by Berger and Mason (2015; 2017)

*Ethical procedures*

Being aware of the ethical issues concerning the research process, appropriate actions were taken at all stages with regard to the safety of participants and the researcher, the privacy and anonymity of the participants and their responses, and data security and storage. The department's procedures for ethical clearance and risk assessment were completed and peer reviewed prior to the fieldwork. As per Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016), sensitivity, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The anonymity of the beneficiaries was ensured by using pseudonyms and participant codes. As for the elites and NGO managers, approval to present quotes using their job titles was obtained. Finally, document security and data protection were ensured throughout the project stages by safekeeping digital content on an external hard drive, while any (and all) print outs were locked safely and never left unattended. No references to the identity of interviewees from previous interviews were made in proceeding ones. The topic of the research does not stimulate any political

intrigue that would put me in question or risk. It was also made clear to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study or refrain from answering any question at any moment.

*Consent*

Participants were introduced to the research project and handed a research information sheet (Appendix C) in Arabic[8] in addition to verbal explanation of the research, as well as its aims and objectives. Either a written (see Appendix D and Appendix E) or verbal informed consent was obtained; most participants preferred verbal consent because of their being fearful of the consequences of signing any documents (a culturally embedded aspect that was respected), or because they were illiterate, or because they simply did not see the necessity of that step having given their verbal consent. All participants accepted on a voluntary basis, were granted full privacy, and had the right to withdraw from the study at any point with no consequences. In the event no one did so.

I introduced myself as a researcher while being careful to explain that I am not affiliated to the government or any NGOs and was also careful not to promise any kind of help, whilst also explaining the importance of their voluntary input. Even with this clear explanation of the project a number of villagers still asked – at different points within the actual interviews – as to what help would or could be offered. This may have been because I was introduced in the first instance by an NGO fieldworker, a CDA member, or another intermediary who acted as a door opener. When such instances arose, I re-explained the research and stressed the fact that there was no financial return for participants' involvement beyond the potential that their inputs might help the vision of future development interventions.

Potential bias in the fieldwork included positive feedback from the beneficiaries because of the fact that I was introduced through an intermediary. Participant biases in general were minimized by the undertaking of a larger number of interviewees – thereby negating any individual bias as a consequence of the larger sampling size. In addition, some villagers openly expressed their financial situations and sources of income and the interventions that they or others had received (as well as by whom), while others did not instantly make explicit the nature of the interventions that they had received or what additional sources of income they had until they were probed or

[8] It was also available in English if requested

asked in other ways. This was especially the case when the gate keeper was present during the interviews. The existence of such a scenario further underlined the importance of observations to this study as a means by which to better understand situations.

*Positionality*

The principles of CR infer the importance of stating the given researcher's positionality (Saunders *et al.*, 2016), and attempting objectivity (Berger, 2015). I can define myself as a female, Egyptian, Muslim, academic, from the upper middle class, living in Cairo and a previous volunteer with voluntary groups and NGOs. All of the previous have affected my positionality. Starting with Egyptian, being a national enhanced the ease of accessibility in the field, and speaking the language allowed direct understanding and informed calculation of risks. Nonetheless, and as a national, I was alert to working within an authoritarian bureaucratic state and recognized the possible long time that it could take to get required permits, as well as the importance of having all permits and documents ready at any point in time during the fieldwork to avoid being questioned. For example, access to preview governmental documents took weeks and was limited by time during which the usage of a camera or photocopying were banned. Nonetheless, being an Egyptian made access to such documents and government representatives possible as opposed to being a foreigner that could have caused additional security implications. Being an Egyptian Muslim, I overlooked religious themes during the initial phase of the fieldwork and took for granted religious references to God as everyday expressions. However, after sharing the transcripts with my supervisory team (non-Muslim but with experience of working in the Arab world) some of the themes were highlighted and these later became obvious in the second and third phases of the fieldwork. My affiliation as an academic at Cairo University greatly supported my position as a researcher and enhanced my credibility. On the other hand, being affiliated with a foreign university (Sheffield) sometimes resulted in speculation and raised questions on my 'real' intentions, which were lessened by further explaining the research aims and objectives and supported by proving my status as a student on a scholarship jointly-funded by the Egyptian government.

While those specific suspicions took place in the capital during mid-level aid chain interviews, other suspicions were noticeable at the village level. Although being from an upper middle class and living in Cairo was positive in terms of having access to NGOs, there were negatives; for instance, I was easily spotted as an outsider in the village, through by my attire and language. The

possible drawbacks of being an ‘elite’ made me cautious all the time and keen to avoid making assumptions or having preconceptions or prejudices. In one case a family insisted that I would join them for tea after finishing my work, despite the fact that they had already been interviewed on a previous visit. That time I was alone without gate keeper and apparently rumour had it and people been sceptical, minutes after entering the house an intermediary came, who had left his work and rushed to the hamlet to make sure I was not using the people or taking money in promise of providing them with benefits. Upon arriving and asking some questions the intermediary was excited to join the research and actually presented a great deal of insight.

As a female interviewing in rural Egypt a possible female bias was expected (Robinson, 2014) as it is culturally insensitive in some areas to have mixed meetings. However, this was minimized through ensuring male representation in group interview settings. Furthermore, and as a matter of respect for rural Egyptian cultural norms, a family member usually accompanied me to increase my credibility and acceptability. On one occasion I had visited a hamlet accompanied by mother and then weeks later I took a female friend to a follow-up meeting. Two or three villagers asked where my mother was; t seemed to be an issue for two females to drive alone in the rural area and the villagers expressed a need to take my safety into their own hands so as to ensure that I ‘had family there’. To ensure my safety during the fieldwork, trusted village guides were contacted to accompany me throughout the trips especially primary visits. However, they usually did not attend the interviews or hear the content. Acknowledging the possible consequences and impacts of my own positionality, frequent reviews and peer discussions were undertaken to minimize any possible effects (Berger, 2015).

## 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpinned the study. This chapter ends the first half of the thesis; the preceding chapters the setup needed to respond to the research questions. The following three chapters use the language of discourse, institutions, and agency to analyse the data gathered and reflect on the fieldwork. The first empirical chapter covers the visions, categories and practices of the discourse as perceptions of the providers and through the lens of rural living. The second empirical chapter provides detailed insight on the various aid chains as perceived by each of the actor groups involved, whilst providing insights about the procedural formal and informal rules that govern the discourse. The final empirical

chapter presents a compiled discussion of the institutional factors that have encouraged the continuity of the discourse through change, including socio-economic, religious, and state factors.

# 5 Chapter Five: Defining ‘the discourse’: ideas, concepts and categories

As introduced in the previous chapters it seems that a failing discourse of development has endured in the context of NGO-led village development in Egypt. There is minimal literature about the topic, and the exact nature of this discourse has not been researched. This chapter puts together the evidence that contributes to answering the research question: What ideas, categories and practices constitute the NGO-led village development discourse in Egypt? This chapter covers both the discourse as text elaborated in the visions of development programmes, the identification, and categorisations beneficiaries, in addition to the set of realized interventions provided by the discourse.

In this investigation, section 5.1 pursues the providers’ perspectives of the discourse studied via analysis of available public content from NGO and government websites, and social media platforms, in addition to interviews with different providers like NGOs and government officials. The research followed the Instagram pages of the NGOs (as explained in Chapter 4: Methodology) to track NGO-led village development through their posts. The extracted information was then backed up by fieldwork interviews, NGO websites, and observations. This section traces ‘comprehensive village development’ project, to confirm use of language, beneficiary categories, and interventions. The section will present how the providers identify and categorize the intended beneficiaries. The providers vision of rural development is presented in section 5.1.2. Then, an explanation of the choices of the physical interventions that result from such categorizations is given in section 5.1.3. Then, the chapter notes the possible origins of the discourse which provides evidence as to the possibility of institutional leakage and bricolage over the years of continuity. Section 5.1 concludes by defining the intended development discourse as text and its set of practices from the perspective of providers. The processes through which these are delivered are examined in Chapter Six.

Section 5.2 aims to identify the development discourse from the perspective of the villagers. This section introduces the rural livelihoods as presented through the lens of the villagers of their surrounding circumstances and problems. The focus is directed towards the aspects of rural living

highlighted by the villagers to be able to question whether the discourse, as practices realized on the ground, captures the beneficiaries' priorities.

## 5.1 The Aid providers' perspective

From the provider's perspective, this section presents the discourse's view of beneficiaries and their respective categories, the visions of the discourse's programmes, and the advertised interventions. The potential origin of the discourse is examined from the providers' viewpoint.

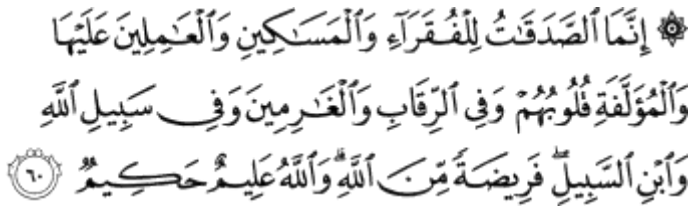
### *5.1.1 Identifying the beneficiaries*

This section presents the conceptualization and categorizations of intended beneficiaries as explained by providers. I here refer to the providers involved in the development setup including government officials such as MOSS officials and other officials at different administrative hierarchies, NGO managers and fieldworkers, CDA members, and intermediaries within villages who were the key links between the providers in the capital and the villagers.

The intended beneficiaries are referred to by the providers and in official documents using different Arabic terms, meaning 'poor' or 'in need' or 'deserving'. To clarify, this chapter notes both the Arabic and the translation. In official meanings, the word '*fakeer'* (فقير, poor) means a person who has less than half of the income they and their family needs in a year; *'Maskeen'* (مسـكين, poor) refers to a person who has more than half of what they and their family need but less than what they need in a year in total; whilst another word that is also used to denote a poor person is *'mohtag'* (محتاج, in need) - can be used simply to say 'I need a cup of water'; '*Almohtag*' (المحتاج,the needy) is generally used to identify a needy person or a person who is in need in general. In colloquial Egyptian Arabic, *'fakeer'*, *'maskeen'*, and *'mohtag'* are used interchangeably when referring to the 'poor', and all are *'mostahek'* (مسـتحق, deserving) of *zakat* according to Islamic law (Lane, 1872). While used interchangeably in many cases, and though officially *fakeer* is more in need than *maskeen* , the term '*maskeen'* provides the perception in colloquial Egyptian Arabic of being more in need than *'fakeer'* in some cases. In general, these Arabic variations do not make a great deal of difference, and herein they have all been translated as 'poor' except in instances where it is important to note differences, for example when specified by participants. Another term used by the government and the NGOs was '*Al-akthar ehteyagan'* (الأكثر أحتياجا , the most in need), this was usually used with reference to villages in Upper Egypt as the most poor, adding 'the most' being used to stress the need and implying the order of poverty or neediness.

Those terms refer to some of the *zakat* deserving categories of potential beneficiaries presented in the following verse from the Quran.

> *Indeed, zakat expenditures are only for the poor and, the needy, and to those who work on [administering] it, and for bringing hearts together, and to [free] those in bondage, and for those in debt, and for the cause of God, and for the stranded traveller. [This is] an obligation from God. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Qur'an, Chapter 9, Verse 60)*




While the vast majority of rural Egypt is considered poor, being *'Mostahek'* (مستحق, deserving), deserving of zakat is one thing, whilst being eligible for provided interventions is another. A MOSS vice minister used this word in the following saying "The aim of any social protection is to reach … a universal coverage, universal not as everyone but only the deserving." The poor and deserving are conceptualized by cultural and religious influences to represent specific categories of people. As one CDA manager put it "in charitable work …. you give because the cases are terribly in need". After he had identified the beneficiaries who fit the concept of 'in need', he continued to present the categories "whether sick, or a widow or an old lady bringing up orphans". A similar was expressed by an NGO manager who said, "I have one criterion 'in need", but he then gave examples of categories "they might be employees but in a bad condition or sick". Although he shared the sick as a category of people in need, he added that employees are usually not eligible (as per NGO restrictions), because employees have stable monthly incomes unless the income per family member is below a certain figure (see subsequently in this Chapter). While some providers followed the general categorization of poor or in need, an intermediary further detailed the ranking categories of people who are in need in the village as belonging A, B and C categories, "A the orphans, B sick people, and C for example, a man who is working in the factory (non-governmental employee) and has 5 kids 4 of whom are in school, and he does not have any extra income other than that from the factory". Although the intermediary, added another level of

detail to the categorizations, those categorizations are not the sole criterion of beneficiary selection. Other identifiers are highlighted when presenting the process in Chapter Six.

A government official at MOSS added comments as to the physical determinants of beneficiary categorizations. She noted, “they don't have a sip of clean water, or a roof to shelter them, they don't have sewerage systems or a toilet to begin with… the most important bit here is the sewerage systems, because they have no bathrooms, the desert is their toilet”. Her representation of the rural poor directs the possibilities for intervening, and it is possible that this perspective has helped shape the institutionalized discourse. This is why she said, “so we started with the sewerage and clean water for drinking”. When the intended beneficiaries are portrayed in a specific way this highlights a possible set of interventions to providers. For example, if, as in this case, the intended beneficiaries are depicted as living in the cold with no shelter, then that concept is rationalized justifying specific categories and can be converted into physical realities such as a roof. This then becomes a priority for the providers.

All the terms introduced above were used by the various providers to identify the beneficiaries. For example, the MeK in its integrated projects programme used ‘the most deserving villages’ (Misr Elkheir, 2018). Alorman aimed at targeting the ‘poorest villages’ while Resala, aimed in the ‘our village in the best’ project to provide everyone in the village with a ‘humane life’ (Resala, 2018). The *Sakan Kareem* (dignified house) initiative used the same language for identifying the targeted segment as ‘poor families’ and the ‘most deserving’ of welfare living in the rural ‘villages’ (MOSS, 2018). The categories targeted were the individuals and families listed in ‘*Takaful and Karama’* social protection (see Section 3.4.2) such as “female-headed households and individuals with disabilities” which was also referred to as ‘sick’. Alorman website showcased their categorisations of ‘poor’ through listing the eligibility documents to be submitted by beneficiaries. These documents included a stamped social research report from the social services, a valid national identification card which contains evidence for social status (to highlight being a widow or divorced), and income or pension statement to provide formal evidence to fit one of the previously mentioned categories of being poor (Alorman, 2018). Alorman fieldworker explained “one of our requirements is that the minimum number of family members is three, and that this house is their only shelter, and that they don't receive any benefits from the government”.

*Hayah Kareema*, the presidential initiative, had additional principles for choosing the villages most in need. Namely, those with poor sewerage and water networks, a poor percentage of education and high classroom capacity, a need for extensive health care services, poor road networks, and a high percentage of poverty. The percentage of poverty per village determined the phases; more than 70% poverty in phase one, between 50% and 70% in phase two, and less than 50% in phase three (Hayah Kareema, 2022). Despite its seemingly more comprehensive criteria in choosing villages, the *Hayah Kareema* initiative had similar categorizations for deserving families 'most in need' in the villages which included the elderly, individuals with disabilities or people with special needs, female headed households, orphans and children, and unemployed youth (Hayah Kareema, 2022). Even though each of the organizations and initiatives defined their own criteria for the intended beneficiaries, they usually include the categories of orphan, widow, sick, elderly, and disabled.

### *5.1.2 Visions - the public presentation of the discourse*

The NGO websites provided very general visions and mission statements and used the same language and concepts as the beneficiaries (as noted above) such as 'in need' and aiming to provide a 'dignified life'. For example, Mek's general vision is to "empower the Egyptian community to go back to a dignified life" (Misr Elkheir, 2018), Alorman's vison is to provide services for those categories of the community "most in need" (Alorman, 2018), and LMF's was "comprehensive community development; for the benefit of humanity"(Life Makers, 2023). Benebny Hayah's vision according to a volunteer: "was to help others, provide help and as much as we can meet the basic needs of the village and self-development, we plant a seed, and they can grow and multiply over time so our aim was to complete the needs for basic needs and work on human development." It can be observed that when providers do not clearly state a specific vision, they state in their aims the provision of a dignified life '*Hayah Kareema*' (حياة كريمة), while this is also the name of the governmental initiative, the words were commonly used in Egypt's development and charity fields before that named initiative.

None of the websites for either NGOs or the government, displayed any specific Key performance indicators (KPIs) or detailed information about the measurement or monitoring of projects. Instead, they included details pertaining to success stories or stories of people in need and links

for donations. Most of the public information on the NGO websites was directed towards news, donation, or volunteering (in some cases). The other text provided by the NGOs on their websites was achievements; noted in numbers and a news section. These sections appear to have been designed to keep current and potential future donors updated upon the projects and achievements. Those achievements and calls for donations were also show-cased by the NGOs on their social media platforms. Because social media has become a legitimate source of information for donors, NGOs are posting more frequently on their social media sites.

The *Sakan Kareem* initiative was launched with the same aim as the programme name; to provide people in poor villages with 'a dignified' house (MOSS, 2018). The *Hayah Kareema* initiative was presented as being beyond merely improving the living conditions of Egyptians and was presented as more of an attempt to honour Egyptians with a dignified life as a form of appreciation for standing by the country during the harsh economic conditions (Hayah Kareema, 2022). The initiative defines citizens as the 'best supporters' of the 'battle towards development' (Hayah Kareema, 2022). This kind of language is used by the state to encourage citizens to accept the stresses of the economic reforms that are taking place within the ruling of the authoritarian state. The objectives of the *Hayah Kareema* initiative (Figure 5-1 ) do not provide smart or detailed KPIs. Rather, they provide general criteria that covers the United Nation's SDGs from equality to poverty alleviation (Hayah Kareema, 2022). As shown in Figure 5-1, Objective number 7 is the development of the Egyptian citizens without specifying which aspects of development (Hayah Kareema, 2022).

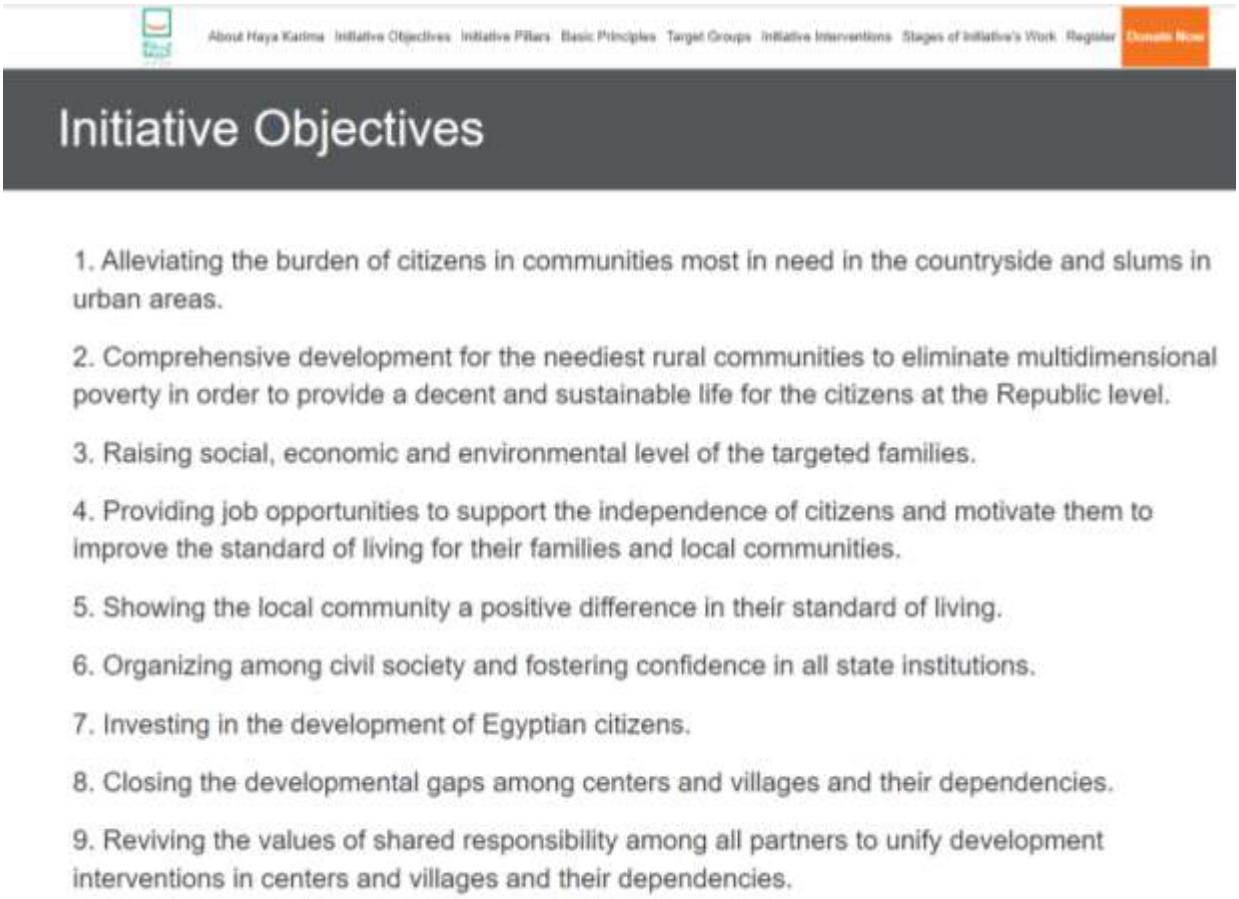



Figure 5-1: Hayah Karima Objectives, (Hayah Kareema, 2022)

### *5.1.3 The interventions – the practices of the discourse*

NGOs in Egypt provide a vast number of interventions which range from orphanages and hospitals to handouts, monthly pay-outs, and providing for street children. All of these (and other) interventions make up the previously noted NGO intervention menu. The NGOs' initiatives as well as those of the government possess general visions and aims which, when translated to planned interventions, are narrowed down to specific physical interventions. In this section, the research lists the interventions as the set of practices publicized by the NGOs within the discourse of rural development in Egypt.

The interventions of Alorman's village development programmes were mentioned in detail on its social media, with the interventions including the delivery of houses (demolition, reconstruction,

roofing, plastering, paint, internal tiling), water and electricity connections, sanitary ware, doors, and windows. The NGO also provided bridal essentials. To showcase their efforts, they posted a video of the opening of one village showcasing houses and the video also included mothers of brides expressing their happiness of getting the bridal essentials (see Figure 5-2). Other posts between 2014 and 2020 identified additional interventions that were targeted towards village development including: medical convoys, projects such as kiosks and cattle, and distributing blankets, food bags and meat to families in need (Alorman, 2022). With respect to village development initiatives, MeK offered: house renovations, water and electricity connections, roofs, handouts, medical and veterinarian convoys, and surgeries. The distinctive aspect of MeK compared to Alorman was renovating schools and health care units within the village development programmes (see Figure 5-4). MeK also continued to distribute seasonal handouts such as school supplies, meat, and other portfolio interventions such as helping with kidney dialysis, and bridal essentials (Misr elkheir, 2022).

LMF's official pages displayed pictures of the main interventions for the 'most poor villages' within Upper Egypt according to the Egyptian government ranking. Illustrations included: renovations, building roofs, clean water and connections to the sewerage network. According to its social media, LMF also provided in kind goods, blanket, clothes, bridal essentials, medical convoys and financed small projects (LMF, 2022).

The Benebny Hayah (building lives) voluntary group undertook similar interventions. The unique aspect of Benebny Hayah was the awareness sessions hat it held; weekly sessions mainly with children within hamlets which covered issues such as ethics, health, and hygiene. Cherif the project manager explained the project priorities as follows;

> *Our priorities were the infrastructure and the village project, such as widening the road or covering the sewage lines, we also had human development and health through medical convoys, we planned for some activities such as roof, building houses, medical convoys, awareness campaign in several subjects. Cherif - project manager- 69*

As for government initiatives, *Sakan Kareem* interventions included houses, roofs, water, electricity, and sewerage; the same interventions provided previously and continuously by NGOs. An official at *Sakan Kareem*, identified the interventions as follows, "so our plan is the rehabilitation of the house, we install roofs, clean water, sewage pipes, a sink a toilet, a door,

window, lamps." An NGO volunteer similarly explained "*Sakan Kareem* was split into 3 categories, roof, water and sewerage." (MOSS, 2022). Finally, the MOSS director, when asked about *Hayah Kareema*, explained that "there are 18 aspects under *Hayah Kareema*, the most important of those aspects are the interventions done by the NGOs, sewerage systems, roofing rebuilding, orphan brides, and people with disabilities." These interventions were also listed on the initiative's website (Hayah Kareema, 2022).

The interventions listed in Table 5-1 are the practices that were chosen from the NGOs' menu as advertised on their official pages. The technical regulations of the interventions were shared between the NGOs and included: that the approved area of an accepted house is an average of 60m$^2$. The *Sakan Kareem* official explained that the government accepts finished 70m$^2$ houses and her reasoning for this as that there are also 50 and 55 m$^2$ houses - so 60 is an average (A typical accepted house can be seen in Figure 5-3). The *Sakan Kareem* manager's internalisation of the interventions usually provided by the NGOs was evident as she supported wooden roofs even in rainy regions noting that,

> *In rainy areas wood is ok as well, the rain does not pass the plastic layer… We are working on the one floor buildings in bad conditions, and the specs are not going to change. I am not working in apartments. They should thank God they have a roof. I am working in rural areas. Sakan Kareem manager-64*

The NGOs had similar requirements in some other factors such as average house area. However, some NGOs also had specific details. For instance, Alorman had restrictions with regards to the planning of rooms – insisting that plans must include 2 rooms, a hall, a bathroom, and a kitchen. Beyond housing, the remaining set of interventions publicised by the NGOs were those noted in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Interventions as advertised by NGOs and Initiatives

| Interventions | NGOs | | | | Development Initiatives | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alorman | LMF | MeK | Benebny Hayah | *Sakan Kareem* | *Hayah Kareema* |
| Full house restoration | √ | | | √ | | √ |
| Plastering & internal tiling | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Roofs | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Sewerage Networks | | √ | | √ 1 Hamlet | √ | √ |
| Water and electricity | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Medical convoys | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| In-kind good & Seasonal handouts (e.g. Meat, food bags,…) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Bridal essentials | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Small projects | √ | √ | | √ | | √ |
| Healthcare/Surgeries | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Service Buildings (Schools, Hospitals,…) | | | √ | | | √ |
| Awareness Sessions (health sessions | | | | √ | | √ |


Figure 5-2 Instagram posts from Alorman, Left: calling for donations for orphan marriages, Right: a woman happy she has got bridal essentials for her daughter, (Alorman, 2022).

Figure 5-3: Left: House restored by Alorman in Benisuef. Right: House restored by LMF for *Hayah kareema* house in Sohag

Source: Author's own

Figure 5-4: Left: A state school newly built by MeK Alminya. Right: A state school newly built by *Hayah Kareema* in Sohag

Source: Author's own

### *5.1.4 The origins of the discourse of development*

The idea of the comprehensive village development was introduced in Chapter One, and it was suggested that it might have been possibly sparked by the 1000 village programme that was initiated by the government. Exploring the starting points provides evidence as to the number of years over which there has been a continuous discourse. The question here is whether the 1000 village programme, initiated in 2007, was the first village development programme or whether there were traces of the same in previous trials. The provider participants, whether government or NGOs, were asked about the origins of the discourse and their perspectives of the starting points and the connections, if any, between those programmes and the *Hayah Kareema* initiative.

In the initial hypothesis of the research and working from my own experience, I thought that what the *Benebny Hayah* voluntary group was designing was a new concept. Later, and through analysis of available literature, the discourse of development seemed to be more akin a continuation to the 1000 villages programme initiated in 2007. However, there is evidence – through the further investigative work undertaken for this work - of similar comprehensive village development plans having been undertaken in the Alminya Governorate by a local CDA, Better Life Association for Comprehensive Development (BLACD) starting in 1995 financed by the Swiss based Drosos foundation. This may have been the initial seed of such programmes. Three participants shared their experiences regarding the origin of the programmes studied in this work. The first was a volunteer and former employee at Unilever Egypt who explained that a successful village

development programme was conducted in Indonesia and that Unilever's CSR saw a video online of that project and took that as a starting point for the undertaking of village development in Egypt; the date was 2004. The second response came from an LMF volunteer who explained that the village project called 'our village project' was initiated in 2010, with an idea to choose villages that are far away and implement all LMF projects in the village within short timeframes. According to LMF's website, the earliest village development efforts were in 2013 (Life Makers, 2023). The third response was from an NGO project manager who said, "I remember a video of a village being developed in Egypt causing the spark for the project that was carried on later by volunteers". He explained that when they started working on village development in 2012, they had not heard about the 1000 village programme, but then continued to note that this might have been because of the fact that in 2012 no one wanted to hear or follow any initiatives from the government (post 2011 revolution). In his explanation, there might have been a possible connection between what was said and initiatives from an Egyptian corporation "may be the TE data (telecommunication corporation) initiative was connected to the 1000 poorest villages, either one of them or copying from them…So maybe we took a readymade idea that we liked but its origin was that 1000 village?". It is worth mentioning that none of the other participants were able to recall any connections to any development discourse origins. While the origins of the discourse remain unclear, it does seem to date from before the 1000 villages and could have its origins in a number of different, and separate points. What matters is that the ideas as to how to undertake rural development were, or became, very similar.

As for the NGOs, the 'Alorman' charity organization did not have any comprehensive village development programmes displayed on their website. However, on their social media platforms the organisation had posted a call for donations to the project "sponsor a poor village" in early 2014. Later in the June of 2014, Alorman posted a showcase of an initiative launched by the organization in collaboration with the CSR of the Egyptian Iron Group to develop and reconstruct the villages most in need. This initiative targeted 40 villages in the governorates of Egypt at a cost of 120 million pounds (Alorman, 2022). In 2017, the organization shared a post about the development of the villages most in need, this time in collaboration with the Tayha Misr fund. Unfortunately, it had only a simple outline "reconstruction and redevelopment of the villages most in need" with barely any details being provided (Alorman, 2022). The NGO posted similar pictures of happy families and officials opening the villages. Then, in 2017, the organization used a hashtag

reconstruction of poor villages, and in 2020 a similar post noted the opening of Alrayan village - this time in collaboration with Rotary Egypt (Alorman, 2022). Finally in 2021, '*Hayah Kareema*' was evident as a hashtag, and was accompanied by a picture of a renovated house. The pictures in Figure 5-5 show media coverage for the opening of a finished village, as well as a family (top right) being delivered a renovated house.

Figure 5-5: Pictures from Alorman's village development programmes in 2014 and 2017

Source: (Alorman, 2022)

MeK's trajectory with regard to comprehensive village development started in 2015, when it initiated a project called 'comprehensive village development' which was funded by banks and other corporations. However, the first post on social media with reference to that project dates from 2019 when MeK started developing villages in collaboration with The National Bank of Egypt. In 2020, MeK posted pictures of collaborations with the government 'Hayah Kareema' and Qatar National Bank Egypt QNB bank "redeveloping Masoud village"; the project in that village. In 2021, MeK relaunched for the sixth time a programme called 'Sutrah' which means shelter or to cover, this time in collaboration with the Alwalid foundation; it aims to provide houses and roofs for vulnerable families (Misr elkheir, 2022).

If the relationship between NGOs' and earlier government programmes is unclear, the influence in the other direction is certain. *Hayah Kareema's* official website indicated that the 7th national youth conference in 2019 witnessed the establishment of the *Hayah Karima* programme with youth

volunteers from the conference being encouraged by the president (Hayah Kareema, 2022). Two MOSS officials explained that, according to their knowledge, *Hayah Kareema* was based on the work already being done by NGOs and the government. Similarly, one official explained that *Sakan Kareem* was designed to build synthesis on the success of NGOs in reaching 'the deserving'. A vice director of MOSS in a Benisuef explained that the "NGOs here have been doing the same things even before the current initiative, it [the NGO interventions/development] is working naturally on its own, NGOs are working on those issues all the time". With reference to village development programmes, the vice director focused on an ongoing discourse that seems to be a continuation and success from her viewpoint. The MOSS vice minister pointed out that governmental criticism is of NGOs working in a scattered way, not their interventions or what they do. The MOSS vice minister's view is that by having a synergized system of NGO interventions real development can happen. She noted;

> *Hayah Karima is a presidential initiative, ……, I think it is based on the poverty maps… It's based on the idea that the NGOs are doing scattered work and that the villages need real poverty alleviation, and we need to know who is doing what all the time. Because the NGOs used to go and work on their own, yes, they give notice to the MOSS about what they do. But they do not work in a system or a cycle. If we connect, we can change people's lives. MOSS vice minister-87*

While the MOSS vice minister's stated opinion indicates a connection between the programmes, the managing director of *Hayah Karima* at the MOSS when asked about the possible starting points of the programme and if this was a continuation of the governmental work of the 1000 village, he replied sarcastically "Do you think that the state manages its agenda in a cumulative way?! No, it manages its agenda in a political way." He implied that the usual governmental projects are more impulsive or that they do not build on previous work or feedback. He continued to say that 1000 villages was not, for example, a step forward from Shorouk (explained in Chapter Three). He explained further that there is an ongoing project called geographical targeting, but made it clear that, in his opinion, and because of the way that the Egyptian system functions, this is not connected to *Hayah Kareema*. Overall, the impression he exhibited was of having a low expectation of any kind of government coordination between programmes, past or present. His explanation for the same related to state funding channels (explained in depth in Chapter Seven) and the fact that these do not, as will be noted, encourage collaborative programmes between the government and the NGOs.


Figure 5-6: MeK village development programmes in collaboration with Qatar National Bank for *Hayah Kareema*

Source:(Misr elkheir, 2022)

In the context of bureaucratic Egypt, matters tend to work in customary, routinized ways. Given this, the official's explanation that the concepts are not connected or new could in fact mean that they are the same old ideas or that parts of them have been reintroduced or simply institutionalized as the rules of the game but given different names.

The above shows that all NGOs followed a trajectory of the discourse for years before joining the *Hayah Kareema* initiative and that they have also continued the discourse of comprehensive village development as well. The most possible explanation for the initiation and starting point of the discourse comes via an institutional leakage and bricolage lens. My explanation would be that throughout the timeline the continuance and copying was done in certain points intentionally through bricoleurs who decided to copy a successful programme from their perspective such as the project designed by Unilever. In other instances, the copying was more unconscious rather than an intentional continuity and at those instances the institutionalization of the discourse of development played a more embedded powerful role in the endurance of the discourse (Cleaver, 2002). Eventually through bricolage and institutionalism, portrayed by various institutions and actors such as NGOS, voluntary groups and the government there have been similar programmes since 1995. The possible reasons why Egypt is resuming a concept of rural development since 1995 that is old-fashioned by global development standards are discussed in Chapter Seven.

### *5.1.5 Summary: the providers' version of the discourse*

From the providers' perspective, the NGOs and the government have followed – and continue to follow - similar paths when targeting poverty. First, a common language, influenced by religion and culture, has been used to identify possible beneficiaries, and as a result there is also common categorization of beneficiaries. Second, there are common advertised grand aims and visions that are summed up in the concept of 'comprehensive village development'. Third, common advertised interventions are displayed across official websites and social media pages with similar sets of practices being picked from the NGO menu to target poor villages. These advertisements capitalize on the language discussed Section 5.1.1 and the visions and aims noted in Section 5.1.2. The ideas of the providers highlighted in the language have been developed and based on those ideas, and decisions are made to categorize possible beneficiaries. Those categorizations also direct the providers towards specific physical realities with regards to outputs.

While the information as to a single starting point for comprehensive village development discourse in Egypt is not conclusive, the presented possible starting points highlight a longstanding idea of development which suggests that such processes have been in existence since at least 1995. The previous determines the presence of a hegemonic discourse, implying a hegemonic idea of development accepted by the providers to attain what they believe is comprehensive village development. The following section explores the categorizations and physical realities of the discourse as explained and perceived by villagers, including both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

## 5.2 The villagers' perspectives of life and the discourse

This section covers the nature of rural livelihoods as described by villagers. Through so doing it highlights their views on the challenges of rural lives, including the built environment and services, income generating activities, social infrastructures, and the magnitude of marriage as a social construct. This section contains a preface of pictures from the field to help provide a visual image of the places in which the fieldwork took place. The section then presents three rural stories in detail as vignettes of real-life stories. Following this, major aspects are highlighted and covered including the economic, infrastructure, and social aspects of rural villagers. Those aspects were highlighted by the villages as being the main aspects of their everyday lives. This section aims to find whether the discourse practices as envisioned were executed on the ground and whether the

providers considered the villagers' ideas of development and livelihood priorities in designing the practices.

*The physical nature of Rural Egypt: Observations*

As explained in Chapter Two, rurality differs between countries. The following gives an overview of rural Egypt through presenting pictures and observations from the field to give an impression of what mother villages and hamlets are like in Egypt[9].

As shown in Chapter Three, the administrative hierarchy of Egypt's rural governorates is divided into centres, mother villages, and hamlets. These hamlets are subdivisions of mother villages. Rurality in Egypt can be simply presented as groups of houses and services situated amidst or on the edge of agricultural land. A centre (≈500,000 inhabitants) is usually where public service buildings such as schools and health care units are found.; as shown in Figure 5-7.The picture is captured at 1 pm at the only medical service provider, with only one nurse who explained that Doctors are available only certain days of the week. Also visible are a large mosque at the right side of the picture and houses that are more than one floor built with brick and concrete. Mother villages (15,000-20,000 inhabitants) are generally less poor than hamlets. Hamlets (500-10000 inhabitants) (Figure 5-8), still have a few houses built from mud brick, but most houses are constructed from concrete and brick, and in some cases, you can see steel supports sticking out to allow for future vertical extensions. The roads leading to hamlets are usually in poor condition. However, when a hamlet is on a main road, it is usual to find a number of shops that serve the hamlet as well as passing trade. Walking through a hamlet's alleys, it is usual to find chicken and ducks which are raised for food and income generation, you will also find kiosks. The latter are windows of rooms in people's houses through which they sell snacks and basic goods (this is sometimes an income generating project supported by an NGO).

[9] This may be particularly helpful for readers more familiar with rural areas elsewhere in the Global South. Egypt is different from many other places especially regarding the scale of settlements.

Figure 5-7: A glimpse of a mother village (pictures from Alminya, Egypt)

Figure 5-8: Abouel nour (hamlet) Elharam (mother village), El Wasta (center), Benisuef (governorate) on the left an example of a mud brick home, and the alleys in the hamlets.

From observations, houses are built on land that is owned by the villagers, either legally within the municipal building permitted zones or illegally on agricultural land that is owned by the villagers. In both cases, the villager is involved in the building and finishing of the house, designing the floor plan according to their needs. The houses are usually built incrementally. Most villages are connected to main clean water and electricity networks but not sewerage. After building the house, and according to the status of the land (the legal position of the land, proof that it is not agricultural land) the villagers apply for electricity, water, and gas meters whenever possible. However, not all households have meters and they either share with their neighbours or connect to the public line and pay a standard fee instead. In addition, not all houses have a clean water supply; again depending on the location of the house and its legal position. In some areas water supplies depend on municipal electric powered pumps which means that if there is no electricity there will be no

water. As for sewerage, most villages use septic tanks for each individual house or a couple of houses, the septic tanks are pumped out by either governmental or privately hired suction cars every week depending on usage.

Figure 5-9: Pictures from Fayoum (pilot visits), showing the placement of the hamlets within the agricultural land.

### *5.2.1 Rural lives and priorities*

This section evaluates what development means to villagers through identifying the various aspects that they advanced about their rural lives, and the actors and surrounding relationships that define the importance of the same. The main aspects that villagers put forward included: the importance of houses, income generating activities, health and education, marriage and societal pressures. The section first introduces three rural life stories of rural beneficiaries. Sharing their individual full stories gives an overview of what life is like in the hamlets researched. The three stories relate to Gomaa and Om Kareem's family, Fawzeyya, and Mohamed's family.

*Gomaa and Om Karem's story*

Gomaa and Om Kareem are a married couple, they have two girls and two boys. "I got married when I was 17" Om Kareem said (note that the legal age is 18). "Now I am 36, we made the marriage official in documents later". They married their eldest daughter when she was 17 as well. "Unfortunately, she didn't finish her education, we couldn't keep up, she wanted to complete her education, but we took her out of school in 3rd preparatory after she took the preparatory certificate, Education is expensive."

Both Gomaa and Om Kareem did not inherit anything form their families and Gomaa was brought up by his grandmother and helped with the marriage of his brothers and sisters Om Kareem said "we helped with the marriage of his brother and sisters" as they both did that together. They started building the house 18 years ago when they got married, "we sold her gold" Gomaa said , "my wedding gift ( shabka) 40 grams we sold for 900 pounds" Om Kareem added. They bought the land in instalments and built the house one room at a time whilst they stayed in one room with his siblings "we stayed, his sisters and I, in one room until we finished it" Om Kareem said. The area of the house is around 60m2 Gomaa said "I don't have a land so I could only afford this area" meaning that if he had agricultural land he would have sold that to buy land for the house.

Gomaa is a daily wage worker. He explained that he is a daily worker because he has no agricultural land, he explained **"**some people have land we don't have land or anything only the things inside the house and that is it, our food is our health" he explained "may god protect our health that is the most important."

Om Kareem added that they do not have any other income source except for Gomaa "only my husband, he is a builder but the circumstances of the country are not the best now" Gomaa added about the effects of being a daily worker "as you can see: one day in, one day out".

While they thought of additional projects to support their living buying cattle as a small project would have not been successful Om Kareem said “even if I get a cattle I don't have land, if I get a cattle I will need land , I will have to rent the land this needs money. So, at the end the money from the cattle is going to be spent on the rent of the land”. Om Kareem wanted to help and had a sewing machine at home “ I got a small sewing machine and worked on it , but the people here are tired [meaning poor] , I do very simple things for 5 pounds 2 pounds , but I found that whatever I will bring in will be equivalent to the additional electricity in the electricity bill , so I stopped working and put it aside because the in is equal to the out” . They went to Cairo aiming at a better living, Om Kareem explained “People here are barely making it so they go to Cairo” the reasons she explained for their transition were that “There is no work for the ladies here, none! And after the revolution there wasn’t any work here. It was very hard for the workers in the building industry so I told my husband lets go to Cairo rent an apartment or porter an apartment building and both of us work together, to help each other”.

They stayed in Cairo for two years during which Gomaa worked as a porter and his wife worked as a housekeeper but even with both of them working they the returned to the hamlet, Om Kareem said “the schools in Cairo were expensive, the education is very expensive and I have three kids Asmaa Kareem and Mohamed and a daughter who got married the pregnant one [pointing at her].” She continued “my daughter’s cousin asked for her hand in marriage and we wed her”

With a family of six and an unstable job the family is eligible for ration cards, however, Om Kareem explained that there are corruption issues with the ration card system. “My two youngest kids do not have ration cards, although they are registered, but till now they did not include them yet Asmaa [their 9 year old girl] takes the bread subsidy only” they have communicated the issues they have but the person in charge of the ration cards said that the cards are still in process.

Om Kareem said that she was once asked about the rise in the gas prices by the lady she worked for but her reply was “at that time they had increased our allowance of food in our ration card 50 pounds each and the bread is for free, I told her we don't need except food for free and flour for free , years ago finding flour was hard , now it's for free and available, and I told her do we have cars to fill them with gas [laughing] what else do we want from this life” grateful for the ration card increase, Om Kareem explained that the supplied was not enough “it's not enough we buy the rest of our needs but it is better than before a lot better , we didn't even find it now it's much better thanks god”

*Fawzeyya's story*

Fawzeyya is a widow, and is living in her late husband's house. "I married an older man in this house I was 15 at that time and he was 65 when we got married". Fawzeyya like other women in the hamlets marry before the legal age. "He was married to two other women, he was very old so I nursed him, and God blessed me from him with boys and girls" for Fawzeyya to marry an older man who is already married could be a result of the man being well off and able sustain a living in addition to Fawzeyya's family wanting to marry her off.

Fawzeyya has eight children in total, "he helped marry two of our men before he passed away, he helped when he was alive but by the time he passed away we had nothing". After her husband's passing people helped Fawzeyya marry off her daughters she said, "people helped me they stood by my side until I married all four daughters", it's an achievement to have married off her children.

Today Fawzeyya and her two sons are living in the house "they are 18 and 19 working on a day-to-day basis (daily wage), one of them has a back problem if he works 3 consecutive days he stops the rest of the month". Fawzeyya said that her main income is her husband's pension "I have my husband's pension 700 pounds ( The poverty line was set at 3.2 US dollar per person per day in 2019-2020 equivalent to 54 EGP (World Bank, 2020a) nothing more no land nothing".

Fawzeyya has priorities and dreams "Help marry my son he works one day and stays for 10 because of his back, I don't have enough money also for my four daughters, I need to give them some things, monetary gifts for giving birth for example ". Her son is an unskilled daily worker "he is a second man he doesn't have a skill" "he helps with the NGO work sometimes they give them a fair wage" She gave reason "He is not educated so he doesn't have another job". Fawzeyya said "I only think about the house and helping my son get married , I don't think about anything else , how could I think of anything else when my house is not good I think of shelter, that God shields us, I would think of a project(income generator) when my house is already good , but before that no".

*Mohamed and Noha's story*

Mohamed is a worker in the brick factory, and he is living in the house with his wife, kids, mother and two unmarried sisters out of four. Mohamed told his story "I was 7 or 8 and my father had a prostate surgery he did not work or do anything". As the male, Mohamed needed to take over to provide for his family "I went to the brick factory when I was 9 years old, I would stay 14 days and bring back 300, 400 pounds". Meanwhile Mohamed's mother cared for her sick husband "I used to take my husband to the hospital and when my husband passed away Mohamed took his place, He is everything for us now" Om Mohamed said.

The house they are living in was owned by Mohamed's grandfather from his father's side. Mohamed said "we have always lived here", Mohamed's Mother expanded "my father and mother in law passed away and I took their place , and I got Mohamed and he married and now he has a family" Om Mohamed also has 4 daughters "two married and 2 not yet living with us here"

Concerning education, Mohamed's wife Noha explained "all my kids are in school except Adham he is still young" and while Noha herself dropped out of school she said "Mohamed was not educated but he is intelligent he passed the literacy test, but I got busy with the kids". They sent their daughter to a public school because she wanted to go to the public school and because it was difficult to register her in the other alternative which is the one class school (a concept introduced in the 90s where kids aged 5-7 enter the same class in the hamlets to overcome the habit of not sending girls far away). Mohamed explained why they preferred the normal school "the one class you need to do the admissions a year before to find a place, it's hard to enter. His wife added "and it needs a wasta (either bribery or social connections)". Mohamed then added "as long as she loves school, stay there, Only the older son is not so much in education" in all cases Mohamed said that "Our maximum is diploma level" and as for the girl "she is doing good in school and we will keep with her until she finishes her education."

The family used to live in a mud brick house "it was cooler, but that white brick in the summer is very hot like hell and in the winter cold very cold but great thanks god" Mohamed's mother said. Although the mud brick is better environmentally and climate wise, Mohamed's mother said "The mud brick was cool in summer and medium in winter". However social pressure and for cleanliness aspects the villagers prefer the white bricks with plaster "how can we do mudbrick when everyone is doing blocks and bricks it was obsolete". Mohamed added "it wouldn't be clean like this or comfortable, the mud brick dropped particles of dust on the carpets, and the water made mud, but the blocks and bricks are cleaner" The brick houses for Om Mohamed denoted the cleanliness of the female of the house "this type of brick if its not clean then the lady inside is the reason, but the mud brick although the weather was better and there was a breeze but it wasn't good, the walls brought down dust and it had crakes".

The section continues to present aspects of rural lives in Egypt to help in drawing a general picture of rural lives that the development discourse is responding to. From the noted stories and others repeated during the fieldwork it can be concluded that participants considered a house to be the top priority. The lengths to which villagers would go to build a house was notable including selling jewellery or spending all their savings Sawsan said “To build the house I sold some of my gold, added our savings and bought the land.” Reasons for the prioritization of housing and discussed in Chapter Seven. Services and basic infrastructure are not taken for granted by those who live in hamlets, Sawsan said “We borrow electricity from the neighbours; we haven't paid for water in a while, and they might stop the supply.”

Village interviewees explained that agriculture and farming are still prominent sources of income. However, income differs between rich villagers with larger pieces of land and those who have no land. The agricultural land owned by villagers is not enough to produce a sufficient output to profit or even feed their families. The inhabitants explained that the outcome is not worth the effort especially given the decrease in irrigation water allocations (Chapter Three). As Abo Rabee put it “A person who has 0.25 feddans will not be able to feed a family with 2 kids, even if you plant them with hash. He will send his children to work and get 200 pounds that would help. The child travels and works just to cover his expenses.” Inhabitants with no land work as daily workers on other people’s land. Am Gomaa said “People work in farming as daily workers for 50 EGP a day, so they might work 1 or 2 days a week, wealthy people have land, but poor people don't it depends on the standard.” It is observed from the stories and the villagers feedback in the fieldwork that income generation in villages has become less focus on agriculture unless villagers own a large slot of land. Otherwise, villagers’ primary source of income is daily wages whether in others lands or services which will be discussed next, and this is not a consistent source of income. Whenever villagers face any financial burdens or need to help their kids get married, they now resource to selling pieces of their land or building over agricultural land. For example, Om Sayed said “whoever had land either sold a bit and divided the rest among their children or sold it to buy a house, or divided it among their children to build on.”

Daily wage jobs are the most typical job category amongst poorer villagers. Daily wage jobs include not only farming on other peoples’ land, but also construction jobs; brick work, plastering,

plumbing and woodwork, or driving a tricycle or a tok-tok (Auto-rickshaw). The difficulties that come with an unstable income were raised numerous times during the interviews at the villages. The difficulties encountered result in a need for children to work to help the family and thus they leave school. This is why numerous villagers work more than one daily wage job, for example in both agriculture and as a driver. Mervat said "my husband is a daily worker, carries sand up to an apartment, cleans too. but he is old he is 48 he looks old; he is our only income provider me and the 4 kids." Sawsan also explained "My husband is a farmer; he has a tricycle and gets 20 pounds for each delivery". Another category of work that only pays the minimum wage is working at a nearby factory; many such workers need another supporting job. Other villagers were permanently employed and had a steady government job such as being a teacher. Such jobs added value in the village as it brought status and possible social connections. Some respondents indicated that they were very poor through replying that they were not governmental employees. Sawsan said "We work on other people's land, we work on a daily basis, we don't have a craft neither are we employees".

Men are culturally identified as the heads of households and income providers, even though women in villages also do the same work. As presented in Gomaa and Om Kareem's story, some females help to create contribute to the family's income to support the husbands. However, this is dependent on individual jobs and the preferences of the household. Households of higher status might not be eager or even allow the women of the household to work in a daily wage job but working as a teacher or a health assistant might be accepted. Conversely, in poorer families, women and girls work for a daily wage or at factories to help with their families' income needs as well as the girls' bridal essentials. It is common that women try to support their husbands by raising chickens or ducks either for food or for extra income. Women who are skilled in sewing, as presented in Gomaa and Om Kareem's story, are provided with a sewing machine through NGOs as a small project to generate income. It is generally preferred for women to either work from home; manage a kiosk, sew, or raise chicken. During a field visit a tricycle full of women passed by and Badawy the intermediary explained "This is the average as the women go out to work in the fields."

Pensions are a typical source of income in the villages. The government provides basic social protection like '*Takaful and Karama'* (introduced in Chapter Three) and similarly some NGOs

give monthly monetary pay-outs - these pay-outs are part of the NGO menu but are part of the set of practices within the NGO rural development discourse. The respondents acknowledged that help but also highlighted how they had to continue to work even after receiving the social protection stipend because it is only equivalent to an average of 500 EGP. The respondents criticised the bureaucracy for the limited support they received from the social protection system.

Prior to the fieldwork based on my previous NGO experience, I was expecting the villagers to express their needs for better healthcare and education. Although they noted some concerns, these were not priorities. The issues regarding health can be attributed to poor education and health awareness including social and cultural attributes, poor sanitation, the lack of clean water and a balanced diet, and management issues with the operation and location of health care units as well as the availability of personnel. The villagers explained that a hamlet can be comprised solely of two large families, who intermarry, which results in genetic illnesses and mutations. During the fieldwork, I visited a family who were on the wealthier side of a village, and because they were financially capable, they decided to marry off their son who had a mental illness. The bride's family accepted, but unfortunately, they had a child with many congenital problems. Poor sanitation and a lack of clean water sources have long been sources of kidney problems; currently being covered by the governmental initiative to eliminate hepatitis-C. Am Abdllah said "Fayoum is known that we have a high percentage of chronic diseases, a lot of kidney diseases because the water is not clean."

The healthcare related concerns expressed by villagers focused on the proximity of healthcare units in some hamlets and the availability of personnel in others. Sara, one respondent, pointed out that the closest unit was 20 minutes' drive away from the hamlet which is far for villagers, as she states "We need doctors. The closest centre is 20 mins away and sometimes the cases are critical." With a lack of transportation, it becomes problematic for inhabitants to reach adequate health services. In a case of a critical health emergency, an inhabitant will have to ask a tok-tok driver or a neighbour who has means of transport to rush them to the nearest open and working health care unit. At night this might be a public hospital in the city centre or a private clinic or hospital. "The Healthcare unit is in Fanous (the centre) there is nothing closer to us than Fanous, but it is far, very far, although we are considered a sub village to that centre" said Hanan. When asked about what she wanted to be when she grows up, a young child replied, "A doctor, because the doctors are far,

we have to ride to the centre to visit the doctor." The villagers also shared their areas of medical knowledge, if a person can give injections (whether trained or not) they would be well known in the village and would be asked for help when needed. When asked if there was a doctor in the hamlet, Mofida replied "No, but there is a woman who gives injections and 2 others who can as well."

Issues concerning education were also expressed by the villagers. Comments included the cost of education, and the distance to schools in some hamlets. The villagers expressed concern that education is expensive, with some respondents explaining that they had to discontinue their children's education because of the financial burden. Although education in public schools is free, the quality of the public education provided does not necessarily allow the children to pass their exams and, as a result, the villagers needed to send their children to private lessons. Though expensive, private tutoring in the hamlets is cheaper than in Cairo. Like Gomaa and Om Kareem, Mervat said "we used to live in Cairo, but it was very expensive, so we came here, my children were growing up and needed private lessons and the private lessons are very expensive in Cairo, …, here life is more merciful (cheaper) especially with the private lessons and children." Sara commented on the quality of education she said "the education is disastrous, ask a child 1+1 equals? ...he won't know not even in 2nd preparatory not even in the 6th primary". Gamal said, "in the old days 6th primary was better than the diploma now, there is no monitoring on the schools, none, there is no monitoring on the governmental services, what will the kids learn from, education is very weak". The final issue with education was expressed by Mohamed and Noha and related to them getting their children into a specific school, and the corruption and social connections that get things done. Such networks of social connections may either help you reach what you want or hinder you.

Social relations as well as neighbour interactions and judgements play huge roles in the hamlets. During an interview we were interrupted by a neighbour asking to borrow the family's large pan; people seem to share their lives and things. Houses also appear to be open all day for neighbours to access. In one case the beneficiary participants who had their house renovated by the NGO saved one of the new rooms for visitors and conducted their everyday lives in an unfinished room. Zeinab said, when asked about the room renovated by the NGO, "no the children can't sleep in this room, it's the guests room what if someone came?" Neighbours' perspectives of each other is key, the villagers compare how houses look. Similar to Om Mohamed commenting on mud brick

houses being obsolete, and Fawzeyya needing money to get gifts for her daughters because families and neighbours compare.

Marriage came up as a central topic in most conversations in the villages. Having children and marrying them off is a subject of pride and bragging between neighbours. Marriage is customary in the villages; any person of age is expected to be married. The age of marriage for some villagers is not the legal age of 18, but when the family is financially ready to marry off their children. Marriages that take place before the legal age are religiously officiated but not legally binding until they are made official at the legal age of marriage. Getting a female married will mean not being financially in charge of her living expenses anymore, this is the principle reason for early marriage. One respondent expressed her anxiety towards marrying off her daughter who is 'of age' [17] but they have not yet completed buying the essentials for her to be ready.

> *I have 6 kids, all of them are married except this last one, she is in the one class school. She also works to help with her marriage, she brings some things for her marriage, she goes to the school but for the exams only. She has one more year to go, her sister got married at the same age (17) and did not continue her education and so will she, she will take the certificate and that is it, she has asked her sisters to help her with the bridal essentials but she knows they can't afford it. A lot of decent men propose but we don't approve because we are not ready. She will finish her preparatory education so she can read and write, then get married. Sayeda-Beneficiary-1*

Marriage places a huge financial load on rural families; as introduced in Chapter Three. The burden is on both families, and they start planning for marriage very early and start collecting the essentials. The pressure on the families may push them to borrow from their neighbours or banks or to drown in debt. The essentials differ from one area to the other, however, that which is presented below represents the average accepted essentials in the hamlets that were visited during the fieldwork. The essentials increase with the social status of the family. The groom and his family usually provide a furnished house which can be a room with a bed in the family house, a monetary dowry, a gold jewellery gift, cover the cost of the wedding, bridal makeup, hairdo and the dress. Badawy who was an intermediary living in a hamlet explained the groom's essentials, the house in his case is a room in his parents' house "I for example am staying with my parents, because my father is old in age I cannot leave him, so I said no I decided to stay here……My father was sick so I could not leave him" he added that while "Some people would rent in the centre or in Cairo" he preferred to stay at his father's and this was not a choice but an only option for other men.

Badawy explained that the norm is that sons build on part of their parents' land or bought land, incrementally or if they could afford it he said;

> *Guys marry at their parents' house, some may have more than one house so the guy stays at one of the houses. In rural areas every man gets married in his father's house, or in his apartment at his father's house, till God blesses him (with money) and he buys a house,… his wife has her gold or wedding gift, and his work they save and buy 0.5 kirat or 0.75 kirat [of land; approximately 80-120 sq. m]. Then he sets it aside and when God blesses him with money he builds the walls, then he is blessed again he puts the concrete roof and so on until he can move in to the house. This is the average life of any rural family. Badawy-Intermediary-57*

Badawy presented himself and his brother as an example "Our house is 1.68 kirat of land so we have more land at the back, so we can divide the top floor by two apartments" He then added that if the family has more sons "if they are more, they follow the same scenario, 1 extra floor, and then more and so on."

As for the *Gihaz* (bridal essentials), the bride and her family pay, according to this study's respondents, an average of 60,000 EGP. The essentials include electrical appliances (as presented in Chapter Three) kitchen tools, a cupboard, utensils and other kitchen essentials, bedlinen, and new cloths for the bride. Some marriage essentials like the dowry and the gift are religiously implied but all the others are culturally imposed. Some essentials are added as a social transfer between urban and rural areas, and as a result of workers returning from the gulf countries specially the electrical appliances.

> *I have a daughter who is married, and I want to help the younger daughter get married, a lot of proper men are proposing but I don't approve as I did not get any of the essentials I didn't get her any of the electrical appliances. Zaynahom-Beneficiary-12*

> *Depends on each family, the normal that we would get was a 12 feet refrigerator, washing machine 5kg, and cooker and an oven for baking, because we are in rural areas. Till now cooker is a must but the washing machine can be half automatic for example. Depends on the bride's education level, if she is educated, we get a 14 feet refrigerator, a full automatic washing machine and a modern cooker for baking. Badawy-Intermediary-57*

While some participants identified the general priorities, others were specific with their needs when asked about what their priorities would be. Mervat said "The roof, then the water meter". Sayeda said "the most important thing is the house to plaster it and finish that wall and close it up

(no doors, wind passing in), if god sent me some money I would do the roof for the other room and get a door, this is what I wish for from this life".

The above-mentioned livelihood issues expressed highlighted some problems and needs that form the major issues that require, as perceived by the villagers, focus and development. The villagers identified aspects of physical interventions, income generation, marriage essentials, health and education. It follows, that there is a need to identify whether the practices of the discourse of development are responding to these issues and, if so, to what extent. The following section shows NGOs responses to the idea of poverty in rural Egypt.

### *5.2.2 The realized interventions of the development discourse at the hamlets*

The part of the discourse presented here is Hajer's 'set of practices', and illustrates how the interventions are realized at village level. This section therefore illustrates what aspects of the providers lists have been realized and what was added to the main ideas. In so doing, the section seeks to identify the set of interventions that are repeatedly provided in the villages.

The participants pointed out a set of interventions that they had either received, or which they knew someone else had been provided with. The interventions provided can be categorized in to; houses, in kind goods and seasonal handouts, projects, health and education, and awareness sessions. Some interventions were instantly mentioned by village participants such as houses and handouts. Others, and especially one-off interventions needed some probing. Houses were the top intervention mentioned by a majority of respondents.

A non-beneficiary elaborated "they provide them with good things, if one does not have enough money to build the house they help him build it, if they don't have water connections they help them with that." Another noted that "They provide us with roofs for two rooms like those, we were sitting unprotected, I swear to God, yesterday we were all shivering in this room". Sayeda noted that "They did the house sewerage and I applied for a water metre, and they put one for me", whilst Om Mostafa, said "they did the roof, they fixed the roof we were staying in the cold." taps for the water was also noted by Om Sayed. A further participant, Zakeyya, explained that they got roofs twice for 2 different homes "They stood beside us a lot, they roofed 2 rooms for us in our previous house, and 2 rooms in this house." A point noted here is the references by the beneficiaries to God sending interventions their way or God sending things at specific times. The role of religion in the ideology and rationale, as well as reception of practices, is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Bridal essentials is a favoured and much mentioned offered intervention, the participants explained this type of intervention comes in the form of electrical appliances as help with the bridal essentials for an orphan bride or a bride in a poor family, as presented in Fawzeyya's story above. The participants also noted seasonal handouts. Those handouts included blankets, meat, food bags which contained a number of essential goods such as rice, oil, sugar and beans, (and school supplies in the back-to-school season), and the clothes market. The participants mentioned basic in-kind handouts that were either provided as monthly or seasonal aid; blankets were provided as seasonal handouts with roofs to protect from the cold. "Roofs, blankets, they roofed all the rooms" Reham said. Zainahom similarly said "They brought us blankets, roofs and meat". "blankets. and meat sometimes" Om Sayed said. The participants mentioned that meat was distributed especially during Eid al-Adha. Seasonal giving was also timed with Ramadan (as explained in Chapter Three), and participants noted the surge of handouts and generous giving during the month of Ramadan. In such responses there was also especial note made of the importance of food and hot meals for people fasting when it came to breaking their fast. Seasonal handouts also included school supplies and clothes at the beginning of the academic year and parties for orphans on the first Friday of April (the Orphans' Day in Egypt). "They are distributing blankets and they are having an event for the orphans now" Sheikh Sayed.

Medical aspects were tackled by NGOs in the form of medical convoys that visit the villages and provide either instant medication or referrals to follow-up appointments or surgery "there is a convoy here in Bayoum a nearby village, they come Fridays to treat the people, if someone needs an eye surgery they help with this" said Om Kareem. "They helped with my son's medical supplies, for his cochlea transplant, First transplant was covered by the social insurance, second time the NGO", said Zakeya

Some participants noted that the NGOs sometimes provides income generating projects, Noha said that they used to bring cattle as an income generating project but "that was long ago", others gave example of tricycles, sewing machines, and kiosks. Additional assorted interventions included awareness done by the voluntary group, and a girl noting how some people came and had a party and played music; they were teaching them to wash their hands. Other interventions included rebuilding or furnishing and renovating mosques, but again that was a one-off effort.

It was also indicated that each NGO had its own trademark or specialty. For example, Alorman was usually associated with helping orphans because of their initial founding activities. Fawzy said "Alorman gets clothes for the orphans." More generally participants indicated interventions such as, houses, roofs, distributing cloths, bridal essentials, food bags and medical help.

As seen in Table 5-2, there were interventions that were mentioned by most of the participants (highlighted in red), interventions that were mentioned by fewer participants (highlighted in orange), and finally those there were mentioned least (in green). Although I could see the renovated schools and medical care units during the fieldwork, the participants did not mention these aspects when asked about what had been provided; this because those service buildings had been built at the mother village level not the hamlet level. A fieldwork observation coincided with the above with the addition of interventions that targeted mother villages rather than hamlets such sewerage network connections. Interventions with more distant, less material goals that included training and enhancement of education and human development do not seem to be either less provided or are not recognized by people at the hamlet level.

Table 5-2: The discourse's realized interventions

| Interventions | NGOs | | | | Development Initiatives | | Realized Interventions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alorman | LMF | MeK | Benebny Hayah | *Sakan Kareem* | *Hayah Kareema* | |
| Full house rebuilding | √ | | | √ | | | √ |
| House restoration: Plastering & installing ceramics | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Roofs | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Sewerage Networks | | √ | | √ 1 Hamlet | √ | √ | √ |
| Water and electricity | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Medical convoys | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In-kind good & Seasonal handouts | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Bridal essentials | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Small projects | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ |
| Healthcare/Surgeries | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Service Buildings (Schools, Hospitals,…) | | | √ | | | √ | |
| Awareness Sessions | | | | √ | | √ | √ |

## 5.3 Conclusion: A discourse of development

This chapter presented a detailed exhibit of an enduring discourse of village development in Egypt covering the visions, categories and practices. The discourse's advertised aims and visions are extremely general and vague in some cases with a general aim to provide the poor with a dignified life without specifying the attributes of that life. The discourse targets specific categorizations of intended beneficiaries within poor villages. The beneficiary categorisations are identified as poor and deserving, aligned with the *zakat* categories and characterised as: orphans, widows, female headed households, the disabled, sick, and poor.

The discourse interventions vary between the advertised providers' view and the realised. The broader set described by the providers include a longer list of interventions, however the realised interventions are mostly physical including; house restoration, roof installation and water and electricity connections, medical related such as medical convoys and surgeries, and handouts either seasonal or bridal essentials. What reaches the intended beneficiaries at the village level emphasizes the fact that there is a hegemonic discourse of interventions and other parallel interventions that are not embedded in the understanding of villagers. These include awareness campaigns, the employment of medical and education staff, and recycling and waste management. Moreover, whilst the discourse interventions tackle some of the rural problems, others are avoided. For example, the discourse focusses on houses and helping with marriage essentials in addition to providing handouts and service buildings.

Although some programmes had aimed to provide sources of stable income to villagers. The villagers themselves identify other areas that need long term action; notably, education, and health. The villagers also highlighted an issue with daily wages and villagers relying on unstable sources of income. The villagers' identified needs are in line with the what the scholars have identified as problems in rural Egypt problems namely; poverty, a deterioration in natural resources, insufficient education, unequal access to education and health facilities, limited employment opportunities, and poor infrastructure (Shalaby *et al.*, 2011). Despite this the discourse interventions focus on a specific set and this set has been internalised and have become the general perceived needs of the poor and deserving villagers.

The interventions that take place come from a specific set picked from the NGO menu. The interventions are even recognized by a vice minister who noted that "the interventions do not change – that is a shame, they are microloans, medical convoys, roofing, medications and so on". Her acknowledgement of the specific set of interventions and that they do not change, backs up the idea of a hegemonic discourse with specific interventions. In her defence of the lack of change she said "but those are the services that you need in the poor areas, you need those things". This view corroborates that which was explained in Section 5.1; namely, that providers view the intended beneficiaries' needs in a specific way, categorize them accordingly, and finally draw up plans of action that match those assumed categorizations.

Why the envisioned interventions are not hegemonic and why the discourse interventions became hegemonic, as well as the reasons as why only specific interventions are copied and sustained are discussed in Chapter Seven. Prior to that, however, the following chapter – Chapter Six – explains how the discourse is 'produced and reproduced' through specific formal and informal practices, and the extent to which the idea of NGO-led development is institutionalized by various actors through a discussion of aid chains and the processes of the development discourse.

# 6 Chapter Six: Aid chains, actors, processes, and institutional factors

To complete the explanation of the development setup, and after identifying the discourse in terms of both text and practices (the interventions), this chapter covers the aid chain process and the actors involved in the discourse while also explaining the institutional relations between and around the same. This chapter responds to the question 'How do individual and organisational actors work within institutional frameworks to put the discourse into practice?' through identifying the actors involved in the aid chain, the resources and information flow, and the formal and informal rules that govern the implementation of the discourse. Unpacking the aid delivery process helps to explain the power of the discourse's ideas that are being embedded in the institutions and how this results in a resilient discourse. The power of ideas is supported by the institutionalization of the process through legitimacy, common interest, and actor agency (Schmidt, 2008).

This chapter starts with a brief explanation of three different aid chains that were found in the field. Then, the details of the processes are narrated from each of the actors' views; how each of the actors views their role and the others' roles. This puts the focus on the agents and their perspectives. The actors also explain the formal and informal rules that govern the process and relations between them, and other actors in the aid chain. The details of the processes include choosing beneficiary families, identifying the interventions to be offered, documents needed, execution details, and issues of monitoring and evaluation. Institutions, like other structures, can be both enablers/facilitators and constrainers (McAnulla, 2006). Throughout the chapter, the institutions that 'embody values and power relationships' (Lowndes, 2001) are disentangled. Then, the institutional challenges putting the discourse into practice are presented. This section covers corruption and biases as well as the lack of cooperation between stakeholders and the inadequacy of data keeping. The institutionalization of the process is also presented within this chapter and identified as one reason for the perpetuation of the discourse. Thereafter, Chapter Seven addresses other reasons that have caused institutionalization.

## 6.1 Introducing the aid chains

Aid chains have been used as a concept to explain the movement of international aid from the north to the south (as discussed in Chapter Two). However, the concept can also be operationally adapted as a means by which to comprehend the movement of information and resources from the capital to rural beneficiaries. The following provides a brief explanation of three aid chains comprehended through the analysis of the interviews conducted during this study's fieldwork. These chains are typical chains for the discourse of development from decision making to intervention delivery, and evaluation.

Before presenting the different chains, here is an introduction of the different actors/ players in the aid chains. As explained in Chapter Four, the actors can be categorised in to two, the providers and the villagers. The providers are the government, the NGOs, and the donors. The villagers include the intermediaries, the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries. Within each category are subcategories, for example the government includes MOSS officials at the capital, directorates and the local government. The NGOs include officials at the headquarters in the capital, branch managers and fieldworkers. There are both formal and informal rules that govern the relations between the actors for example there are hierarchical relations within each organisation. Additionally, there are informal institutional relations between actors in different categorisations that help in sustaining the process as explained below.

**Chain A**-*NGOs at the forefront*: This aid chain presents the processes that have been followed by MOSS-registered NGOs from 2012 onwards. There are two possible initiation points. The first is based on the national survey undertaken by CAPMAS whereby an NGO chooses a set of villages (ranked from within the poorest) and decided upon the size of village/hamlet that they can address. Then, they survey the needs through fieldworkers and intermediaries (6.2.1). The second is where a funder contacts the NGO to execute specific interventions based on their organisational preferences. Either way, the NGO has its own set of criteria to identify deserving beneficiaries. The NGOs' funding sources are individuals or corporations who donate with or without restrictions being applied to how their donations are spent.

Upon choosing a village, the NGO sends fieldworkers to survey the same and conduct a needs assessment. The fieldworkers do not start from scratch by surveying the whole village door to door. Instead, they collaborate with intermediaries in the villages to obtain a first draft of 'the list'. The list is a piece of paper compiled by intermediaries according to their local knowledge of possible beneficiaries who comply with the requirements of the NGO. The intermediaries used the arabized word 'el-lista' for the English list. Once the list is received, the fieldworkers undertake extensive research work and conduct an in-depth family survey. Thereafter, the fieldworkers identify the families that are both deserving and eligible, and pinpoint the interventions that those families can benefit from. The fieldworker informs the selected beneficiaries who then start compiling the needed documents[10] to support their application.

Once the documents have been compiled by the beneficiary, sometimes with the help of the fieldworkers and intermediaries, the NGO produces final register which contains the details of successful intended beneficiaries. The intervention thence commences. The speed of intervention delivery and the number of interventions depends on the availability of funds and donor plans. During the delivery, the intermediary is involved as an assistant to the fieldworker to monitor the execution of the intervention. The family is sometimes involved in the execution. If a family member helps with the execution, he is paid according to his level of expertise. After delivery, there is minimal to no follow up, and there is no formal assessment or feedback. Only if the family is registered to benefit from other interventions does informal feedback take place; additional unplanned monitoring happens due the presence of fieldworkers and intermediaries, but this does not impact the decisions of the intermediaries with regards to future interventions. The government, namely MOSS, audits registered NGOs on a regular basis to ensure their compliance with their respective activities (Figure 6-1).

[10] Those documents include the national ID, proof of not owning agricultural land (thus no source of income), proof of need from the MOSS unit, ownership of a piece of land in case of house rebuilding, and a proof of no steady income.

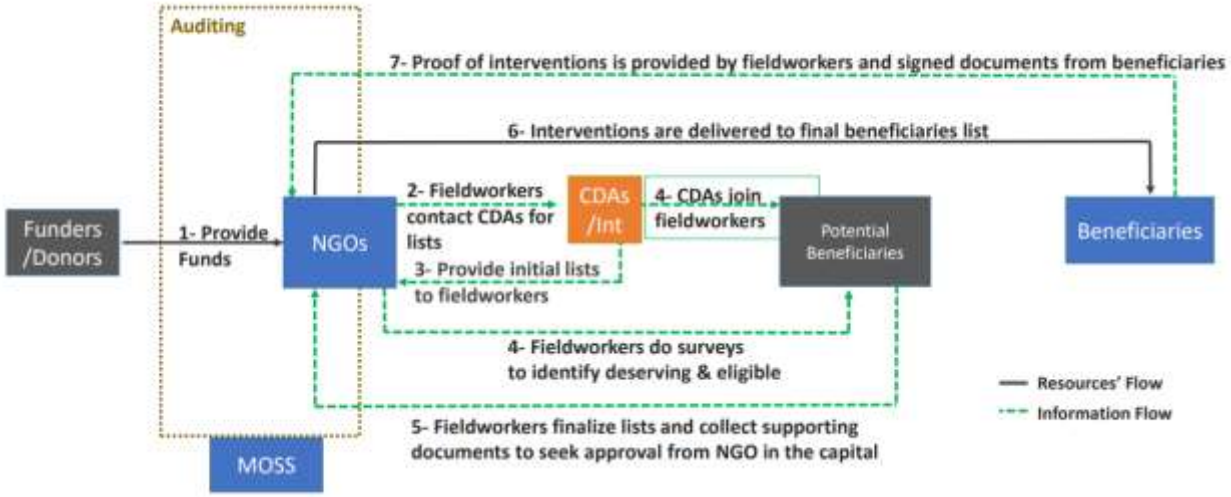



Figure 6-1: Chain A

**Chain B -** *Government leading the aid chains*; In this aid chain, MOSS is the coordinator and funder of 80% of the money (which comes either from its own resources or from a third-party corporate donor to the government). The remaining 20% is provided by the partner NGO that is responsible for the implementation. The relationship is coordinated through signed protocols between the involved partners through signed tri-protocol between the Government, NGOs, and major donors. *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema* are supported by the presidency and several governmental organizations. The chain is governed by a protocol signed between MOSS and the national NGO.

The process is very similar to Chain A, however, the government, embodied in MOSS, handles the distribution of the targeted areas to a few specific national large NGOs through the directorates and governorates. The choice of families within the geographically targeted villages is mainly based on the *Takaful and Karama* social protection database. MOSS requires detailed documentation of the cases and interventions. Besides this, each NGO follows its own processes (which were mostly the same in all of the NGOs researched for this study) as the ministry does not require specific procedural requirements when it comes to implementation. As expressed by the *Hayah Kareema* project manager, the ministry accepts that most NGOs work through CDAs or intermediaries whilst others do not; and the ministry does not mind either way. Similar to chain A,

a family member is paid if they work with the NGO even if it is with regard to a project that involves their own house.

The monitoring process is mainly based on the completion of all needed documents (beneficiary ID, proof of need etc.) in addition to pictures and videos that are shared through WhatsApp to the governmental employee (in some cases) in the capital as documentation and proof of delivery. Occasionally onsite visits are undertaken by governorate and directorate employees. The NGOs get some of the 80% funding in advance, and the remaining amount is settled after the intervention is completed (Figure 6-2).

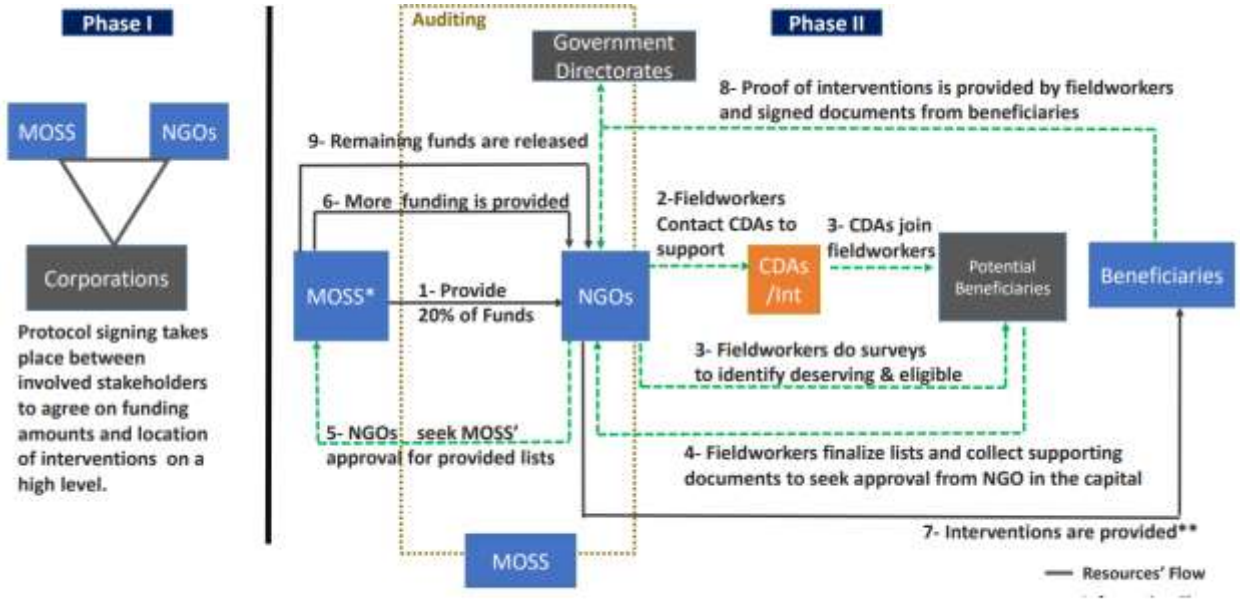



Figure 6-2: Chain B

**Chain C –** *Volunteer centred*; this aid chain is the one followed by a group of external urban volunteers from the capital city. The chain was initiated via a personal contact between the volunteers and an intermediary at the village level. The volunteers either (rarely) perform a complete survey of all the hamlet inhabitants or they communicate their desired interventions with the intermediary and ask the intermediary for a list of possible matching beneficiaries. In many cases, the volunteers follow the intermediaries' recommendations regarding the choice of

beneficiaries. On some occasions, the intermediary initiates the process by communicating the needs of the villagers to the volunteers whom he had previous encounters with. The volunteers aim to collect the needed funds, and this usually takes place through social media with donations coming from private citizens. The execution of the physical interventions is undertaken entirely through the intermediary or when technical support is required, the intermediary acts as coordinator for the process. Non-physical interventions, such as awareness courses or human development interventions, are undertaken on a weekly basis by the volunteers on weekends. Volunteers rarely follow up after the delivery of physical interventions, and the volunteers usually work informally. However, if they wish to get permits or legal documents to help with specific interventions then volunteers collaborate with registered NGOs or CDAs to formalise their work (Figure 6-3).

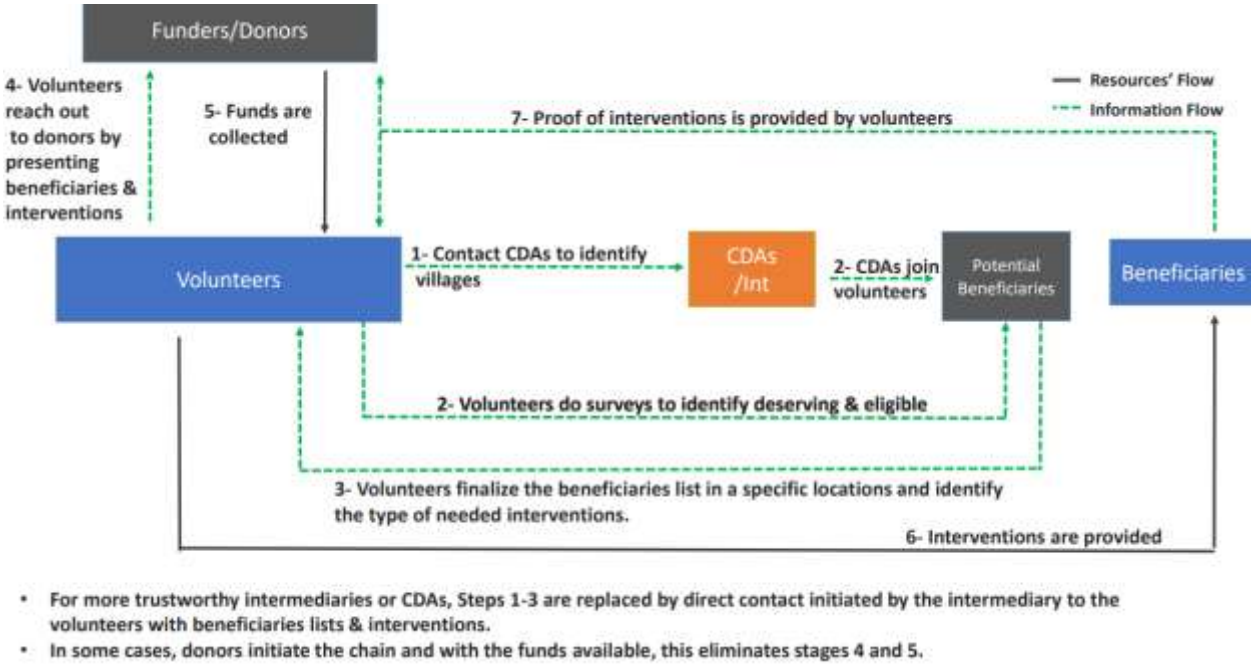



Figure 6-3: Chain C

## 6.2 Detailing the aid chains

This section presents evidence on aid chains from the perspective of involved actors. Adopting a CR approach enables accepting a variety of perspectives form the actors; these then enable a better

understanding of the role of each category of actors in various chains (Maxwell, 2012). The formal and informal processes that take place for the interventions to be actualised are presented. Prior to the research, I expected that aid chains A and B would flow either funder to NGO to beneficiary, or government to NGO to beneficiary. However, the intermediary showed as a key person who is the link between the different providers located in the capital and the rural beneficiaries at the villages.

The process of delivery will be described from the perspective of the various actor categories. The NGOs' perspective is presented through the interviews with a sector manager and an employee at the capital, two field workers, a branch manager, and a section manager at the governorate from MeK, in addition to a fieldworker and a manager from Alorman and three field workers from LMF. The government perspective is presented from analysis of interviews with a vice minister of MOSS, *Hayah Kareema* project manager, administrative manager of *Sakan Kareem*, a vice governor and directorate officials at the governorate level. The narrated views of the officials put forward their perspectives and thus the reflections by the other actors in the following sections will help complete the picture and triangulate between the interview information.

While the volunteers' perspective is presented through interviews with five volunteers. The interviewed intermediaries (introduced using the pseudonyms) were: Sheikh Sayed, a teacher at the local school and a CDA member who has worked with Alorman and MeK foundations; Badawy, a fresh Law school graduate who has volunteered with LMF (Life Makers Foundation) and helped the *Benebny Hayah* voluntary groups in village development projects; Abo Youssef, a governmental employee in the industrial area, a contractor, construction shop owner and CDA member who works with Alorman, Am Abdallah a governmental employee who works with voluntary groups, Abo Mohamed who works with Resala Intermediaries forming links and creating lists and Sheikh Aly a village resident and intermediary with LMF.

### *6.2.1 Intermediaries forming links and creating lists*

The structures or aid chains presented above highlight the importance of the intermediaries at the village level. They represent a key link between the NGOs or the volunteers and the beneficiaries.

An intermediary is a volunteer job taken by an individual in the village who wishes to do good and may or may not have initiated or joined a CDA. The intermediary is, as implied in the previous section, usually well-informed with regard to people who are need in his village and surrounding hamlets. He often creates a physical list of potential beneficiaries for whenever funding becomes available. Often referred to by the villagers and field workers as the village guide or village representative, there may be more than one intermediary in each hamlet, and sometime the (predominantly male) intermediaries will recruit women to help as representatives in different hamlets. The intermediary's legitimacy for both providers and villagers comes from his knowledge of the people and surroundings, and his connections with funders. This representation is not a result of a village voting but rather an accepted fact by the NGOs and the villagers based on previous work between the intermediary and the providers (donors or fieldworkers).

The list is a piece of paper with the names of the people in need, sometimes the family name, the name of the man or women head of the family or the eldest son/daughter. If the intermediary's representative in a certain hamlet is a woman, the list will be written in the women potential beneficiaries' names, but if it is a man then the list is usually mixed. Whenever an intermediary walks around a village, people gather around to communicate their needs, to ask if their names are on the lists, and whether or not they have been approved for the next batch of interventions, as well as whether or not he can help them financially. During the fieldwork villagers referred to an intermediary when asked who does charity and development work. A villager said "if you want to know more, you can ask Sheikh Aly he is the best". The intermediary's role in each of the identified aid chains may be at a different stage but they were each part of the 3 examined aid chains, and their relationship with other actors is presented within the aid chains detailed below.

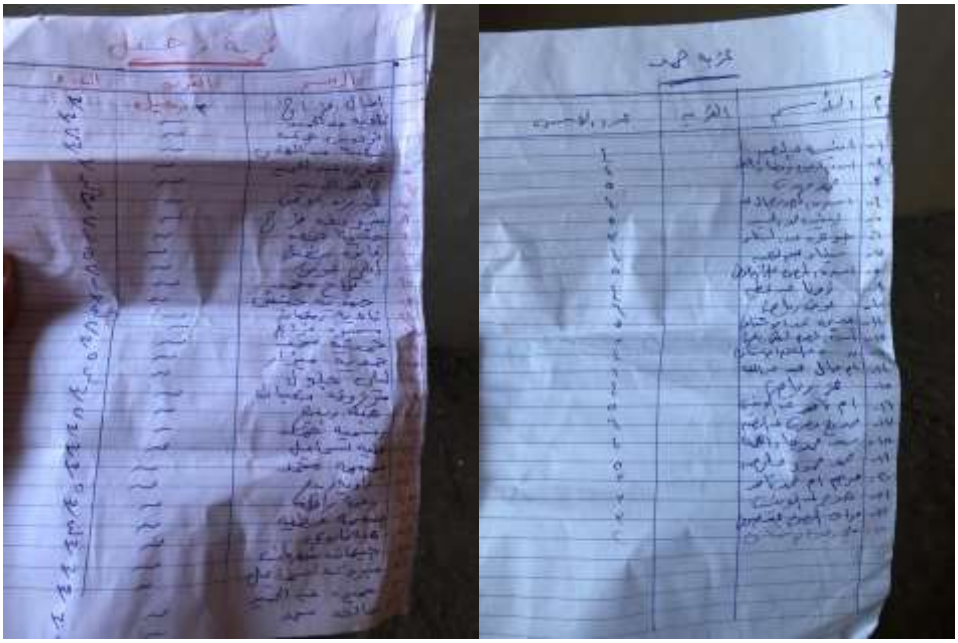


Figure 6-4: An example of the intermediaries' 'lists'.

The lists show the name of the hamlet, name of beneficiary and number of family members

### *6.2.2 Chain A - NGOs at the forefront*

The NGOs are the meeting point of the demand for charity and development work through the surveys and the work of the fieldworkers across their branches all over Egypt, and the supply of funds through donors. NGOs work on the ground implementing their visions and missions. Some NGOs emphasize in their vison that volunteering and motivating a sense of volunteering amongst the young adults is integral to their work and, as a result, they work mainly through volunteers. In contrast, other NGOs have established and strict forms of organizational hierarchy, and these NGOs tend to prefer to work with paid fieldworkers rather than volunteers. Volunteers from the middle and working classes reached out to NGOs in Chain A and they offered their volunteering efforts and recommendations for interventions. They also acted as a link between the NGO and the beneficiaries. The volunteers were typically from within the beneficiary community or came from the local areas. Some of them had started as volunteers but had subsequently become paid fieldworkers.

The NGOs' goodwill and their advertisements help with the continuous collection of donations. The NGOs either have enough funds to cover deserving families within a specific village or a

quota of specific interventions, or they are approached by a donor who has a plan in mind for a specific village. If the donor does not have a plan then, the NGO will respond by giving them options for proposed interventions from previous surveys. The NGOs have built up the menu of all of their interventions and areas of expertise. An MeK employee noted, "exactly like a restaurant when you ask a waiter what do you have?... and he starts saying the options, exactly the same manner". This is the menu explained before in section 5.1.3, however, the NGO could also present the dish of the day or what they are currently working on.

The NGOs have different strategies when dealing with village development. For example, MeK works more on service buildings at the mother village level and has a minimum budget of 250 million EGP per village. It relies on GIS mapping that is not connected to - and possibly more up to date than - CAPMAS. MeK also provides menu interventions for families and individuals in need. In contrast, Alorman and LMF focus more on the families within the geographically targeted areas by CAPMAS.

A fieldworker in Fayoum explained how they saw the initiation of intervention process. He said, "we get a notice from the [NGO] administration in Cairo that a donor wants to fund a village, and sometimes we are a step forward - we prepare a list of villages, then wait for the availability of a fund". He also noted that, the fieldworkers collaborate with the intermediaries in the villages to provide them with an initial list of possible beneficiaries, a fieldworker explained "we have a village representative [intermediary] and they choose the deserving families, we [the fieldworkers] then survey those families to check which families meet the NGO requirements". The intermediaries' knowledge of the people in need makes them able to customise the list according to the requirements of the NGO. When asked how families in need were identified, Bawdry replied,

> *Because I am one of the village inhabitants, so I am always here. In rural areas we all know each other, for example if anything happened to me everyone would know. So, we know the people and their circumstances. I have the surveys (from work with NGOs) and cases in the village for the orphans, sick people and poor. All of this is available. Badawy-Intermediary-57*

Abo Youssef similarly explained,

> *The people of Alorman NGO say we want a village, and I as an intermediary know all the people, they are my family (Ahl, أهل) I know them. So, I provide the NGO fieldworker (Eng Hatem) with a list from each hamlet, he then sends this to the centre (Fayoum) and the centre sends it to the head office in Cairo. I do not survey, I just provide the list. The NGO then asks and surveys to know who is deserving ...etc. Abo Youssef-Intermediary-61*

While Abo Youssef was explaining his position as a link, Sheikh Aly a CDA manager, saw himself as the only connection, he said 'If Resala (a major NGO) wants to work in this village they cannot work except through me as a CDA manager, they know that I know the cases". Similarly, Sheikh Sayed noted that "I have been doing this for 16 years, 16 years I got to know X for example, or a donor who came and saw the houses". A connection to a CDA allows the given intermediary to have a legal framework through which to finalise paperwork and permits. NGOs prefer to work with intermediaries connected to CDAs as it makes them easier to monitor. The NGOs test the intermediaries, "they test us in various ways, until they make sure you are doing this for God, not for fame or benefits, gifts or other things,". said Sheikh Sayed.

If the intermediary does not choose deserving cases, the NGOs will find another person who is more trustworthy. The NGOs perform needs assessment and field surveys from the data received from the intermediaries. The surveys are detailed "as if it's a police investigation" said the MeK branch manager. A fieldworker asks around the village to make sure that the data provided by the intermediary and the family during the survey are correct by cross examining the responses of different families and young children in the village. A fieldworker said, "we ask to make sure of the family situation is correct with all the details". The fieldworker explained that in some cases, people provide inaccurate data to receive an intervention. The fieldworkers are trained to evaluate the neediness of the intended beneficiaries and it follows that their expertise is relied on for decision making when it comes to finalising the choices of the surveyed families. According to the MeK branch manager, the fieldworkers reach a level where sometimes they can have an initial evaluation just from seeing a house or looking at the family members. Exclusion criteria are based on any displays of wealth; this is uncommon within the villages in Egypt according to the fieldworkers' expertise. Figure 6-5 provides an example of a house that would be identified as undeserving for a number reasons including having iron gates at the entrances and its being a three-

story family building. Thus, the family owning this house would receive an initial negative decision. According to a fieldworker, another reason for rejection is that the females of the family are wearing excess gold jewellery.

Figure 6-5: An example of a bigger house at a hamlet in Alminya.

Source: Author's own

The fieldworkers aim to meet the target number of interventions requested by the NGO, and they do not always need to find all of the beneficiaries from within the same hamlet "I don't have a minimum or maximum number of needy families per village to work on. My target is 30 houses; all the families might be in one hamlet or in several. For example, in this hamlet we have 6 houses, but we have 20 in the mother village and its sub villages." Such targets may also sometimes be

restrictive; fieldworkers may have a larger number of families deserving of the (given) intervention but cannot include them all because of restrictions pertaining to either funding or the target number of interventions. This puts the intermediaries in such situations in a difficult position and they must rank the deserving.

Where there are multiple intermediaries in a village, the intermediaries share their lists with each other so as to manage times of distribution, data, and so on. An intermediary explained that, in Ramadan, people tend to donate more food bags, so he coordinates with other intermediaries according to how they view the neediness of the people. As a result, a family might be provided with a food bag twice or three times at different times of the month by different providers. The shared goal of providing for the hamlet motivates the intermediaries to collaborate and work formally and informally to get the work done; discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Once survey results are finalized, they are shared with the NGO's head office in the capital for approval. Upon receiving the final approvals, fieldworkers are expected to collect documents from each beneficiary prior to the intervention being delivered. The fieldworkers help the intended beneficiaries to collate their documents. In this chain, MOSS audits the NGOs, and the governorate and directorates are coordinators who aid the NGOs in providing permits with no involvement in the flow of information and resources. The fieldworkers communicate the plans of their interventions to the directorates and the governorate, so the government is aware of the work of the NGOs. To avoid raising any suspicions from the government, the NGOs want to always make sure everything is approved beforehand. The fieldworker further explained "we take all the approval permits and documents from the municipality and the Agricultural unit to make sure the house is not built on publicly owned land or agricultural land". Despite the NGOs' being registered and monitored by MOSS, the NGOs must also get clearances from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Council, and the governmental auditing institutions so that those institutions are informed that a given NGO is present in an area for a specific purpose. A MeK branch manager explained how she works closely with the government for clearances and permits she said,

> *I have to push, Pushing will keep it going. The governmental sector workers are not always aware about what you are saying. But when I put effort in something I call for them to continue what we started. 'Let's help the community' I say. If not, I go to a*

*person in a higher hierarchy, push and try. If it stops, I push again I have to be patient to make sure that the service is sustainable. MeK branch manager-71*

The NGOs manoeuvre and collaborate informally with the government to get things done. The importance of a close NGO-government relation was also expressed by a local NGO manager who stressed the importance of informal connections in easing processes, he explained,

*Take care, to make any charity work you have to know the stakeholders and make agreements for your work to go smooth, to avoid any problems, and as a result instead of wasting time to get the permits why not do a partnership with the municipality or governorate so they will do all the paperwork for you. This is why you can see that I am in close contact with the new governor. He is a good young man. Local NGO manager- 102*

The duration of the execution of an intervention on a house takes between 45 days and 60 days. The NGOs pay the beneficiary for their work on the house according to his skills, and he is also paid if he uses his tricycle to transport building materials. As part of the intervention model, beneficiaries are not expected to contribute to the intervention financially - even their efforts as workers/movers of supplies must be financially compensated. An NGO fieldworker said with pride that "it is impossible and not allowed that the case [the beneficiary] pays anything in the rehabilitation or rebuilding of the house". The beneficiaries' involvement in the renovation of a house is limited choosing the colour of the tiles; the latter being contained with a pre-approved list provided by the NGO. After an intervention is completed, the evaluation undertaken by each NGO varies. Alorman fieldworkers conveyed that feedback is on an informal basis. A fieldworker agreed with an intermediary and explained that their voices are rarely heard with regard to feedback and especially when it comes to NGO requirements that do not match reality.

Beyond the typical Chain A process, when the fieldworker finds a need that can be met by the NGO at the village level, he either writes a memo to the head office to get an approval for additional interventions. Another case is when the governorate refers to an NGO for help because of its expertise. "The directorate sends a memorandum of the needs / problem and they see which of the NGO has more expertise in such an area, the intermediary has a huge role in this because he first presents the problem to me, he says we sent this to the local governorate and they can't cover it can you as an NGO cover it , we present the issue to the board of directors and the NGO

administration if they agree we take a memorandum from the MOSS and we start working on the spot" said an NGO Fieldworker.

When asked about communication and coordination between NGO volunteers and other actors, the volunteer said that informal communication at a village level happened between different NGOs working in the area. An example she gave was when the other NGO wanted to distribute blankets and the volunteers advised them to go to that village "we know the people and families in need". A volunteer narrated a similar story to demonstrate how informal ways work fairly well in rural development efforts despite the barriers from bureaucracy. She explained that when it came to documentation, "we had no paperwork, I will tell you what we used to do, we used to do paperwork casually, but legal documents with the government, bank stuff ..etc, was saved by God's blessing, although not everything was in place but things kept moving because we don't know anything about it". Here again there was a reference to God and God helping the people in need; discussed further in Chapter Seven,

Nationally, some of the volunteers who had a long record of volunteer work were selected by NGOs to work in *Hayah kareema* phases one and two, and that was when they started to work as fieldworkers for the NGOs that they had hitherto volunteered for. "I don't take money from LMF, LMF was always beside my work, I worked with different entities empowering females with the ministry, development but not LMF". The volunteer expressed that it was hard to accept a return to volunteer work especially with her home NGO "the only project after a very long time with LMF that I took transport fund/ any money was *Hayah Kareema* because the foundation took a fund from the presidency; at the beginning I refused because I was never used to taking money from LMF on the contrary it was me giving it my time health and money, so for me taking any money was unusual and strange. At that point several people talked to me to separate between LMF volunteering and LMF development".

### *6.2.3 Chain B - Government leading the aid chains*

Chain B relates to *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema*. *Sakan Kareem* is narrated by the administrative manager where the choice of villages is based on "the poor geographical areas, this

is my responsibility to set this, my manager and I make sure that there are no overlaps. I give each NGO a list with the villages". She further explained that the NGOs do not have, or are not able to have preferences "I set the geographical zone/area, it's not upon their request, or else why do a protocol with me?! I am giving you 80% and you're putting 20% to achieve a specific thing". The manager views the government giving 80% as a huge privilege that NGOs accept with no opinions of their own as the alternative would be that they had to provide their own funds for their work through fundraising or searching for donations. While this puts more power in the hands of MOSS the official saw such funding as an offer that the NGOs could never refuse. The *Hayah Kareema* presidential initiative is similarly based on CAPMAS statistics. The vice minister said, "the *Hayah Kareema* is based on the poverty maps in an attempt to compile and synergize the huge amount of work done by NGOs".

NGOs with capital of between 3 and 4 million are eligible to sign protocols with the government. The *Sakan Kareem* manager explained that this is done "for a reason, because I ask for 1,000 roofs multiplied by 15,000 EGP each, how will a small NGO sustain this?" An official explained that, from her perspective, NGOs benefit from such collaborations because this improves their reputation and the amount of work they do. The more the NGOs work and people see their ads on TV, the greater their legitimacy and more people donate. Additionally, the ministry is aware that the NGOs undertake side interventions that are not funded by the initiative to cover the needs of those who have not received funded initiatives.

The concept of national NGO-government protocols was critiqued by a manager of a local NGO at one of the governorates. He explained that while national NGOs are more connected through their branches at a national level, opportunities are missed by their not cooperating with smaller, specialized NGOs that are local to the governorates. "It doesn't make sense to sign protocols with only national level NGOs and to dismiss NGOs with local expertise in governorates" noted Dr Ashraf. The government seeks to make it easier for themselves by signing agreements with a single NGO that has a large local network. In so doing it can ignore local experience.

In Chain B, the NGOs are provided with 25% from the 80% of government funding in advance, with the rest claimed after the work has been completed. The 20% share from the NGOs are paid

in advance and kept in secured accounts until the later phases of the project are near completion to ensure the NGOs' commitment. There is proposed legislation that would allow access to 50% of the 80% government funding however, this legislation has not yet been enacted according to the *Sakan Kareem* manager. The full reimbursement to the NGO is finalised after the completion of the intervention, a full presentation of the requirements, and the completion of a signed document by the beneficiary that the intervention has been completed. This is a long process and places a financial burden on NGOs, especially when it comes to large scale and long-term projects. According to the Sakan Kareen manager, an informal model takes place to overcome this difficulty in which the NGO approaches the government when their funds are tight, and the groundwork has begun. The *Sakan Kareem* manager allows the NGOs to access their 20% locked share of the funding, until the 75% of the 80% government funding share is released on an exceptional basis. The deep knowledge of the officials of the institutional rules both formal and informal allows them to find more ways to manoeuvre to make things move towards the end goal. While this might also open routes for corruption those are the rules of the game. The official could be risking being accused of corruption, but they choose to take the risk to get round the formal problems with shared aim of making this model of development work.

The protocol signed between the government and large NGOs dictates the location and the commitment to provide the interventions to beneficiaries from the *Takaful and Karama* database. The NGOs carry out the process on the ground in similar manner to that in Chain A with the involvement of the NGO fieldworkers and intermediaries who choose the beneficiaries. However, the *Takaful and Karama* database was criticized by an official as MOSS got several comments about it from villagers. A director of MOSS commented that only 2 out of 10 cases are deserving, and that this is why the ministry is renewing the database to avoid such incidents. The *Sakan Kareem* manager said, "Sometimes people are deserving but they are not listed in *Takaful and Karama*, accordingly they do not receive […] whereas there are other where the families are listed in *Takaful and Karama*, but the fieldworkers say they are undeserving". When asked how they deal with people who are considered deserving but are not listed in the database, there were two responses. One was "If they are in the geographical target area, we do their houses as long as we are there" and the other was that they communicate with the NGOs to take over those cases as

additional costs to be covered by the NGOs. On the other hand, even if the family is deserving but the house is not built legally, meaning the house is built on agricultural or wakf (Islamic trust) or public land, then the case is refused for not meeting the criteria, “The programme does not get involved in anything illegal” the *Sakan Kareem* manager stated.

The *Sakan Kareem* programme encourages family members who are getting the intervention to help with the work in order to receive a fair wage in return. The *Sakan Kareem* official explained that they try to employ people “from the village, not only from the village, from the house itself whenever possible or else we would resort to neighbouring villages”. The family members are paid a typical wage and the official explained that, for a normal worker, this would be a daily wage of 50 EGP, a medium skilled worker 80-100 EGP per day, and a skilled worker 150-200 EGP per day of work. The official explained that by adopting this approach they provide some families with an average of 60 days of work, from the officials’ perspective this enables a minor economic boost. Local workers of all professions are encouraged to participate, and the 60 days are extended if the work will be continued in neighbouring villages.

There are also cases when there is a third organisation in charge of the execution of interventions, as in the case in water and sanitation projects. The *Sakan Kareem* stated, “The water company hands in the cost survey and asks for the 80% from the ministry. I don't pay the 80% except if I get the 20% slip from the NGO (under the name of *Sakan Kareem*), attached to the cost survey by the water company. Because it is not unmonitored money, I have to make sure that the NGO has put their 20% then I approve to transfer my 80%”; the 80% is paid via instalments with the final instalment being paid only after full delivery. However, the third party gets the money earlier than NGOs.

Monitoring of the execution of interventions is mainly undertaken by MOSS social units. As the *Hayah Kareema* manager explained “there is close monitoring. It’s complicated. In the field, we have social units, they are the smallest social units. They monitor the NGOs in the village and any family that gets help must get an approval from the social unit. The social unit must authorise that the family is deserving of the intervention”. The monitoring in this case completed through viewing documentation that is revised by the MOSS unit. We monitor each family. I check every

ID, and the *Takaful* and *Karama* ID to make sure it's reaching the correct families. If they don't match then no way, I can allow helping additional 5/6 cases that are not in *Takaful and Karama*, but we have to have the information". This official of *Sakan Kareem* stated that she had never been in the field but is nonetheless capable of monitoring the progress "I used my intelligence, I started to ask for picture and video reports, to see the difference". The official who decided that the monitoring via documents was not enough, decided to find other ways of checking based on her personal ideas and choices. She continued to explain how she assesses the success of a project, the manager of *Sakan Kareem* said,

> *I told you I have eyes in every governorate, the municipalities, and the directorates, I call them and let them go there and make sure whether the execution is going as planned to the families, I send him the sheet on WhatsApp or via email. To check the list with the real life, it's not a game Hoda, although we don't have a huge team, but we are awake for every move, I have my brain and my way of work. Sakan Kareem executive manager-64*

Some NGOs have built trust with the ministry due to their long working history, but the newer NGOs have not yet earned this level of trust. There seems to be several informal processes for the monitoring in addition to the documents. The *Sakan Kareem* manager differentiated between NGOs who are trusted and those that have yet to attain this status. According to *Sakan Kareem* manager, some NGOs' behaviours were questionable as they did not fulfil previous agreements, or the MOSS found out that they were altering documents. The NGOs under question made the manager of *Sakan Kareem* highlight the negatives of not having MOSS fieldworkers.

> *This is why we are facing a problem by not having our own fieldworkers, for example, Alorman, MeK, and another NGO (جمعية البر والتقوى) we trust them. So, what I do, in each village and governorate we have an employee (directorate manager working for the MOSS) مدير مديرية, so I call them one by one and ask them to go and have a look in specific locations by specific NGOs, are the people deserving, is the intervention done properly and according to the ministry standards. Sakan Kareem executive manager-64*

At the directorate level, the director viewed the monitoring process again through the MOSS units and documents/ The director said "I have financial and administrative evaluation, I have legal, social, and financial reviewers. Each one of those has a plan they will visit those NGOs, for

example I have 8 centres, one person is in charge of this district, and they follow up". After the intervention is provided there is no monitoring, and the owner of a house has full freedom to undertake changes with no interference from the programme.

### *6.2.4 Chain C - Volunteer centred*

The volunteers from the urban elite, like the researched group which I joined, are the key players in Chain C; they encourage the initiation of the process through choosing hamlets and interventions, coordinate fundraising efforts, provide funding, and organize and oversee execution including the delivery of weekly awareness sessions to the hamlets. These volunteers are mainly outsiders to the hamlets and are based in the capital city. Chain C volunteers seem to have internalized the discourse as a language. One volunteer said, "I would rather help a fewer number but give them a decent life". Another volunteer said "we want to work on sustainable community development this includes basic human rights health, and education infrastructure. There are basic pillars when it comes to basic human needs that must be available/ abundant for the person to live a decent life and for this person to have the potential in the future to give back". The volunteers are using a 'decent life' (حياه كريمة, *Hayah Kareema*) as a term of reference for the outputs that they wish to achieve.

The initial step for the volunteers in Chain C was finding the hamlets. This is typically achieved by a series of informal searches undertaken through contacts in the hamlets and previous contacts with intermediaries in the voluntary field. The volunteers rely mainly on their contacts with family members, fieldworkers, porters or housekeepers or working-class people in the city who have rural contacts by which they can be connected to the villages. The criteria was explained by a volunteer who noted that, "The choice of hamlet is based on the distance / proximity and the need, but mainly how close in proximity because if the hamlet is more than a 2.5-hour drive, then this becomes too far for us and very hectic (Because people – especially females– as they have to do their fieldwork as day trips and not stay in the villages)". At the point when the researched voluntary group started, the latest published data that was accessible to the public about poverty was from 2007 - "people lived and died" Cherif said, trying to explain how the available information could be outdated. As

a result of this, the volunteers chose the poorest hamlets from their own point of view irrespective of public data. The main criterion was that the hamlet was close to Cairo.

In this chain, the intermediaries' roles were extended to include planning and funding, meaning that he is aware of needs and in some cases could call the volunteers or donors and communicate such needs directly to them. This approach works both ways - either the donor wants to undertake a specific intervention, or the intermediary contacts the donors and volunteers who can help fund a case. The volunteer said, "our guide in the village was the one who was interested, and he was the one who pushed us every time, let's go let's do this or that". For example, he would tell us that school uniforms were needed for the kids before the start of the semester, and had a number of kids, we go with him and buy the school stuff".

The second part of the choice is ensuring that the hamlet's needed interventions can be covered by the volunteers' resources and that the beneficiaries are clearly in need. The volunteers are provided with a list by the intermediary of the needs of each potential beneficiary. A volunteer said, "we get a list then we do an evaluation of the cases and see the people for ourselves". The volunteers do their own assessments when they arrive in the village to determine the choice of beneficiaries and interventions. "We check the roofs, the villagers whether they are wearing gold or not, how the houses look, whether or not they are built from concrete and so on, that is it in a brief… We check the need and numbers and so set the needed budget,". stated one of the leading volunteers. Unlike Chains A and B, the volunteers' resources in Chain C are quite limited. The group choose to focus on the interventions or the discourse practices "5 or 6 main things, we distribute blankets and food bags, deliver kids awareness sessions, renovate houses, organize clothes exhibitions, medical awareness and convoys, and sports days". – a volunteer explained. Due to the intimacy and flexibility of Chain C, the volunteers do attempt to customize additional interventions based on the needs of the beneficiaries such as covering sewage lines, providing sewing shops, or undertaking candle making. However, such trials are not persistent, and the volunteers tend to go back to the set practices.

The third part of Chain C is raising the necessary funds. The volunteers in Chain C, whether separate individual efforts or acting in groups, act as funders as well as implementers. They can

be direct funders and/or play a fundraising role. Motivations for those acts vary and are discussed in Chapter Seven. The funds are collected either directly from the volunteers, or from their families and friends. Why some donors prefer to spend their religious givings and donations to the volunteer group directly is a result of two aspects: that they trust their relative volunteer, and that the volunteer group does not subtract 10% to 15 % of the donated funds for administrative purposes as larger NGOs do. Cherif the Project manager elaborated,

> *For example your aunt would donate because you are working in the project, so she knows the money is going to those people, people donated and told me we are donating because we know you/ because of you, and we know the money will reach the people through you, it is not going to be given to an NGO nor will you take a percentage….the part of taking a percentage from the money for administration… That was a problem. Cherif - Project manager-69*

The administrative costs are accepted in religious giving; however, donors prefer that the whole sum goes directly to the needy. Despite the seeming rigidity of donors' preferences for specific interventions, one of the volunteering project managers argued that the donors' pre-decided directions can be changed by proper marketing of the work being done. As explained by a volunteer "Keep in mind our budget, we worked 4 years with no outside funding, and it was all self-funded mainly through Facebook posts. So, we could not do any drastic change, or I mean something that needed a lot more money". In some cases, fundraising efforts take place during the execution phase when additional unforeseen deserving intervention cases appear.

After collecting the necessary funds - the volunteers' usual target was 500,000EGP equivalent to 12,990 GBP (in 2013) for a single hamlet - the execution phase began. The volunteers work through the intermediaries. As Cherif, the project manager of the voluntary group, said when asked about how the volunteer group worked in the village and who provided the know-how "The guide [intermediary], he is the closest to the village, so he guided us to what is usually done". This reemphasizes the importance of the intermediaries who are helping to standardise the set of practises. The volunteers, typically young professionals, and university students, dedicate Fridays as volunteer days. They commit to the same hamlet for a span of 9 months to 1 year on average. The volunteers seek to carry out the interventions by themselves with the help of the intermediary. The lead volunteers coordinate logistics including the transportation of volunteers, acquiring

materials on-site beforehand in case of building roofs/ house renovations, preparing food bags, buying blankets, organizing clothes exhibitions, and so on. For medical conveys, lead volunteers coordinate the recruitment of volunteering medical professionals, and ensure medication and medical supplies are available in a suitable venue in the hamlet. The money fundraised is kept on a trust basis by the volunteers with minimal bookkeeping. The money is mostly collected and spent as received. Money for transportation and awareness sessions supplies are typically collected from the volunteers themselves on a weekly basis. Volunteers were not registered with MOSS so, they collaborated with CDAs and NGOs to obtain permits.

If the intermediary was not a member of a CDA, he would use his connections with CDA members when permits and documents were required. In other instances, intermediaries just advance with the work without permits on an informal basis. For example, when volunteers need to use public service buildings for charities such as a school or for a medical convoy. An intermediary gave an example of organizing a medical convoy and how he had collaborated directly with the local school principal to open the school on a Friday, and how to make it look legal they asked the Omda (the mayor) to send two guards for security and the Omda himself greeted the doctors, thereby making the whole process look more formal. Another example was narrated by Badawy

> *When we were planning for a sewing studio, because there are cheques and bills included, so we got the stamp of the CDA, when we need paperwork, or permits or stamps, from the CDA they help us and do not say anything. As long as it's good and people will benefit from it, no one stops this at all, everyone shares in this […]. Badawy- Intermediary-57*

While Badawy the intermediary was not a member of a CDA so needed the help of CDA members, Cherif the *Benebny Hayah* project manger explained that the intermediary himself was a member of a CDA so he was able to help with the documents and permits required, he said,

> *That was easy for us, the intermediary helped with that, one of them was a member of a CDA. Sometimes we used their papers for example in medical convoys, so if anyone would ask us who we are? we would have papers from the NGO to support our claim. Eventually, we found out that this is not enough and that you need a permit from the ministry of health which we did not do. So actually, we were winging it and God Protected us. Cherif - Project manager-69*

Like the intermediaries, and the fieldworkers in the other aid chains, volunteers search for ways to solve issues that are beyond their capabilities through informal connections. A volunteer narrated a story about a mosque that needed re-building and how they had contacted an NGO that specialized in rebuilding mosques. He noted, "we got to know an NGO called *Ebni Masged* (Build a mosque) and they funded the building of the mosque. We just gave them the architectural drawings". Another story was concerned with the quality of tap water in the village "the water in the village was undrinkable." A volunteer contacted the ministry of water and irrigation, and they came to take a sample and they found out that it was unhealthy." The volunteer then explained that "the plan stopped I don't remember why". Even though informal connections make a difference, there is no accountability or follow up. This is partly because of the lack of formality and partly because of the inconsistency of volunteer work. When asked about the documentation a volunteer said, "We do not do documentation except videos, we had no higher authority, and we were all alone with our main goal to do good".

The advantage of Chain C from the viewpoint of the volunteers lay in areas where there was direct contact between the volunteers and the young people living in a villages. While they only spent a year in each hamlet, a volunteer explained that she felt they had an impact Farah said,

> *The village that I feel that we had the most impact in was Aboulnour Benisuef. Why? We did roofs and other things, but we did awareness to the youth, and when the youth saw us doing this, they started to copy us, so they became concerned with this issue, and they started asking we want to take the village kids to Cairo for a trip and they asked us for the know-how, or to fund them and they would bring the kids. Similarly, we wanted to do hot meals for the villagers during Ramadan, so the youth volunteered. Farah-Volunteer-88*

Despite this informal view on what had had the most impact, evaluations in Chain C were, like those of the other chains, based on the measurable outputs. As Farah noted, "maybe we did the evaluation to the materialistic things such as the medical convoy we know that we examined 1000 persons, 40 of them had some tests and 80 did surgeries and so on". The project manager expanded on this and noted, "we had numbers to evaluate upon and we did not need to go back because the sick person took his treatment and was examined and had the surgery, so the evaluation was in numbers, but we never did a survey for the people to evaluate". After completion or the

reconstruction of the roof a volunteer explained that "Once we feel that the roofs are done, we start searching for another hamlet that needs roofs, also we had a timeframe we do not stay in the same village for more than ~1 year, it is enough let us search for another village". The volunteer then highlighted their edge over NGOs in village development. He noted, "our main impact usually is the awareness with the kids. For the Benisuif village, we brought them to Cairo and the kids that we worked with have roles when they got older, they are supervising the younger". When asked about their awareness of interventions by independent volunteers in villages near them, a vice governor explained that "we will not be able to monitor each person helping with something except in the large things".

#### *6.2.5 Conclusion*

The presented aid chains show three different yet similar processes to achieve the same outcome. Although the aid chains are similar, it can be said that the most dominant aid chain in the Egyptian context until 2019 was Chain A, this was until the presidential initiatives took place and currently the dominant chain is B. The dominant chain is the one with the available cash flow. While the aid chains explored involved different leading actors, they inevitably follow a similar path in terms of both information and resources. The implementing actor - whether NGOs in chains A and B, or volunteers in chain C - begin their process with the same step; direct contact with the intermediaries irrespective of the scale of the interventions. The intermediaries are key players and a focal point across all aid chains. These intermediaries act as a compass and help volunteers and fieldworkers in identifying beneficiaries who meet their respective criteria. All actors noted that having proper inspections (i.e. site visits to beneficiaries) is an integral part of the process by which they finalize the choices of who will benefit from the interventions. There were however some exceptions in Chain C when the volunteers and intermediaries had worked together in several projects and trust have been built, the intermediary initiates the communication as opposed to the typical chain C process. The informal practices in the aid chains were more than the anticipated; even in Chain B. This level of informal practices was displayed between government and NGOs in Chain B; and between CDAs and volunteers, and local government in Chain C. There appears to be a general

consensus amongst actors across all aid chains that allows informal practices to take place in order to complete the given intervention. It was observed that all aid chains perform some form of due diligence before providing the interventions, and that there is also a tendency to undertake minimal monitoring or proper evaluation upon the delivery of the intervention. The role of the intermediary and the intermediaries themselves are one place where the chains overlap. The intermediary could be working for more than one provider or more than one chain at the same time. Similarly, the local government and directorates could be corresponding to different chains at one instance. Finally, the beneficiaries could be getting help from two different chains providing two different interventions (or even the same intervention in cases of corruption). Those overlaps possibly even strengthen the discourse as the actors are reassured of the rightfulness of their actions as they are exposed to similar actions in other chains. In the next section, the views of the beneficiaries of the received interventions and how they view the process, and the different actors will be presented.

## 6.3 The beneficiaries' responses

Whether it is chain A, B or C, the beneficiaries are the receivers of the interventions. The beneficiaries do not care to know who the donor or the providers are. They are more concerned with the intermediary and/or the fieldworkers as they are the ones they refer to. One beneficiary only knew that "The organization that helps comes from Cairo", but she knew the linking intermediary, as she said, "the one related to the intermediaries Abdallah and Ramadan." However, above all the beneficiaries think that the interventions are a reflection of the hand of God through any path (see Chapter Seven). The beneficiaries experience the different aid chains through three main stages: the selection in the list stage, the inspection stage, and finally the implementation stage. The level of complexity is based on the magnitude of the intervention received. A house intervention would take a longer time and more investigation compared to bridal essentials for example and handouts which are more frequent and require less investigations.

Across all chains, the intermediary lists are integral to the selection process. One beneficiary stated that "Here in the hamlets, the CDA comes here, like Sheikh Walid, they come to the cases, then a donor would say I want to do that number of houses, or I have blankets for distribution or I have

Ramadan bags, , as you know, they go to the sheikhs (intermediaries) they know them, they give them 100 bags , 100 blankets, 5 houses, and the sheikhs are responsible, each hamlet has its sheikhs, it is like a representative system, the people go to them and they [the Intermediaries] know the deserving". The villagers are familiar with communicating their misfortunes to the intermediaries and fieldworkers as evidenced throughout the fieldwork.

Beneficiaries' knowledge of possible interventions is predominantly achieved through word of mouth. One beneficiary explained that they saw houses being renovated in a neighbouring village, so they went to an intermediary and asked to be added to the list. The villagers when noticing an intervention would be keen to know the story of how people get those interventions, they identify the key person and they go directly to them, they know this has worked before. During Mohamed and Noha's interview (see Chapter Five), they narrated the story of how they got to have their house completed by an NGO. Their recollection of houses being renovated in the village dated from two or three years before the interviews took place in 2019. They saw two houses that were being renovated by Alorman in their hamlet and a neighbouring hamlet. They asked the neighbours who had undertaken "this great job with your house" and their neighbour responded, "people of God" (pious people). Then, the neighbours continued "Alorman, you can go to the intermediary (sheikh el balad) and he can put you on the list and they will come to you". The beneficiaries clearly saw the hand of God in what was being provided and since the intermediary is the person in visible to them, they see them as the source of the good and help in the village. Fawzeyya communicated a similar story. She said "I heard that an NGO is doing houses, so I went to Sheikh Gomaa Abo Ragab Abo Salem [an intermediary] and I asked him if it would be possible to add my house to their next batch, my son is about to get married and I can't do the house I can't afford to get him married and I can't maintain the house, he told me ok I will put your name in the list, god bless him God bless them all, everyone who did good may god bless them god bless them". Once again, the beneficiaries made references to God's will to reflect on their experiences and emphasised the good nature of the CDAs. The beneficiaries themselves in some cases informally help the intermediaries find the people in need, Om Kareem said "We also tell the CDA managers about any of the neighbours whom we know are in need, to help them like they did to us" so the beneficiaries become new links to people in need.

From the perspective of the beneficiaries, the second stage of the process is the inspection. This is examined here through the typical experience of Abo Ayman's family renovating their house. Abo Ayman went to the neighbouring hamlet's intermediary and "asked him when God allows, and you do another batch of houses can you please write our names in the list" Karima- Abo Ayman's wife- said. This was not followed up immediately but a year later they saw houses being done in another hamlet, and they knew that it was totally funded by an NGO and that the beneficiaries had not paid. While they did not know the restrictions or the area or any details of the criteria for such an intervention, they asked for a similar intervention from the intermediary. Weeks later they got several visits, Karima said "people came suddenly we were sleeping, they went in and found us all sleeping in one bedroom". The process was tough and thorough for the beneficiaries as they explained "we were afraid they would reject us, each time they passed we were afraid". I asked if the restrictions included that the intended beneficiaries' children were enrolled in the school, but Karima replied, "no it didn't matter, what matters is for the family to be large, 3-4 kids". As explained by the NGOs, proof of income is divided by the number of family members and thus larger families are usually poorer comparatively. The inspection phase for larger interventions like renovating houses would take a span of a few months to one year on average. Most beneficiaries communicated similar stories and noted that it took almost a year from inspection to completion while construction took from one to three months. All the beneficiaries agreed that the fieldworkers visited several times, and that the paperwork took some time to complete.

Construction details were also explained by the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries in Chain B said that they had to have brick walls constructed and that those who already had plastering were asked to remove the old plastering. This requirement, which was specific to Chain B, put financial burdens on the families and they had to borrow money in some cases to construct the walls. From their local knowledge, the beneficiaries knew that the intervention would include plastering and painting the walls, installing windows and doors, and involve roofing in addition to internal plumbing and electrical works. The NGO regulations dictated that interventions would only cover 60$m^2$ houses without plastering. Beneficiaries with larger houses have to make sure they had a wall at the point in which the 60$m^2$ average ends so that they can do the roofing. The 60 $m^2$ has to accommodate 2 rooms a kitchen and a bathroom, and although the original plans of the houses had the kitchens

opened to the distribution area, the beneficiaries even removed plastering from the walls to fit the NGO regulations. The inspection was more intensive for renovation and roofs, while for other interventions such as bridal essentials, Ramadan bags and blankets, the inspections depended on the intermediary's knowledge of the people.

The implementation stage took place shortly after the inspection had been completed. During the construction, the family either stayed in one room until other rooms were finished, or stayed in family houses nearby until their house was finished. In some cases, the men offered to work with the NGO during construction, Gomaa said that they even asked him to work in the following two hamlets and that he did. Gomaa's wife Om Kareem said "God bless Eng Hatem [the fieldworker] and the people when they found that Gomaa did not have a job, they employed him to build Alorman houses with them. He even worked in construction for our house, and they gave him his wage equal to any other worker and they did not pay less because he was working on his own house, no!" The NGOs were keen that the intervention was provided with no payments from the beneficiaries. As Om Kareem said "Alorman people gave us any money that we spent, for example the ceramic we got they gave us back the money in addition to my husband's fair wage".

The reactions of the beneficiaries displayed their content with the provided interventions. For example, Aisha said, "I am so happy you can't imagine how happy I am, I feel that this is more than I deserve, I swear to God, I wouldn't have ever imagined in my wildest dreams to have a house like this". Nelly similarly said, "we told them do whatever you want, and God bless them that they are doing anything". Since the beneficiaries expected nothing to begin with, any kind of intervention was seen as blessing. Sheikh Metaal noted, "we didn't imagine this to start with so anything is great, they told me this is what we can do so I told them OK and leave the rest of the area no problem".

In some cases, the beneficiaries were asked if they wanted some minor changes. Mohamed said "I just asked if it's possible to make the kitchen and bathroom on a step higher and they said OK" others chose between different paint colours. Generally, the beneficiaries trusted NGO fieldworkers' choices. As Om Kareem stated, "the bathroom was not like this, it was a rural house, it was the old system". She continued "they re-designed it according to their vision". Many of the

interviewed beneficiaries stated that they viewed the choices regarding house renovations to be based on expert opinions that were better than their own (and others) local knowledge.

There were also some negative comments. Mona who was not a beneficiary pointed out that there were biases when it came to choosing families, whilst Kawthar said, “There are people who don’t need and they give them, [covering her mouth) but I am afraid that …..[the intermediary) he hears me…. he is my cousin”, said Sara. Similarly, two sisters explained “They do everything for their relatives, we have been here for 5 years no one got us anything”. Om Gamal added “Me and her we are in need, and he says the names are listed, and we need it, we told him once, twice and three times, why does he discriminate”.

The form of negative feedback was mostly sarcastic or a general commentary that highlighted their situation. Om Gamal wanted to say we too are deserving basically. “And what about the poor don’t they stand beside them? the poor are living a more bitter life than the orphans, I swear to God” Om Gamal said. Om Gamal referred back to the beneficiary categorisations that are noted in Chapter Five in which the ranking of possible beneficiaries is orphans then the sick, and then the poor. Although the non-beneficiaries expressed their resentment, the beneficiaries did not think that their feedback was worthy to be heard. They expressed that they were only rural villagers and that the providers within the aid chain know best. The perception of the villagers towards the intermediary varied according to whether or not they had benefitted from given interventions; there was testimony from both sides.

## 6.4 Institutional challenges to putting the discourse into practice

The participants critiqued both the concept of ‘comprehensive development’, and the details of its processes and procedures. This section notes institutional challenges to putting the discourse into practice from the perspective of the actors within the aid chains. This is followed by a consideration of propositions for better comprehensive development in rural Egypt expressed by this study’s participants. This section, thus, provides a reflection of the different actors about the discourse in the Egyptian NGO-led village development context.

The concept of comprehensive development was criticized by the vice minister who expressed that *Hayah Kareema* is “not really comprehensive”. From her point of view “politically and financially

it's not very rewarding to do actual development that is the base line. No one will be that honest with you. It's not rewarding politically". Her vision of 'real' development was communicated to include in-depth research, enhancing the role of female rural leaders, automated, adequate, and accurate MIS and GIS data keeping. She explained that detailed data keeping will help avoid overlap and duplication of efforts, finally she said that having laws enshrined in the constitution are the first step to make sure something will happen and that even through political changes. This statement reinforces the main question which motives this research: if those programmes and initiatives are not comprehensive, why do they continue?

Several actors presented challenges to the process and suggested that they included: the selection of beneficiaries which might entail biases and corruptions, the heavy level of dependency on intermediaries, the lack of evaluation and feedback, donors' control, bureaucracy and time restrictions, limited coordination at the top levels with regards to data keeping and sharing, and the choices of which interventions to progress.

***Selection of beneficiaries – The mismatch between institutional requirements and reality***

From the previous sections, it can be seen that the process of beneficiary election comprises a combination of formal, statistics-based criteria and informal practices. The application of those criteria is heavily dependent on local knowledge, judgement and the choices of the intermediaries as well as possible bias. This bias can also be seen in the formal processes of identifying beneficiaries; especially in chain B. There are some obvious weak points with regards to corruption and bias in the governmental protection lists as well. The *Sakan Kareem* official explained that "some families are listed in *Takaful and Karama,* but the fieldworkers say they are not deserving, for example we received some information, about a tax officer who is listed in the *Takaful and Karama,* another case the Omda wanted to do two of his houses". The official knew about specific cases in which the government employed an execution manager at one point in time "we had our own execution manager, but he left". According to the *Sakan Kareem* manager. MOSS renewed the databases for the *Takaful and Karama* social protection plan "the minister ordered to renew all

the databases recently, because we know some people have passed away and the families are still receiving pensions and *Takaful and Karama* benefits on their behalf."

One of the lead volunteers reflected on the process and said that the intermediary played an important role in the choice of village, interventions and made the whole process easier. As they stated, "When the contact is good like Badawy, the trust is so high, so everything is easy, we just tell him we need a specific number of orphans, and we just go". The emphasis on the role of the intermediary as a key player is a major issue across all aid chains in Egypt and the extent to which they are viewed positively or negatively depends on each intermediary's individual ethics and personality.

On several occasions participants commented on the inclusion and exclusion of individual beneficiaries. The villagers' knowledge of the criteria makes them work around such that one couple may get divorced because the probability of someone getting an intervention as a single mother is larger. This was made clear when a fieldworker explained that the NGOs needed to make sure that a divorce was final and that the couple would never get back together (if they did so it would be a violation of the NGO's regulations).

> *For example if there is a father, his daughter who is a divorce and she has a child we check to make sure that this is her only house and that her life with her ex husband is over so we don't build the house then she goes back to the husband, sometimes she might have another house but she stays with her father because they know the requirements and they are manipulating for the house to get done, this case we consider they are wasting the Foundations money until we are proved wrong. Hatem fieldworker-53*

The villagers seem to know what to say and how to manoeuvre around the restrictions that the government and the NGOs have put in place and thereby ensure that they get the most out of them. One way to do this was to use the correct labels to attract the providers. A beneficiary said, "They are orphans their father passed away approximately 17 years ago".

People also use 'Wasta واسطة' a term that refers to the connections that can get you to where you want to be. People may use their connections or wasta to be placed on a list. In cases when the wrong or undeserving villagers benefitted from an intervention, an official questioned the

conscience of the people getting the help while not meeting any of the listed criteria. As *Sakan Kareem* manager noted, “there are non-deserving people who have a project now, they should leave the money for someone who deserves, I don't know why they do this!!!” As stated in Chapter Five, the deserving beneficiaries include those who are orphans, widows, sick, elderly, the disabled, and those who are poor with no source of income.

There are also issues with the NGOs’ and government selection criteria that are disconnected from the groundwork according to the NGO fieldworkers and intermediaries. This, they suggested, make them subject to community criticism even though they personally disagreed with them.

> *Alorman has its own restrictions, and I cannot change. I disagree with some restrictions and some houses (choices of beneficiaries), but I cannot change. I will give you an example a widow living across has a room that is plastered, they don’t do her house, so look at it from the outside people would say you did not do a widows’ house but you did a house for a man, any outsider would think like this, I refuse such a restriction but neither I nor the fieldworker have a say in that. If a person has half a feddan of agricultural land and his house is not plastered they are accepted but a widow with who plastered her house is not accepted, it is not logical plaster for 400 EGP gets refused and half a feddan for 50-80 thousand gets accepted, tell me what can I do?! how can a manager sitting in his office with AC decide on something like this?! All they know about a case is their national ID……..Sometimes the NGO has requirements for the cases that you and I might not approve of, but we do not have a say, they put the 8 criteria and We get the cases that fill in the criteria , we get the houses that comply by the rules that the NGO wants, we search for the houses according to the requirements. Not according to the needy cases. Sheikh Sayed- Intermediary-63*

***Lack of comprehensive evaluation and feedback***

Across all three aid chains, the participants reported a lack of comprehensive evaluation and feedback, in addition to the focus on quantitative and easily measurable interventions. There were several incidents where the participants explained, as per the previous section, that evaluations were minimal. A shocking example, explained by Am Abdallah, related to government microloans for development projects that were lacking anytracking or accountability to the beneficiaries. Even though the government offers loans for various small projects including raising chickens and producing fertilisers from trash and more, the government does not follow through with those loans

and this causes the beneficiaries to take loans and spend them on other needs such as bridal essentials. From this they may enter a cycle of debt.

The lack of feedback and evaluation causes more inequality. As the vice minister explained, "this is because we found out that some people said that they took nothing and that they are sick and so on, then you find out that they are taking double, triple or quadruple benefits". Although the intermediaries seem to be very important in the execution chain, their feedback - like that of NGO fieldworkers – is not heard by NGOs or the government. Sheikh Sayed who has been an intermediary and a CDA member for 16 years and collaborated with major NGOs said:

> *Our own voice does not reach anyone, because Alorman and MeK's have a higher management they decide what to be done, they don't take the opinion of Alorman manager in Fayoum, I rejected the idea of ¾ feddan the requirements, he told me he communicated the problem, but nothing happened. Sheikh Sayed- Intermediary-63*

***Donor domination and upward accountability***

The aid chains are donor dominated, and corporations are major players in development; especially in the more formal chains A and B. This is because donating provides opportunities for them to reduce their taxes and give back to their communities, thereby also furthering their community engagement and to helping them to enhance their public image. Corporate CSR teams collaborate with NGOs either directly in Chain A, or through signed tri-protocols with an NGO and the government in Chain B. In this case, the company was the donor, the NGO was the implementer and government was the coordinator and facilitator. Corporate partners in chain A enforce restrictions on the directions of spending, whilst in other cases the help is provided to the needy and rich alike. In one incident, the donor's requirement was to provide water meters to legalize water access to all villagers irrespective of the status of individual families. This caused trouble in the local community and the responsible intermediary was accused of being dishonest. The needy in the village claimed that the rich could afford the implementation themselves, and that this cost could have been used elsewhere to support the "more deserving" poor families of the village. The donors' domination was also manifested in Chain C from the funding side. The donors' target was instant help, one of the volunteers said "roofs, people want money that they can see its impact

instantly, if you tell them we need money for awareness. No. they want something that they can see that makes a difference".

***Bureaucratic procedures***

Bureaucratic procedures strongly impact both chains A and B as they are embedded from within, while for Chain C bureaucracy only arises as an issue when there is a need to collect permits or official documents for specific interventions. According to an intermediary, the plans and execution strategies all arrive from the capital, and the NGO fieldworkers and intermediaries only execute them via a set of rigid practices that are generalized and not tailored to specific locations or needs. As Sheikh Sayed said,

> *MeK the same, you know here in Fayoum, I have started working with them since they started, all of them here just execute what the higher management want, without thinking, they have a system […] it's a system that they are following , any change is a decision from the higher management, here no one has a say when it comes to Alorman and MeK when it comes to the know how or any changes. The decision come from the board members in Cairo, and we all have to abide by it. Sheikh Sayed- Intermediary-63*

Chain B displayed more bureaucratic procedures due to government involvement that led to many complications. This had resulted in financial difficulties in projects' executions in recent years due to the prevalent economic conditions and the floatation of the Egyptian pound (both noted in Chapter Three). The signed protocols restricted the provision of the 80% of government funding to NGOs, and as a consequence of unplanned financial complications, NGOs were in some cases unable to continue their work on the ground. In such instances, they became dependent on officials to find ways round bureaucratic restrictions. Lack of communication between different governmental entities pertaining to future financial reforms could also affect governmental initiatives in various ministries. MOSS seems unaware of the economic changes that take place, and they are disconnected from the financial impacts of the same on projects. As the *Sakan Kareem* manager explained, the financial limits for the water and sewerage connections were defined at a time with certain prices then "days later the value of the US dollar increased and the Egyptian pound faced devaluation in 2018… [and] "the NGOs approached me that the financial limits are not enough". The manager took the information back to the social fund in the hope that the limit

would be increased. Whilst there was initial resistance, they eventually approved an increase to the financial amount. Comparable financial events happened again a few years later in 2020, and at the time of writing this study it was expected that it would take a similar length of time for financial limits to be revised.

***Time limitations***

Time limitations had different impacts upon different development projects. The volunteers in Chain C critiqued their processes and interventions and noted with regard to time being a limitation that "this is our problem, we work in one hamlet did some housing and roofs, then quickly moved to the next hamlet did roofs and some awareness and clothes exhibition and we move again to the third. There is no comparison, we work here for a while then somewhere else". When asked about how much time they allocated on a weekly basis, one of the volunteers stated "How many hours!! we didn't spare the whole Friday, so our impact is very small, but we are trying…we are trying". Another volunteer pointed out an issue with the work they did at the villages "it is not sustainable". She said, "all of the volunteer team members had a day job/university, and this was pure volunteer work, so the sustainability from our side was not the best, not everyone was consistent due to their work loads, so another volunteer would replace them without previous knowledge, and start all over, there was a gap".

A lack of commitment to volunteering (which was also attributed to issues of time) hindered the group from sustaining their innovative ideas; two examples being a small carpet factory, and decorative candle making. According to the volunteer names Farah, "the cycle from A to Z has to be closed and working from within" and due to the short-term nature of the work, sustaining such projects was difficult. Another volunteer added when asked as to what they had learned from previous experiences "No we do not learn, we need training and we need fulltime dedicated people". The chain C volunteers compared their work with the work being done by larger NGOs. One of them stated, "keep in mind that MeK's resources for example are totally different than ours and keep in mind that those are not volunteers this is their job". Having NGO fieldworkers as dedicated professionals as opposed to the part time nature of volunteers in chain C eliminates issues pertaining to dedicating time to pursuing or undertaking development work.

***Cooperation and the lack thereof***

Despite the informal cooperation that existed between fieldworkers, intermediaries and even the local government, at the village level across all chains, there was still an issue with coordination and cooperation at the top level and in some cases this was also evident on the ground. The vice minister explained the coordination issue as a work-ethic problem in the Egyptian context. She generalised the issue as a cultural problem and stated, "this is a cultural problem we do not like to work in teams each person just wants to get an extra point, this is a problem I am not saying it scientifically, but it is a current problem, it's there in your everyday life… if you think of what is wrong, you will find that its coordination. Coordination comes at the top". Perhaps her viewpoint may be accurate with regard to opinions at higher levels, however, this opinion cannot be generalized to the work undertake on the ground.

Coordination issues were more obvious when comparing hamlet level groundwork to top level management. At the hamlet level, when fieldworkers and intermediaries choose to cooperate, they display cooperation and coordination at its best; for instance by sharing data and knowhow. In the case of established personal relations, coordination happens organically on a friendly basis and helps to mitigate, for instance, issues of duplication. For example, if there are food donations, intermediaries for different NGOs will give them out at different times of the month to minimize the impact of duplication. Another encouraging form of field coordination happens when intermediaries are involved with multiple NGOs; capitalizing on each of their offerings in a sequential manner to benefit the same beneficiaries. For example, an intermediary coordinated with a voluntary group to build the walls of a house and then contacted Alorman to do the plastering and finishing. Badawy, an intermediary, said "there was a mudbrick house, we demolished it and built it with white blocks and put up a wooded roof, God bless them. We then contacted Alorman to do the plastering and finishing, or we can help. Simply, we complete each other". There is another form of unofficial coordination that exists between voluntary groups and intermediaries. This happens when intermediaries get acquainted with volunteers and initiate direct contact when opportunities of need arise, Farah said "If the government, the NGOS and the villages cooperated believe me you will not see the current status but unfortunately you know we have

thousands of NGOs registered and not registered, how many distribute blankets?! How many …. If we all cooperate, we will not find the duplications we find!"

Asmaa a volunteer and current field worker gave an example "we were checking a family if they needed bridal appliances and we found a curtain and behind it we found 2 of each a refrigerator, a washing machine plus other things". Mr Walid an NGO manager said, "There is no coordination, I will give you an example say I am going to distribute seasonal handouts, the poor person in a village in these seasons becomes rich". This duplication causes a waste of potential resources not only with regard to physical handouts but also with regard to funding efforts, distribution, and logistics. The resources in such instances could be better allocated elsewhere.

The lack of cooperation and coordination at NGOs' head offices is also displayed when NGOs refuse to share their databases of beneficiaries with one another. Each NGO feels that their database is the result of their hard accomplished fieldwork and that it gives them an edge over the other players. A volunteer in Chain A explained that during her years of work coordination between NGOs was nil "ohh that is a sensitive subject, it hurts to talk about" she said when asked about NGO coordination. She gave an example in which another volunteer called for NGOs to coordinate at a national level and although they all agreed to the same during a meeting, when it came to work "the NGOs would tell me give us the data first then we will give back". She further noted that "each NGO thinks I have invested time and energy to get this information , and all what I need is to overlap the data to avoid duplication , to reach the more needy families so we only could do this with NGOs with whom we are on good terms or we share some projects ..etc , It was on a friendly basis, we succeeded with a number of NGOs 3 or 4 only in Tahta , we shared the families' data if you need volunteers I will help you or we can coordinate if I need something , we would coordinate for small workshops , coordinate to do roofing". A participant who works with a development corporation said "This is our work we cannot share it! Its 11 years of data". NGOs not sharing their expertise and know-how results in wasted time and effort as a consequence of the need to re-learn the same kind of interventions.

The amount of resources available is also a massive issue. As one volunteer said, "Thank God Egypt has so many resources but we have a big problem in allocation". Better allocation is hindered

by the lack of coordination and data keeping. Participants explained that there is a lack of horizontal and vertical coordination specifically at top levels, and that fieldworkers and intermediaries work to coordinate at the village level in an attempt to make the best use of resources.

In some cases, the lack of coordination on the ground result in the same beneficiaries receiving duplicate benefits such as bridal essentials, or blankets being distributed before winter to the same families each year.

***The nature of the interventions***

Another major issue with aid chains is that the interventions are limited and do not address all the needs that a family may have. One volunteer explained that roofing and bridal essentials all fall under basic needs. Commenting further Volunteer Yasmine also said;

> *other things we don't have as much control over like for example the educational system, yes, we can find alternatives and find a parallel educational system but the financial and manpower hassle and the high risk in such a solution caused it not to be a first priority. This is in addition that education should be the government's role and similarly health, but in health at least you can have a less formal alternative unlike public schools and formal educational system. In health you can try to provide alternatives such as medical convoys or taking the sick people to be treated in Cairo, or in the city and paying for this, so tackling health issues is more tangible…. let's not say short term but you can do this intervention and the results are usually long term, for example, if someone is treated and they are taking a treatment you can sustain this treatment for the long term, but education you have to have a full-on education that is not corrupt that is working vigorously on developing the human beings. You have to develop the teachers, and schools as an infrastructure, also the curriculums. It's a very big system that would be very hard to intervene in and have an impact, so we are searching for interventions with a long-term effect but also in our capacity and control to do change. Yasmine – Volunteer-89*

The amount of funding available and issues of corruption were also perceived as potentially major setbacks. Rahma, a volunteer and current fieldworker, gave an example related to roofing and noted that "some places corrugated steel was the only option because in some villages there is an insect similar to a white ant that eats wood, to overcome this we buy wood that is treated against

insects, but for example without naming anyone, an NGO knew about the insect and built the roofs using normal wood and the roof came down like sand in 2 months, and they said it was not their problem, so the roof came down with a layer of grout over it".

The recipients at the end of the aid chains find ways to maximize their benefits. They manage to challenge power and control the information returning through the chain. These issues were observed or told in stories by different participants. In one case, the beneficiaries were offered a wooden roof and after the completion of the roof the beneficiaries took down the roof and sold the wood, then they borrowed some extra money and built a steel roof. From the interviews with the field workers, they explained that this was acceptable as a beneficiary is free to do whatever they want with the provided intervention as long as they fit the restrictions of the NGO at the point of provision. In addition, the volunteer added that the villagers displayed more interest in immediate financial returns rather than securing sustainable income; this also affected the quality of interventions.

***Proposed solutions***

Participants were asked to express their proposed solutions for the difficulties and the discourse critique explained in previous sections. They were also asked as to what they thought were ways forward for the ongoing sustainable progress of the discourse. Some participants were dreamy and utopian in their dreams, the MOSS director said "I wish that in a blink of an eye I can find all those villages renovated, all villages have sustainable development all working mums have a job. Small projects I wish". Similar responses were given by villagers and other participants. In contrast, other participants were specific in their ideas on how to enhance the process for better results. Ideas included enhancing the role of female rural leaders, improved data keeping, and automation to minimize duplication of work.

The vice minister explained that the discourse as it presently exists - although internalised and institutionalised - will not lead to development. In her view, placing the focus on physical interventions will not resolve issues as development requires investing in the people. She stated;

> *If I am the minister of a country for MOSS and I have someone who is monitoring me, correct development is to put 70 percent in the people and 30 percent in physical equipment or whatever and the correct way is to do real development with whatever you have around you, but we do not use this model I do not know why. Vice minister MOSS-87*

Enabling the people was also the response of the manager of *Hayah Kareema*'s with regard to sustainable development. Despite working for the presidential initiative, his own views are different and up to date with global development trends. He adds that the discourse and the institutions seem to be stronger than the dispersed ideas. Officials and volunteers critiqued the lack of research and believed that the goal of sustainability lay in research. Farah, a volunteer , explained;

> *I do believe that I will go back but we need to know what went wrong and correct it, because if we are to follow the same scheme ok it good, but we are shutting mouths and a little bit of awareness and that is it. We are trying to help them live a decent life after our push, but it is not sustainable some food bags and blankets, clothes, but I think that the most important thing is the small projects, and small projects that match the resources of the village not candles!!, it is not studied, is there a demand, there has to be plan, people and purpose but walking forward with no direction!! I have learned a lot throughout this experience, I would get so enthusiastic, let's go let's do it, those projects have to be studied and someone must be living in the village, We never took feedback from the people to be honest. Farah- Volunteer-88*

Volunteers believed, from their own point of view, that encouraging the volunteering culture from within the villages would plant the concept of social responsibility. They also mentioned that if you provide development to their employability skills this will help make their life better.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The three different styles of aid chain noted in this chapter provide three commonly adopted processes by which to achieve rural development. There are underlying similarities across all three aid chains despite their different scales and the different nature of actors' involvement. Despite the fact that Chains A and B possess larger implementation scales because they are executed by large national NGOs and work with large sums of money, whilst Chain C is based on volunteers' individual efforts, all three aid chains follow a similar process once funds are arranged. They all contact an intermediary, inspect on site, collect some form of proof as due diligence, and provide

the physical interventions to beneficiaries. There is minimal feedback and monitoring of the provided interventions across all the aid chains. The actors across all aid chains have also adopted informal practices that have helped institutionalize the discourse as manifested on the ground by different intermediaries, NGO fieldworkers and volunteers, and local government organisations and officials. The intermediaries are integral to the process and are key players who connect the NGOs and volunteers to the beneficiaries in the villages. The beneficiaries in all cases act as receivers of the interventions, the process for them is very similar across all aid chains; they know what is offered and they ask for it specifically. The beneficiaries have internalized the NGOs' practices; they know what is presented, who to ask, and what is expected. When asked about the intermediaries' role, the responses of the villagers were either positive or negative; dependent upon whether or not they had received interventions. Even where this was not the case, it did not stop them from asking the intermediaries to be included in future interventions. The information that travels upwards and downwards through the aid chain is never clear-cut, and changes occur at each level; either 'filtered' or added to by the intermediaries' experiences or by the beneficiaries who know the correct words to attract funding (Watkins *et al.*, 2012).

Despite the institutionalization of the discourse, there appear, according to the actors within the aid chains, to be multiple challenges that inhibit its being put into practice. Beneficiary selection is impacted by bias and corruption. The heavy reliance on intermediaries' recommendations places a risk of bias through which, as noted, intermediaries may be biased in selecting their friends and family for interventions as opposed to those more in need. The *Takaful and Karama* database includes cases of non-deserving villagers such as government employees being the recipients of aid. This is due to corruption.

There is a lack of comprehensive evaluation and feedback across all aid chains and especially chains A and B. The intermediaries and fieldworkers clarified that although they have tried to communicate specific issues with the given NGO, they are not heard. Even though Chain C should be more flexible due to its size, there was evidence that the same problems exist; a of feedback, discontinuity, and donors restrictions being three that were noted were participants.. Other factors

that represented institutional challenges to the discourse being practice were issues of bureaucracy and time restrictions.

There were contrasting displays of cooperation across the three aid chains. There were cases of full cooperation and coordination on the ground between intermediaries, fieldworkers, and volunteers in which resources were shared and coordination was unified in joint efforts in some interventions. There were also cases that exhibited a lack of coordination at the village level which resulted in duplication of efforts and resource wastage. At the top NGO level, there were several displays of a lack of coordination that had arisen as a result of the competition that exists with regard to donor funds or because of a failure by individual NGOs to share their beneficiaries' databases with others so that they might maintain a competitive edge. In contrast, cooperation between government and NGOS was evident in Chain B, and informal practices were used to overcome bureaucracy; as explained in Chapter Two. One reason for the coordination between the government and the NGOs is that they both follow similar centralised hierarchical administrations. Finally, the nature of interventions was criticized by several actors because it was seen that they are focused on basic needs rather than developing the beneficiaries and investing in their longer-term improvement. Others stated that there was corruption in the choices of interventions progressed.

Even though some officials were critical of the work or the unchanged nature of the discourse, it seems that the power of the institutionalization, internalization, and acceptance by higher level personnel of the discourse won. The power of ideas, structure, and institutional power in the discourse have overcome the institutional challenges and they continue. The reasons for this are discussed in Chapter Seven.

# 7 Chapter Seven: The Perpetuation of the Discourse

This chapter provides a discussion of the possible reasons - including actors' motivations, social structure, and political influences - that have caused this discourse to be shaped as it is with regard to interventions (Chapter Five) and processes and relationships (Chapter Six) and to be self-perpetuating, institutionalised and continuous.

The chapter categorises the various factors into three aspects derived mainly from the thematic coding of the empirical material and fieldwork encounters; the social structures, including religion and social economic norms and factors, political factors, and standardized operational practices. While the initial categorizations were social, economic and political as expected from the literature about NGOs and rural development, during the fieldwork some aspects prevailed such as religion and standardised operational procedures - those aspects seemed to have had a greater influence on the perpetuation of the discourse than expected.

Thus, the chapter provides reasons for the different ways in which the discourse is in line with Egypt's social structures (formal and informal institutions). Then the political factors such as legitimacy, quantification of outputs and state budget expenditure. Finally, the standardization of operational practices in established frameworks. While the presented factors intersect and overlap, each of these three aspects: social, political, and operational is examined separately for analytical purposes.

## 7.1 Social structures and individual motivations

Social structures and cultural norms affect the motivation of actors and influence the institutional acceptance or rejection of interventions and processes, thus impact the lock-in of the of the discourse. Aspects of social structures will be discussed with a mindful of the motivations towards undertaking and accepting the discourse. Needed to be noted here that all the motivations are interlinked and do overlap.

### *7.1.1 Religion motivating the discourse endurance.*

Throughout all the interviews words related to religion came out naturally in the Arabic language. References to Allah are woven into everyday speech, God willing 'Insha'Allah' and Thanks to God 'Alhamdulillah' are part of the colloquial Egyptian dialect. Those religious expressions are weaved into culture regardless of belief, but they are not just a matter of habit – for many they reflect genuine beliefs (though these may be taken for granted), and of these one that holds primacy is the concept that all that happens is conditional on God's will – and, therefore, that for everything that happens God needs to be thanked. For its own reasons, the state also needs to be seen to be following this religious aspect of the country's culture; it is an important part of its legitimacy with the population. As a result, religious language also appears in policy texts. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, religion has become particularly important and openly expressed in the context of charity and development, with the protocols between NGOs and the government for the presidential initiatives including quotes such as "in case of disputes 'God forbid' then the solution is…". Such references in official documents supports the need for and importance of religion in this particular field. There was, as is discussed in this chapter, further evidence of religious references made throughout the fieldwork. Motives for doing good and giving back were explicitly presented by providers, and while there are other motivations discussed in the following sections, religious motivations were expressed openly and proudly. The section will follow down the aid chain in terms of discussing religious motivations, in an ordering of funding, setting up, working and volunteering, tolerating abuse and receiving.

As explained in Chapter Three, *zakat* is one of the main drives of giving in Egypt (El Daly, 2006). This act of giving is fundamental to Islamic beliefs and is one of the five Islamic pillars. The study showed that 90% of voluntary giving in Egypt has a religious motive whether it be *zakat* or *sadaqa* (El Daly, 2006). The concept of *zakat* was expressed by a volunteer who viewed correct *zakat* spending as the way to solve poverty.

> *We have many populations that are under-served with the national services or are not reached enough although it's a basic human right. Maybe it's because, corruption or the unequal distribution of wealth or that not everyone is paying Zakat, a lot of*

*different reasons. I really do believe that if people paid their Zakat poverty rate will be almost non-existent because God decreed that this would happen. Yasmine- Volunteer-89*

An NGO manager said that the NGO was founded because "the owner has a high sense of corporate responsibility to solve problems, it is also religious giving as his *zakat*". Religious, motivation was thus present from the start. A CDA member expressed his religious motives to establish those organizations. He said, "I opened this organization to help the poor, you will find that most of the CDA members are volunteers".

In addition to funding, Islamic *zakat* also defines and influences several aspects of the aid setup: from the choices of interventions to identifying beneficiaries. The types of interventions are, to some extent, directed by religious ideas. As explained in Chapter Five, the interventions and programmes get certificates from the Foundation of Religious Verdicts in Egypt '*Dar al-Ifta al Masrriyah'* which acknowledge that the activities and programmes are accepted channels of *zakat* spending. The interventions which constitute the discourse are acceptable categories informed by *zakat* and lead to those interventions being seen as legitimate by those involved in providing, and including the recipients. This acceptance of the intervention categories encourages self-reinforcing of the discourse. The categorization of the beneficiaries in the discourse (orphans, widows, poor, in need, and other), is also largely affected by the categorizations of the people deserving of *zakat* explained in Chapter Three; this overlap between the discourse and *zakat* has led to a wider acceptance of the discourse.

*Zakat* is not the only form of doing an act of good for Muslims in their pursuit of future rewards and heaven in the afterlife. Other religious motives were manifested by several sectors of providing participants to be involved in this kind of work such as doing good, giving back to society, and thanking God for his blessings. Those motivations are reflected in, and reinforced by the prophetic saying "Actions are (judged) by *Alniyyah* (النية, intentions), so each man will receive what he has intended for" (Al-Bukhari, 1978). The importance given to the intentions was obvious particularly amongst volunteers and fieldworkers. During the bus ride from Cairo to one of the hamlets in Fayoum with volunteers in Chain C, the volunteers each shared their intentions for going to Fayoum. This, in turn also allowed others to reflect on their own intentions for undertaking the

trip. Similar intentions were expressed not only by volunteers in Chain C but also by the various other actors such as intermediaries. The first motivation examined is the idea of being righteous. The Prophet (PBUH) said 'خير الناس أنفعهم للناس' which, whilst it can be translated in more than one form, means 'The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people or others.' This saying was stated by an MeK branch manager who then went on to explain how this intention motivates and helps her with her job "God loves people who serve and help… this makes me do my work with love".

Having such religious motivations are causal factors for the continuation of actions. Another idea that supports the idea of being motivated to do good is that people are chosen for whatever they are doing. It follows, that being chosen by God to be in service of others is a blessing and it is one that is expressed with pride according to one of the intermediaries. Abo Youssef, an intermediary said "I am the servant of anyone". However, it is not by chance that specific people are directed to act in such a manner. Commenting further, one CDA representative explained his understanding that "God chooses people for specific matters, and whoever is chosen in a specific place must show excellence and creativity in that job". In this context, he also expressed the Islamic idea of Ihsan or (إحسـان, excellence). It is considered a form of worshipping God in which one completes their job/tasks with excellence as if they can see God.

Participants also explained why they wanted to do good or help others. They believed that they were investing in God's blessing and that they would be rewarded with both tangible returns in this life and intangible rewards in the afterlife. A volunteer reflected on her journey in developing villages and said "anyone who entered this circle of doing good, God blessed them and Subhan Allah 'glory to God' everything nice that came to me was a reward from this good. Anything good that happened to me is because of that group. I swear to God". She added that having a religious intention behind doing development makes the whole experience different, it moves the heart and made her grounded. An intangible consequence was expressed by a volunteer who narrated A Prophet's (PBUH) saying "صـنائع المعروف تقي من مصـارع السـوء" carrying on good deeds protects one from an evil death. This was repeated by a former volunteer and a current fieldworker as a motivation for their investing time and effort into interventions.

While access to the field as a researcher is sometimes difficult, some participants saw my work as an opportunity to worship God. Some participants mentioned that helping others was their motivation to respond to my questions, and that this was, therefore, a way of them undertaking service. Doing good is rewarded in this life and the hereafter, and some stated that God had sent them to help me. They reflected on me saying that I must have done something good to make God send them to me. A CDA member said "You prayed to God, and he sent me to you, and this is a blessing"; making the research easier was my reward from God for something good that I had done is how the participant analysed the situation.

Sometimes God's blessing is very practical. A CDA member said "what I want to tell you is that when you put God in your mind, God will make everything easy for you". Doing something for God was a point of attraction that intermediaries used when they needed facilities for convoys. For example, an intermediary said that he went to a school principal and asked him to open the school on a holiday without going through the long bureaucratic cycles related to permits. The intermediary told the principal "I am coming to do something for God and people will benefit from it". The school principal from his side is motivated to help the intermediary for two reasons, first that he wants to do good and second so as not to be the one stopping the help from reaching the people in need. As Sheikh Aly said,

> *God knows that our intention to do something for God, and people are going to benefit from it, so everything is made easy. Never will you be doing something for God, and you find it complex/hard or will you find problems. Sheikh Aly-Intermediary*

He noted that the purity of intentions helps to accelerate the process. He explained that one hamlet in particular was blessed, and that whenever someone was in need, he would easily find the help that was required.

> *some people are blessed and it's not only my testimony, I will tell you how? For example, we are doing 40 roofs, I would find the person in charge of funding calling to saying we collected the money, and it is more than needed, for example instead of 40k 50k, and from my side as well, instead of 40 roofs, God helps us and we are able to make 50, 55 roofs. Anyone who tries to help those people, everything becomes very smooth and easy… it is something from God, as long as your intentions are pure, God will make it easy for you. Sheikh Abdallah-Intermediary-62*

An NGO fieldworker explained that religious motivations break through bureaucratic and hierarchical procedures, and that it encourages cooperation between actors. She explained that "It depends, some officials respect the work we do for God, they respect the amount of energy the NGOs puts in", and that when a document or a certificate is needed the official "sends an employee to check the situation and approves right away". She did not generalize but further explained that "sometimes you meet an official who complicates stuff, but at the end we succeed to get all the permits, and sometimes the moment an official sees the amount of good and he knows how much the village or the hamlet or the governorate needs it, he gives the approval and says the priority goes to this".

The fieldworkers and government officials feel that procedures and permits are made easier because the intention is to serve God; and what is meant for God, God will make happen. Religious motivations provided encouragement for volunteers and additional encouragement to others who are employed and involved in the aid chain as their job. Fieldworkers are happy that their work is focused on helping people and that by helping people they are getting closer to God. In the meantime, they feel the burden that they will be asked (by God) whether they provided help with excellence. A governmental official copied the same idea noting, "it is very hard; we will be held accountable in front of God for every pound that passes though us".

Some volunteers were motivated by giving back to the community, thanking God for his blessings, and some even phrased it as *zakat* (alms) for their health and blessings. This belief can reach such levels that fieldworkers who were previously volunteers find it hard to be paid for their time and effort, as evidenced by a former volunteer for LMF.

Religious motivation helps intermediaries overcome negatives and hardships. Sheikh Sayed, a CDA manager explained "if you want to continue working in the charity field, your main goal must be God's blessing". CDA managers do have other motivations for their work (see later), but this CDA manager expressed that putting God first helped him to stay motivated and disregard any negative comments from villagers. Religious beliefs helped intermediaries overcome the many obstacles that they encounter in their line of work. The CDA manager added that if you seek people's praise, your work will not be rewarded by God. Intermediaries tend to receive

negative/harsh comments from villagers but say nothing because they are waiting for their reward from God. Sheik Sayed said

> *A few in this field put God above all, it is hard, all the worlds sins are accumulated in charity work, you can pray to god and fast with no other seductions, but charity work all of it and I am saying all of it, all the seductions are in charity work, all, I won't name them you can understand all of the seductions, they can destroy, no one continues in charity work except those who are chosen by God to be stable and continue, because charity work is full of seductions. Even though if you are working for God, you find a person because he did not get a house talking behind your back. This is why one of the pious men said whoever wanted to work in charity work, he should give a part from his dignity for God, meaning when you dedicate yourself to voluntarily work you are exposed to gossip and accusations, because people will talk 'he is biased' and he might not be this at all, but people want their houses to be built, even if they are not compliant to the NGO's requirements, and a neighbour got his house done , so that person would say that the representative is bias, he is doing so because the woman looks good or he took a bribe, they say things that are untrue. Sheikh Sayed-Intermediary -63*

Although the abovementioned views show that all involved stakeholders appear to be pious, there are some underlying issues in these comments that relate to the intermediaries' perceptions of themselves. Intermediaries may obtain a sense of entitlement that they have been chosen by God to help others. The intermediaries are human and the feeling that they have been chosen and are to receive a reward from God, indirectly implies that they cannot be wrong. As a result, they are unlikely to accept criticism or acknowledge any personal wrongdoing. From my field observations, the tone of some intermediaries was condescending towards any villagers who held an opposing view, and they were almost never wrong. A middleman used the line "I am here to serve God and do not care about your opinion". This attitude can also prevent them from actively listening to feedback. Again, however, this depends on the individual intermediary. This is another reason that discourse has become self-perpetuating; namely, there is minimal acceptance of criticism. The intermediary or fieldworker believes in cases when they are being attacked that the cause is not because there is something wrong with the processes or the interventions but because the way to serving God includes hardships such as negative comments that they have to overcome.

As introduced in Chapter Two, religion provides dual motivations for actions. For example, while people are religiously motivated to be self-sufficient and even beyond be the giving hand, on the other hand people practice acceptance from the viewpoint of poverty as a test from God. From the beneficiaries' perspective and as explained by Syukri Salleh and Osman (1997), poverty is seen as a test from God which needs to be accepted with gratitude. This acceptance implies that some beneficiaries feel that they are compelled to just feel thankful for what they have got and this may somehow obscure openness to feedback which also helps to minimise criticism of the discourse. They feel that the intervention is a kind of blessing from God, and they are grateful to God and the people who have helped make the intervention happen, irrespective of whether the intervention actually met their need.

> *"Whatever we get, we thank God for it, those are blessings from God, what God sends we thank God for, this is a lot of good that we thank God for" Om Sayed-9*

The beneficiaries are afraid not to be content with their situation, and they believe that if they are not grateful with their life, God might take away his blessings.

> *As you know we have to wait because there is nothing else that we can do, thanks God, 'reda' رضا, we are content with what god gave us. Fawzeyya-Beneficiary-29*

The villagers repeated that their income is what God sends them, and that their futures are in God's hands. The beneficiaries stated that the interventions are from God and that the intermediaries are ('Sabab') سبب the hands of God. The way the beneficiaries gave back to the intermediaries is that they prayed that God would bless them in this life and the hereafter. Part of being thankful to God is being thankful to people.

While their reactions to the interventions was not always positive, the beneficiaries did not usually provide feedback. For the beneficiaries, religious gratitude prevented them from raising any issues that they faced with a given intervention as they did not wish their 'complaint' to be misread as their being unthankful to God, the intermediaries, or the providers. This position even prevents potential constructive criticism from being offered. As social representation, in front of the fieldworkers the beneficiaries might not want to express that the intervention is not good enough to make sure they get picked for the following intervention, however it is of course, impossible to

tell. In addition, some beneficiaries would only start to raise issues as a result of being dismissed by intermediaries; an action that would not be very pious.

It can be seen, therefore, that there are several ways in which religious motivation acts to protect the discourse. However, across all stakeholders, there was also a tendency to be at ease with a lot of uncertainty. This was, in turn, once more seen as being God's will; an approach that, in effect, negated the need for proper planning of the future and being hands-on when it came to facing challenges. This was evident when the CDA managers were asked by villagers about future help and they only responded with religious quotes rather than ground promises; an approach that, at least temporarily, relieved the villagers.

### *7.1.2 Social norms and motivations*

In addition to religious motives and influences, there are also social motivations that further ground the initiation and continuation of the discourse. These motivations include: the matching of the interventions with the priorities of the beneficiaries, financial rewards, social recognition for the intermediaries by being involved in the aid chain, as well as sustainability, a sense of community, and enhanced self-esteem for the volunteers.

As introduced in Chapter Five, the villagers had prioritized several interventions that were of social and cultural importance to their lives. Of these, the two that had primacy were houses and bridal essentials, and these were also the most prevalent adopted discourse interventions. This matching between the priorities of the villagers and what was provided is one of the reasons why the discourse is protected.

Starting with housing, the villagers highlighted the importance of housing as a point of pride and as an essential need for their sons when they came to get married (it was less of an issue if they only had daughters). As one beneficiary Hanan clarified "the most essential thing for a human being is their house". That she was questioning what a human would need other than (or more than) a house illustrates the dominance of housing as a need. While the need for shelter would be obvious to outsiders, the importance of bridal essentials is not as obvious unless one has an understanding of the country's culture; noted in Chapter Three. Sayeda said, "the most important thing is the house… if God sent me some money I would do the roof for the other room and get a

door, this is what I wish for from this life". Fawzeyya also said "I only think about the house… [and then added] "and helping my son get married, I don't think about anything else, how could I think of anything else…I would think of a project but only when my house is already good , but before that no".

The providers have also internalized the importance of providing a house or helping with housing. The population is always increasing, and the need for housing will, therefore, continue to rise. All else being equal, this rise encourages the continuation of the discourse. When asked why they continued, a project manager replied, "because the need is still there, and since there is a need you can continue working, people are still hungry they still need a roof, and so you will continue working". Additionally, an individual donor's preference to fund specific interventions also helps the continuous flow of those interventions. Their preferences might be shaped by an NGO's advertisements or other individual preference. As one NGO manager put it "some projects are sexier than others"; she further explained that the houses and roofs in winter, and orphan related projects were considered amongst the most appealing.

It is possible that the villagers were thinking within the practices of the discourse with regard to what is usually provided. But another possibility was explained by an NGO manager who suggested that people accept interventions that they might not need. He emphasized that beneficiaries would gladly accept material interventions that they did not need in order to later sell the components of the intervention to buy or build something they did need. He stated, "It's the same as giving meat to a vegan person…whatever comes from the NGOs is better than nothing". This would question whether there is a difference between what people think they need because this is what is provided and what would encourage and excite them in development terms if they were exposed to it. One perspective of the discourse perpetuation is that the villagers' imagination is limited to what they are already exposed to.

Another aspect that helps with institutionalization of the discourse is the intermediaries internalizing their role. They are motivated not only by benevolence (stated above) but also other

socially related motivations including social status and capital, self-esteem, power, political connections, and financial gains.

Societally, the fieldworkers and intermediaries are respected as a result of their work in the villages, and this respect feeds a person's self-esteem and status with many seen to be of the same importance and to have the same wisdom as the elderly members of the village. As a fieldworker noted,

> *I have been living (spending a lot of time) here for the past 2 months. I am now one of them. Whenever people would have a problem, they would call me to ask for my view. I have solved marital problems where we take one of the village elderly or most respected and we go solve the problem and help reconcile the couple. Hatem-Fieldworker-53*

As a result of the amount of good an NGO fieldworker does, people have confidence in him and respect him. They trust that he can reconcile and reach a fair compromise between people. The reward of an acknowledgment for one's actions seems also to have been a cause for the endurance of the discourse in the current aid chain hierarchy. Actors in direct contact with beneficiaries are motivated by a sense of self-fulfilment. Several actors in the aid chain explained that a simple smile which filled their hearts was a reason why they were motivated to continue. Viewing the happiness of the people who received the interventions was a worthy reward for several actors as it improved their own morale and sense of purpose. When asked why he continued doing what he did in the hamlets, Cherif the Project manager of Benebny Hayah replied "the happiness of the people with what they are given. This is a great motive to work again, and when you meet them again you can feel how thankful they are". He then gave an example of providing a house which was a dream come true for the beneficiary. He ended by saying "The thankfulness of people to what we did was a great motive to continue".

An example of financial gain was evident as one CDA manager owned a shop for construction material from which the NGO bought some of the needed materials for houses, this resulted in direct financial benefit. Another intermediary admitted that he was motivated to do some work for an NGO by the prospect of receiving money. Badawy said "I won't lie and tell you the financial reward was the last thing on my mind, no! But it was one of the points on my mind. I am being

honest". He then clarified that he also had religious intentions and narrated a story from when he had agreed on a financial reward for helping with construction but opted out "I refused to take the percentage. I am not saying that I am an angel from the sky but that is the truth". Although asking for a financial reward would be viewed as a counter argument to undertaking work for a religious motive, the idea was introduced in Chapter Two that people could have multiple and contradictory motives for the actions they take.

Although religious motivations were significant and dominant for the volunteers, they also presented other more secular but still moral reasons for their actions and the continuity of their efforts. Some volunteers talked about the idea of being part of a community. One said, "Our community [of volunteers] also was very motivated, enthusiastic and cooperative". Another volunteer narrated her story with a focus on the importance of being an active individual in the community and a sense of belonging to a group having a common goal. She noted:

> *Why did I volunteer, ok, I was working at a bank, I finish work every day and go out with friends. I didn't feel that this was me. And I said will I stay in this loop of work and with friends who are not like me, so I prayed to God that I want a good group of friends(صحبة صالحة)at the same time my sister was already going to the villages every Friday and I thought why would anyone leave their weekend and wakeup at seven am to go to a distant village for two hours, and I told her your family deserves this time more, and she came back tired and messy. I didn't understand until I went once and since then I was addicted, and I felt that we need to so do something about this. I felt that this is what I want to do and thank God I became a team leader four consecutive years. I was addicted to the act of going to the village, the people and the idea. You travel two hours and leave your holiday to go and help someone, with others who share the same goal, a common goal. It's an incredible energy. Farah-Volunteer-88*

A further reason noted was having an enduring and lasting impact on the livelihood of villagers. As one volunteer noted, "I feel that we had the most impact was in Benisuef, we did roofs and other things, but we did awareness to the youth". During the provision of the discourse interventions "the youth saw us doing this they started to copy us, so they became concerned with this issue, and they started asking 'How can we help?'...". This was important the volunteer suggested because;

> *If you plant a seed and enhanced them and gave them special training and developed them and gave them rewards, I will do this if you educate 10 people, or I will put a roof if you and your friends help with the other houses, I think if this is coming from within the village it will make a difference. Farah-Volunteer-88*

The above presented examples for motives for not only to perform an action but also touched upon the drives for the continuity to execute those actions. Those examples resonate with the motives for continuance stated by Same *et al.* (2020) that include: experiences, recognition, fulfilment of original values, and growth.

## 7.2 Political factors

As presented in Chapter Three, Egypt is a centralized authoritarian state. There are several political factors that, as a result, help sustain the discourse under this ruling from adhering to the state direction to producing targets and quantifiable outcomes, providing a way out for funding and enhancing legitimacy.

### *7.2.1 Adhering to the State's Direction*

The first factor was explained by a planning official at GIZ who was involved in rural state planning. He stated that, in general, projects succeed or continue when they are undertaken in parallel with state plans and directions. This is applicable to Chain A since Chain B was initiated by the presidency. Moreover, this further supports what Najam (2000) stated in Chapter Two relating to NGO-government relationships being cooperative when both are aligned in terms of visions and directions. The discourse's interventions, target audience, and the organizations involved are all accepted by the state.

The managing director of *Hayah Kareema* explained that the initiative has become central because "poverty and the less privileged are topics that are on top of the agenda of the decision maker at this point in time". This was a continuation of a conversation which noted that the state does not plan its issues comprehensively but instead reflects the views of the national leader at any point in time. The execution level will speed up the process for projects that are favoured by senior decision makers. The vice minister of MOSS told a similar story "I will tell you why, this is merely a political question because now there are so many forces in politics … the persona of the national

leader, the persona makes a huge difference". She continued to explain that if the decision maker at a lower hierarchical level was enthusiastic but the higher-level decision makers had another opinion everything changes "when the pressure coming from above starts, where are the results like any fund?!"; which means that the result will be failure. As introduced in Chapter Five, the providers agree to the set of interventions as they fulfil the perceived obvious basic needs which align with the policy maker's agenda. Again, in an authoritarian state, the acceptance and flourishment of NGOs comes when they provide services or products that are complementary to the plans of the state. In this discourse, the acceptance of the interventions is even more well-received as all interventions are seen to address basic needs. The Sakan Kareem manager also explained "NGOs know that the infrastructure is damaged, it is beyond damaged, so they started to move to solve this".

One distinctive feature about this discourse is that it is national NGO based. The absence of international organizations in an authoritarian country improves the possibilities of acceptance of the development discourse from the regime (Herrold, 2020). Several actors in the aid field in Egypt and Egyptians in general view international NGOs as a part of a larger conspiracy theory. This concept was proposed by an NGO manager who said cynically "The USAID has political and economic intentions" and he used body language that identified some mistrust. He continued to specify an example "The political agenda of international NGOs might include corruption, a bad habit, spying, and the economic intention is to create or find a need for specific companies". This attitude is alive and well in the field.

Like governments, NGOs have adopted a centralized hierarchal structure that in this case sustains power at the central capital as presented in the aid chains (see section 6.2). The centralization of both government and NGO institutions, means that the monitoring of executions happens at the top level. As explained in Chains A and B the monitoring is done via a set of reports and documents. While this centralization has negative impacts such as bureaucratic procedures, the similarity of the organizational structures and the close locations of the headquarters and ministry implies that the latter has easier connections to the larger NGOs. As explained in Chapter Two by

Lewis (2013), one reason for the cooperation of NGOs and the government was a result of a reciprocated authoritarian regime within each of the institutions.

As stated in Chapter Three, almost 30% of the 57% of Egypt's population living in rurality are considered to be poor (CAPMAS, 2022a). As a consequence of the pride in numbers concept, villagers strive to have many children as possible as a sign of displaying wealth. This leads to continuous population growth which places ever greater pressures on the government. As a result of the same, there are also ever rising calls for interventions, and this has led to hegemony of the discourse as it meets the development plans of the authoritarian state. This has resulted in a shift in efforts to fulfil basic needs rather than focusing on other human rights such as freedom of expression. This was explained by the vice minister of MOSS,

> *You cannot ask a person about the freedom of speech when he doesn't have anything to eat, putting food on the table trumps anything else... I am not an authoritarian but it's a basic need, they are living without a roof. when you go to the villages you will know why they ask for simple things and why the interventions are limited. Vice Minister MOSS-87*

The way in which the decision makers view the needs of the people define how they set the priorities for interventions as explained in Chapter Five.

### *7.2.2 Swift legitimacy gains for the government*

When asked about providers, the beneficiaries usually referred to the intermediary with whom they have had direct contact. However, in the case of *Hayah Kareema*, the responses were not only the intermediaries but also 'Al Sisi', the president. The beneficiaries had seen media advertisements on the TV about the initiative, so they have made the connection. While those advertisements resulted in the beneficiaries comparing between what is shown on the screen and what they received, nonetheless, they still referred to the president and prayed for him that God blesses him. Noting the president as the key provider indicates a build-up of legitimacy for the president.

Choosing to alleviate poverty through an initiative was seen by MOSS's director as a bold move by the president. Rather than waiting for a project to be designed with detailed operative procedures, the decision makers used an initiative with only design aims.

*According to my vision, and how I interpret things since 2014. The president has a vision concerned with dealing with chronic issues in the Egyptian community. And dealing with it sooner not accepting any delays. All the responsibilities problems concerned with chronic issues that have to do with health or poverty or informality and so on. And those fast actions have to be through initiatives we are not going to wait until we collect the money or so we have to work now so we combine all of our efforts towards a specific activity. Previous governments were afraid to deal with this that open. And in poverty, this initiative is targeting poverty and poor villages. This reflects a vision of the decision makers. Using initiatives for poverty and health issues. Hayah Kareema director MOSS -65*

The MOSS *Sakan Kareem* official stated that "those NGOs have been working on this long before the ministry launched the programme". It follows, that the longevity of the discourse presented itself as an opportunity to achieve the ministry's and government's goals. So, the government built on that which was already available as well as ongoing plans.

Legitimacy exists not only at a leadership level but also at the governorate level where other officials also build on the discourse. A special case of Chain C happened when an individual who wished to fund the interventions planned to join the parliament elections and sought to collect as many voices as possible within their governorate. Again, through an intermediary, the person who was entering the elections reached the villagers to buy their votes. In this case interventions with quicker end results are preferred. For example, they would choose legalizing agricultural land to become buildable, implementing connections to the electrical and water grids or as simple as provision of food to families.

### *7.2.3 Quantification of Development Efforts to meet targets.*

Another reason why the discourse is sustained is the feasible quantification of the outcomes. Many countries including Egypt strive to meet the UN SDGs, however, as explained by Horn and Grugel (2018) the goals are interpreted depending on the development priorities of each country at a national level and according to their own specific agendas. How the discourse is helping Egypt achieve the UN SDGs is another reason for its continuity. The *Hayah Kareema* initiative has been recognized by the UN as a best practice program that achieves SDGs together with other local programmes in Egypt. Meeting the UN SDGs was also pointed out by the MOSS vice minister

"The importance of numbers is that you tick the SDGs boxes …… You have international forces, as Egypt, you want to jump from one level to the other".

To portray advancement, governments and other organizations are required to submit numerical achievements; this is not only applied to the UN SDGs, but is a universal limitation which was discussed in Chapter Two. The implementing institutions are especially accountable upwards and need to preview numbers to donors or the government. As the discourse interventions are easily quantifiable, the outputs are attractive to both providers and decision makers, this promotes the likelihood of the discourse continuing. since

As noted in Chapter Six, time limitations restrict the types of interventions, and those restrictions tend to result in funds being directed towards interventions that can be executed in a timely manner. The vice minister of the MOSS said "you are restrained with time, you have to come out with numbers". The importance and power of numbers here outweighs quality concerns. The vice minister of MOSS also reflected on the programmes and explained that besides the time limitations there are donor restrictions "you have very limited time which is the first challenge and then you have donor money and donor conditions". She added that the usual funding donor requirements, from her knowledge of the field, distribute the fund to "10% training and 90% hardware and equipment, they want specific things, and it is very political". The vice minister had a strong view on this. She commented;

> *NGOs are not genuine. it's a business, in my opinion, some of the people who work in the NGOs are genuine but at the end it's not a money business it's a show business. That is what I mean they need to say we did roofs for 100 thousand houses, but he will not say I trained 50 people because training is a process indicator not a result indicator, but roofing is a result indicator and that is what makes a difference in their track record. And this is how they say we did 1 2 3. For example, if thy say we trained 500 blind people to walk with the white stick this is very hard to do an impact evaluation or analysis on it. so politically scientifically and financially it's not very rewarding to do actual development that is the base line. No one will be that honest with you. It's not rewarding politically. Vice Minister-MOSS-87*

### *7.2.4 State budget expenditure*

In the specific case of phases one and two of *Hayah Kareema*, the collaboration between the government and the NGOs to execute the interventions can be explained by reference to the terms of the state budget. The Egyptian state budget is classified into eight 'chapters': wages, purchase of goods and services, interest, 'subsidies, grants and social benefits', other expenditures, purchase of non-financial assets, and acquisition of financial assets and loan repayments (Hassan, 2014). Chapter Four in the Egyptian budget, 'subsidies, grants and social benefits' is designed to target people in need, and it accounts to the highest state expenditure chapter with 28% , while the budget's chapter six 'the purchase of non-financial assets' (i.e. infrastructure) is allocated only 7% (Hassan, 2014). The official said,

> *The budget has several chapters; chapter six is concerned with money that is saved for country assets. Building schools street pavements and so on. They call it projects for investment plan. The money in chapter four the country saves for support that goes to the deserving. Those are people that conform with a set of requirements. The people deserving support. A poor family that is passing through hard times and need support. Hayah Kareema manager MOSS*

Despite the government having the financial resources to reach the intended target groups for infrastructure work in Egyptian budget's chapter four, the mandates of the budget item do not allow working with contractors to carry out said work; for instance, houses and roofs. As a result, the NGOs receive the funding and take the necessary actions on their behalf. The *Hayah Kareema* manager said that either MOSS distributes or spends the budget directly or through the NGOs to deliver to the people. He commented,

> *I cannot give it directly to a contractor, I cannot form a bid and accept bids, and give money to a contractor why? Because working with contractor has to be from chapter six not chapter 4. Chapter 4 has to go to needy people deserving and they sign for the money they took or a link NGO that can deliver to the individuals. Hayah Kareema manager-65*

The government allowed the continuity of the discourse so that it is executed by the NGOs, and the operational details and know-how are available and ongoing. The *Hayah Kareema* executive director at MOSS explained why the government collaborates closely with the NGOs "It's a technical aspect that has to do with the country budget". He went into detail that "most of the work

done by the MOSS comes from chapter four of the budget. The support money comes to the ministry to deliver it to the deserving". He also explained one main issue "The ministry doesn't have the capabilities and human capital to help reach 200,000 deserving in 3 or 4 months". He further noted that this led to using NGOs, "Hence, we collaborate with NGOs as a link. This is because they have the capabilities, the flexibility, the units and the employees and so on". The *Hayah Kareema* manager expanded "We give them some money and sometimes they put a percentage because this is their work. They give the beneficiaries the money or the need. The work through NGOs is in the by-laws. I, as the ministry, would distribute it myself if I can if I have the capabilities".

## 7.3 Standardization of operational practices

Within NGO centralization, the discourse follows an established framework and the aid chains explained in Chapter Six. Those identified processes help to further ground and institutionalize the discourse.

### *7.3.1 An established framework*

Over the years the NGOs have constructed a menu that the funders choose from. According to the MOSS Vice Director in Benisuef, "NGOs here are doing the same things even before the initiative. It is working naturally on its own, NGOs are working on those things all the time". The same idea was explained by the *Sakan Kareem* manager who said "those NGOs have been working on this long before the ministry launched the programme, if you go to the field, you will find Alorman for example had done a lot of houses [….] before *Sakan Kareem* this is their work"

Part of this framework is the informal relationships and networks which are both long-established and mutual. Local NGOs and the local government have deep-rooted interactions that are parallel to the discourse. Those interactions were explained by the director of MOSS when asked about the monthly plan of the directorate. The director of MOSS replied, "We take the plan from Mr Walid [a local NGO manager], I swear, I ask Mr Walid 'what are we going to do this month Mr Walid?', really". This conversation took place in the presence of an NGO manager, Mr Walid. This highlights the informal institutional relationships that exist as she might have been praising his efforts in order to maintain a good relationship for future collaborations and as a means of

acknowledging his efforts. She further explained throughout the interview that she believes in the role of NGOs and that her role as a director of MOSS is to make sure that the NGOs are appreciated for what they do.

In the villages, beneficiaries expressed the trust they had in the fieldworkers and intermediaries. Nadia told me, “Honestly any house is opened for Asmaa and Elham [the fieldworkers], excuse me but if you would have come alone; we would have been astonished and not respond to you. But because we know them, any closed door is opened for them”. This strong relationship and the open communication that exists allows for a smooth execution of interventions; thereby enhancing the efficiency of the process.

The longevity of the discourse has caused each actor to internalize their role within the same. The NGOs have internalized their role of helping the government, with the belief that it keeps a continuous momentum of work. A MeK sector manager put it like this “We divide the work by two, the government and the NGO”. Similarly, an NGO branch manager said, “You are working in a field or an organization with a belief that your role is to continue what the government cannot do”. This institutionalization of the NGO’s position in the aid chains locks in interventions to the extent that, according to a MeK Branch Manager, “an NGO will provide the intervention but will not follow-up, they will be thinking of doing the same service in another needy place”. This implies that these interventions will continue to be provided and will expand to fulfil future demands regardless of the fact that there is a lack of both evaluation and feedback.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter answers the research question How do deeper causal factors (both agential and institutional) sustain the discourse? While the institutionalisation of the aid chains presented in Chapter Six is one reason for the endurance of the discourse, this chapter provided other factors that have caused the continuity and expansion of the same. The research’s conceptual framework is presented in Figure 7-1 draws a simplification of the real-world problem of continuity of an enduring discourse. The diagram presents the researched discourse, the actors within the aid chain, and the institutions in an attempt to illustrate the causal mechanisms that influence the discourse

and are similarly influenced by its endurance. The discourse strikes several wins in more than one area simultaneously. With regards to social including religious, political, and operational levels. The discourse seems to meet the actors' motivations; the beneficiaries' shared needs and norms, the decision makers' directions, and the ease and functionality of delivering aid.

Religiously, the discourse as outlined targets beneficiary categorisations of those in need and are accepted for *zakat* expenditures. It fulfils the intermediaries, volunteers, and government officials' moral and religious codes and assists them in their endeavours for piousness. Religion as an institutional structure is affecting the actors involved and their agency, other institutions, and the discourse practices (see Figure 7-1). At a social level, the discourse provides several rewards for those who are involved, including materialistic, financial and community belonging. Cumulatively, the unchanging perspectives and priorities, the growth in population, and the continuous nature of need, help sustain the discourse. The various actors at different levels of the aid chain are motivated in a conscious and unconscious manner due to the surrounding social mechanisms. On the other hand, the power of individual and collective agency, influences the structures within a complex social setting. Politically, the discourse is safe and agreeable. It matches the state and decision makers' direction; enhancing legitimacy, enabling a boost in UN-SDG levels, and providing a way out for state budget expenditures. The institutionalized discourse stood out as an attractive way to solving funding issues as the nature of large institutions requires documented accountability. The quantifiable nature of interventions fulfils the demand for accountability and the proof needed by the funding bodies. Additionally, aid funding is driven by timed, and quantifiable numbers which are used as measures of success. It follows, that targeting quick interventions and small wins is attractive or makes sense. The programmes seem to have been defined and planned based on several factors including the NGO menu, the UN SDGs, institutional leakage, the statistical needs, and the political decision makers. It seems to work naturally in a way that fulfils the needs of involved stakeholders. The discourse of NGO-led rural development also stood out as a solution by which to immediately attain presidential goals and help cement his legitimacy. Thus, the state uses ongoing, hegemonic processes and procedures.

Finally, at an operational level, the hegemonic discourse produces the needed numerical outcomes in a timely manner. The NGOs have been doing this for a long time, and thus it becomes easier for them to walk the same old road that they already know. In addition, population growth and the continuous need for aid have helped the discourse to withstand surrounding changes and to self-perpetuate overtime. The roles established in the discourse are based on years of on the ground implementation rather than detailed planning, execution, monitoring, and careful evaluation. The discourse continues because it seems to work. The discourse is protected even when it is implementing unevaluated interventions that are not 'developmental' per say. The discourse is also protected because it has become both an accepted way of doing things and the accepted standard for actors and their roles. Operationalisation and know-how – the institutionalization and lock-in of the process - and the embeddedness of the discourse in the minds of various actors at different levels, from the providers to the beneficiaries and villagers, is a further reason for the continuation of the discourse. The work of the NGOs is approved by the state, supported by religious and social institutions, and is additionally celebrated by beneficiaries and institutionalized in the concepts of the discourse by other actors in the chain.

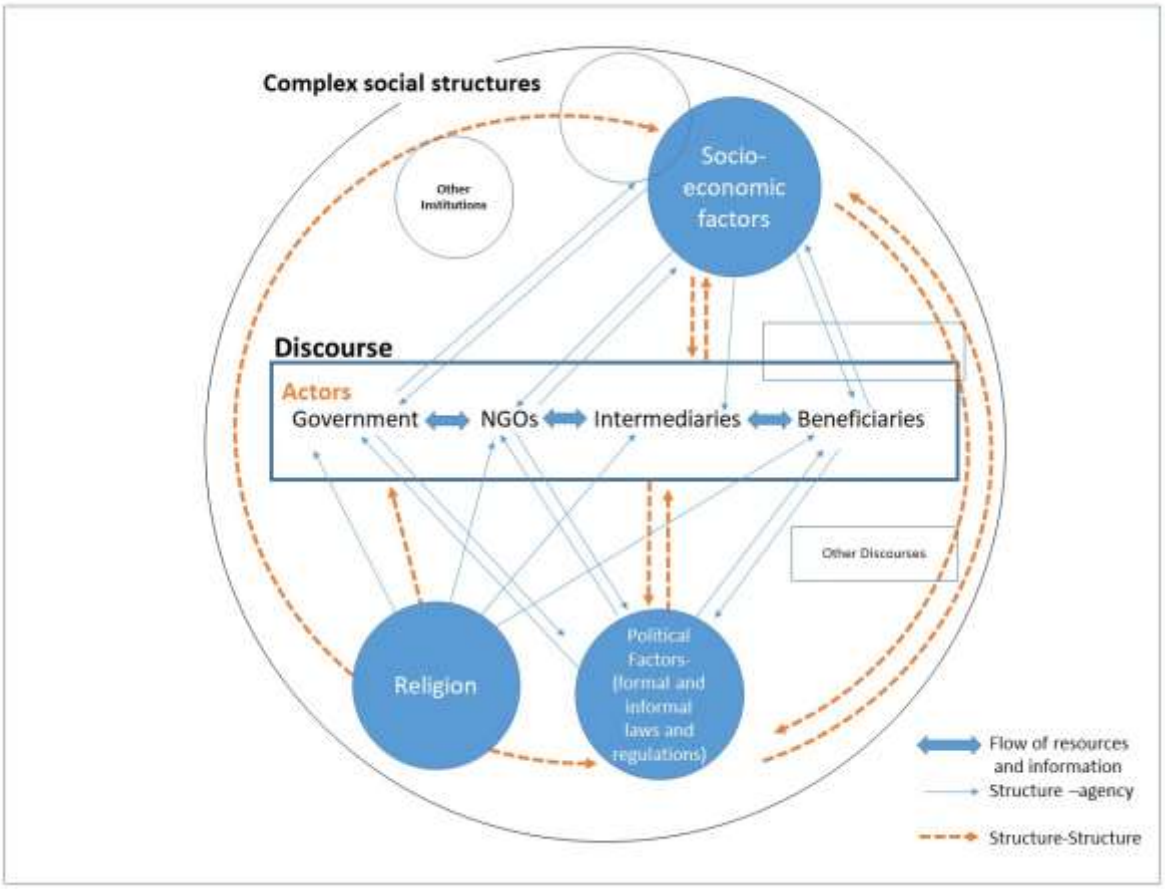



Figure 7-1: Conceptual Framework

# 8 Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The idea for this research was motivated during my volunteering years, by an interest in understanding why NGO-led village development programmes are designed in a specific way despite their repeated failures to achieve poverty alleviation or development. The thesis is guided by the principal research question: How do actors and institutional factors interact to sustain a discourse of NGO-led development in rural Egypt? Through a critical realist approach to structures and agency and using a discursive institutionalist lens, the research was able to account for the causal powers of the various actors and structures that are immersed in the complex development setup.

The CR approach supported the findings of causal powers at different levels and scales. Using the CR's retroductive reasoning I was able to constantly alternate between literature-based research and fieldwork to explore and identify the research themes. This allowed freedom in the fieldwork through which I was able to revise the conceptual framework as necessary. Using a qualitative methodology through studying four different case studies permitted a wider understanding of the various aid chains whist also enabling the identification of the similarities and commonalities of the studied discourse. The research put forward the perspectives of the various actors and build on the concept of aid chains to describe the processes of NGO-led village development both formal and informal. As presented in Chapter Four, using semi-structured interviews allowed fluid open conversations with the various participants which allowed them to express and reflect on the subject. While Egypt and the discourse might seem specific, references to the endurance of a developmental discourse, as well as NGO-government relationships in authoritarian sates, alongside religious and spiritual motivations and institutional structures are typical in other settings. It follows, therefore, that findings from these themes can perhaps be generalised to help comprehend various aspects around the subject of development more widely.

The preceding three chapters presented in-depth discussions of a dominant discourse, its processes, and reasons for its endurance. The following section summarises answers to the research questions

raised in Chapter Four. Thereafter the chapter outlines the contributions of this research, its implications, and further research avenues.

## 8.1 Answering the research questions

### *8.1.1 What ideas, categories and practices constitute the NGO-led village development discourse in Egypt?*

Following Hajer's (1995) definition of discourse, this research identified the ideas, categories, and practices that constitute the discourse under study. NGOs' official advertisements, government officials, fieldworkers, and others adopted the same language when referring to the intended beneficiaries. They used different Arabic terms, meaning 'poor' or 'in need'. This use of language was extrapolated to refer to the rural population in Upper Egypt as it contains a greater percentage of the poor than the rest of Egypt, and the expression '*al-akthar ehteyagan'* (الأكثر أحتياجا, the most in need) was coined. This was further extended to classify those people who are not only poor but also deserving, conceptualized by cultural and religious influences to represent specific categories of people deserving of *zakat*.

The visions and missions of the providers whether NGOs or government programmes use the same language and concepts to identify intended beneficiaries as 'in need' and main aims of a 'dignified life'. This is shown through governmental initiatives such as *Sakan Kareem* and *Hayah Kareema* which both contain the word 'dignified' in their names. Despite each of the organizations and initiatives having their own defined criteria for eligible beneficiaries, the most common categorization of beneficiaries is influenced by religion and specifically the categories deserving of *zakat*. Those categorisations typically include orphans, widows, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled. Specific aspects of perceived rural needs, and in particular the emphasis on a need for houses as well as other material improvements direct the interventions more than concepts and concerns such as education, and alternative livelihoods.

No single origination point for comprehensive village development discourse in Egypt was identified by the participants or the literature, but there were processes noted by this study that have been in existence since at least 1995. There is a distinct idea of development that has been agreed upon by the providers to enable them to achieve what they believe is comprehensive village development. This has been achieved by a specific set of interventions that do not change and reinforce the idea of a hegemonic discourse with specific interventions from the NGO menu: a set of interventions which range from hospitals and orphanages to in-kind handouts, monthly pay-outs, and providing for street children.

The NGOs advertised very vague and ambitious visions for the NGO-led village development programmes however, there were no specific KPIs. Despite the ambitious visions of a dignified life for the poor and the enhancement of human development, the interventions advertised for the discourse were limited to include physical interventions such as housing and infrastructure, in-kind goods, bridal essentials and seasonal handouts. They also included renovating service buildings such as schools and health care units. Delivering Healthcare, providing surgeries and organizing medical convoys are also all part of the discourse practices. The advertised interventions also included providing awareness sessions and financing small projects. The research showed discrepancies between what reached the beneficiaries at the hamlet level and what was intended by the programmes, with some interventions being implemented at the mother village level such as service buildings and sewerage network connections. Interventions related to training and the enhancement of education and human development were not identified by people at the hamlet level and they may not have been provided.

The realised discourse interventions tackled some rural problems but avoided others. The discourse as practiced focuses on houses, amongst other infrastructure interventions, and helping with bridal essentials. Despite that, daily wage jobs are the most typical job category amongst poorer villagers, and the difficulties that come with an unstable income were raised numerous times during the interviews undertaken by this study within the villages. Only a few of the programmes incorporated projects to provide stable sources of income. There was also a mismatch with respect to health interventions. The beneficiaries expressed healthcare related concerns with regard to

availability of personnel. Despite this, the provided medical interventions consisted of health care unit service building renovation, and medical convoys and surgeries rather than empowering medical personnel.

Despite the diversity that exists within rural Egypt, this study found that NGOs do not tailor development plans but rather pull together development proposals from previous experiences in a collage like process (Whaley, 2018). This results in normalized aid interventions being delivered to different communities and contexts (Tembo, 2003; Risal, 2014). This finding is agreement with that of Li (2007) who noticed that the focus becomes one of providing a technical solution rather than innovating solutions for complex problems.

### *8.1.2 How do individual and organisational actors work within institutional frameworks to put the discourse into practice?*

#### a. Who are the actors involved and how are they organised in aid chains?

The research identified three different aid chains. The actors involved are NGOs, the government, donors, volunteers, alongside two common actors who appear across all three aid chains; the beneficiaries and intermediaries. The intermediaries are villagers who are not recipients of interventions and act as focal points between the NGOs and the volunteers, and the beneficiaries. They assist in the identification of the beneficiaries deserving of interventions and in some cases in the delivery of interventions. In a few cases of volunteer centred aid chains, the intermediaries also initiate contacts with volunteers about proposed interventions for selected beneficiaries. In both government and NGO led chains the government plays the role of the auditor through MOSS and local governments. In government led chains, the government also assumes the role of donor as they rely on NGOs to be the executioners while funding 80% of the interventions. The government signs protocols with large national NGOs and, in a few cases, corporate donors are included to specify the locations and quantities of interventions. Corporate donors are usually involved in government and NGO led chains, and they either donate to a specific cause, or as

advertised by the NGOs. In some cases, donors approach NGOs or volunteers to perform specific interventions for a specific category of beneficiaries or a specific location. The beneficiaries are the recipients of interventions, and they are requested to provide documentation to demonstrate that they are eligible for the interventions.

**b. How do resources and information flow through aid chains?**

As explained in Chapter Six, the aid chains present a flow of resources and information. The aid formalised chains involve a series of information transfers from the top management levels of the NGOs to fieldworkers. Then, a field survey takes place involving NGO fieldworkers and the intermediaries which may include information transfer from the intermediaries to the fieldworkers in the form of opinions or a list of potential beneficiaries. Once field surveys are completed another flow of information takes place in which the proposed beneficiaries compile the qualifying documents, sometimes with the help of a fieldworker or intermediary. In government led chain the given NGOs' top-level management seek government approval after sharing the lists and the documents. Once approval is received, the funds are released, the interventions are implemented on the ground. The final flow of information in this case is field evaluations and signed confirmation by the beneficiaries that the work has been completed. In the volunteer centred chain, the volunteers embody the roles of NGO top level management and NGO fieldworkers in both the field surveys and when it comes to communications with donors. MOSS audits NGOs in in formalised chains by monitoring the funds received versus the interventions provided and they cross check the beneficiaries' documents and signed confirmations. The beneficiaries display their gratitude and appreciation with the provided interventions.

**c. What are the formal and informal rules that govern the implementation of the discourse?**

Guiding the clearly stated flow of information and resources, are both formal and informal rules that govern the discourse at each level. The formal rules are manifested in terms of all aid chains and perform some form of due diligence before providing the interventions represented in the field

surveys. The NGO fieldworkers are trained to evaluate the surveyed families to finalise choices of beneficiaries. Exclusion criteria are based on any uncommon display of wealth within the village. Another agreed upon rule is collecting evidence for the completion of interventions in the form of formal documents in in NGO and government led chains, and via pictures and videos volunteer centred chains. According to the power of the donor (organization or government), the NGO-organization relationship changes from partnership to a contractual relation which affects the moral goals and NGOs' initial objectives. When NGOs become more involved in large scale service provision projects their flexibility and innovation are affected by their own institutional bureaucracy. In between the rigid hierarchies within the aid chains the informal practices still, however, find their ways. It was observed that the closer the actors are to the delivery stage (across all levels of the aid chains) the more likely it is that informal practices and means of communications will take place to speed up the process and bypass any bureaucratic procedures. Within this study, informal practices and arrangements were demonstrated between government and NGOs, intermediaries and volunteers, and local governments, and there were also interactor categories between different intermediaries and within the same village across all of the different chains.

Motivated by various structures, individuals and organisations accept and utilise informal arrangements. For example, NGOs ensure ongoing communication and partnerships with the government to in order to secure an accepted position and ensure a smooth flow of acquiring permits and clearances. Government officials also made informal decisions to support fund the NGOs whenever the latter were short of funds and even before the completion of the agreed upon interventions. Officials also informally coordinated with NGOs for the benefit of ineligible but deserving cases. At the village level different intermediaries, volunteers, and fieldworkers of different NGOs coordinated informally to better serve beneficiaries.

Informal communication at a village level happens between the different NGOs working in the same area on the ground. In villages with multiple intermediaries, they coordinate with each other and share their beneficiaries lists whenever possible and especially when there are overlapping

interventions. Similar to the intermediaries, the volunteers come up with ways to solve issues that are beyond their own individual capabilities through informal connections.

Intermediaries are able to define and contextualize the beneficiaries in terms of the categorization needed to receive the (given) intervention. This can even be extended to beneficiaries themselves whereby they are able to identify themselves as 'poor' and 'deserving'. In some cases, the beneficiaries themselves informally help the intermediaries to find people in need. The villagers gave positive testimonies about the intermediaries when they were beneficiaries and they criticized them and accused them of being fraudulent or corrupt when this was not the case.

To my surprise, evaluation in the volunteer centred chain, like the other aid chains, was mostly based on measurable outputs. Even though the volunteers attempted to customize additional interventions based on the needs of the beneficiaries to include awareness and sports for example, yet those trials were not maintained, and the volunteers tend to go back to the set practices. It was noticed that the feedback of fieldworkers and intermediaries was captured on an informal basis and that their voices were, with regard to the feedback rarely heard. This was especially the case in instances in which the NGO's requirements did not match the reality.

#### *8.1.3 How do deeper causal factors (both agential and institutional) sustain the discourse?*

This research provided a review of the deeper institutional and causal factors that have sustained the discourse. The research focused on social structures, religion and individual motivations, political factors, and operational practices. Religion was found to be a central aspect of the discourse's endurance. Along the aid chain individuals and organizations were motivated by religion. *Zakat* alms were a major motive for donors, and especially interventions that were accepted by Islamic law. *Zakat* acknowledged and influenced the accepted categorisations of beneficiaries. In many instances, *zakat* also encouraged businessmen to set up NGOs through which they could disseminate their giving. However, *zakat* was not the only type of giving, volunteers and fieldworkers were motivated by giving time and effort to help the less privileged as this made them closer to God. Their motivations were based on Islamic teachings and expected rewards in this life and the hereafter. Religious motivations break through bureaucratic and

hierarchical procedures and encourage cooperation between actors. They also help intermediaries to stay motivated and disregard any negative comments from villagers.

Despite all stakeholders appearing pious, there are some underlying issues with regard to how some actors view themselves with reference to religion. Religious influence, however, also had negative impacts regarding how it helps to sustain the discourse. For example, some intermediaries get a sense of entitlement, and believe that they are God's chosen ones on the ground to carry out this work. This sense of entitlement was demonstrated in the condescending tone of some intermediaries towards any villager who held an opposing view to their own. A complementary negative impact is the religious gratitude attitude of beneficiaries, which prevents them from raising any issues that they have faced in the intervention so as to avoid being misread as being ungrateful to God, intermediaries, or the providers. It even inhibits constructive criticism.

Social motivations also contributed to the initiation and continuation of the discourse. Those motivations include the overlap which exists between beneficiaries' priorities and the provided interventions, financial rewards, social recognition, sense of belonging, and enhanced self-esteem. I began this study thinking that there would be huge discrepancies between the perspectives of beneficiaries and the providers. However, and to my surprise, the provided interventions were at the top of the beneficiaries' priorities. All actors seem to have internalized the importance of providing a house and bridal essential. Nonetheless, it is possible that villagers only consider needs that are within the practices of the discourse, and there is also evidence through stories told by intermediaries, that beneficiaries will accept something instead of nothing, and then sell the components of an intervention to buy or build something they need. Social motivations including social status and capital, self-esteem, power, political connections, and financial gain are amongst those that motivate intermediaries, and donors in some cases within Chain C. Several actors in the aid chain specified that they got a feeling of self-fulfilment from being directly involved with beneficiaries. Several actors in the aid chain explained that a simple smile which filled their hearts was a reason why they were motivated to continue. Volunteers were inspired by a sense of belonging to a like-minded community and this is what, in addition to religious motivations,

sustained their involvement in the aid chain, other volunteers stated that providing sustainable incomes for beneficiary families was what drove their continued involvement.

As presented in Chapter Three, Egypt is a centralized authoritarian state. Within this ruling there are several political factors that act to protect the discourse such as; adhering to the state direction, producing targets and quantifiable outcomes, providing a way out of funding, and enhancing legitimacy. When NGO projects are in-line with the authoritarian state's visions, the projects continue, and they provide services or products that are complementary to the state's plans. This also ensures the existence of cooperative NGO-government relationship which results in speeding up the process for projects by overcoming any governmental bureaucratic difficulties. Another political reason for the sustainability of the discourse is the ability to quantify outcomes and achieve them in a timely manner. Egypt, amongst many other countries, strives to meet the UN SDGs as explained by Horn and Grugel (2018). The discourse helping Egypt achieve these goals is another reason for its continuity. The discourse allows the government to use the welfare related share of the budget for infrastructure projects with NGOs acting as implementers since this budget item does not allow the hiring contractors. This may, therefore, be another reason for the discourse's continuity.

From the fieldwork it was also found that beneficiaries were not interested in who the donors or providers were. They were more focused on their relationship with the intermediary and/or the fieldworkers as they are the ones they referred to. The only time another person's name was mentioned was ElSisi the president; respondents had seen him on some media advertisements about an initiative. According to the villagers, they are on the president's mind despite his full agenda and this contributes to building-up the legitimacy of the president. The legitimacy is not only at a leadership level but also at the governorate level. All these political reasons made me question whether the discourse has become institutionalized due to the needs of the villagers or whether it is because the visons of decision makers and national goals align with the discourse.

Finally, the discourse is well-established and works organically with NGOs having operated this framework for a long time through existing informal relationships between themselves and the government. The strong NGO-Government relationship and open communication enables a

smooth execution of interventions. This ease results in an efficient process. Due to the longevity of the discourse, each actor has internalized their role. The actors take it for granted that interventions will continue to be provided and overlook the lack of evaluation and feedback. In the absence of evaluation, change is simply absent. The reliance on national NGO-government protocols limits governmental collaboration to large national NGOs only. This results in the former dismissing opportunities to cooperate with smaller specialized NGOs that are local to the governorates and, as a result, the process loses local expertise.

From this it can be concluded that the discourse is protected for both right and wrong reasons. Right reasons cover firstly, that the discourse interventions are in part aligned with the needs of the intended beneficiaries. Secondly, that the discourse builds on already available mechanisms, and aid chains to reach the poor. Thirdly, because it talks back to religious structures in identifying the beneficiaries and in building on motivations of benevolence to help and support communities.

Nonetheless wrong reasons for the protection of the discourse include, firstly, prioritization of instant impact that could cause legitimacy over, long term less quantifiable interventions such as human and economic development. Secondly, lack of feedback and evaluation which have eliminated a completion of a full cycle of reflection for effective improvement. Thirdly, internalization of roles of actors who believe in their roles and continue despite the lack of feedback. Despite the contradiction, the discourse continues for both wrong and right reasons.

***Finally, addressing the overall aim: how do actors and institutional factors interact to sustain a discourse of NGO-led development in rural Egypt?*** The development of an institutionalised and easy to replicate discourse ideas, categories and set of interventions that are chosen from an NGO menu form the basis of the idea of what 'development' means. Actors involved in the development aid chains all agree about the idea and categories of who should benefit from it. This agreement is underpinned by aspects of Islam that are evidenced in the ideas of deserving and beneficiary categorisations, and the acceptance of a specific charitable benefit giving, as opposed to empowerment. This wide acceptance reinforces the exclusion of international participation discourses. The agreement about the discourse is backed up by the authoritarian nature of the state, which excludes NGO activity that is not aligned with government interests. Further reinforcement

is presented through the very practical coming together of government and National NGOs, in which the NGOs' interests in working with a funder like the government to enhance their legitimacy, and the government achieves and celebrates tangible, visible improvements in people's lives to enhance its legitimacy. The aid chains are quite effective at delivering the decided interventions and are set in norms and mechanisms about how to do things (quantitative outputs etc). Despite the dysfunctional issues of the aid chains that include lack of coordination, over-bureaucratisation and so on, the common orientation of all those involved (to do good for the deserving poor through charitable deeds and giving) patches up the problems by motivating informal communication and coordination (again with a religious undertone.). All of this takes place in a society which has some powerful structures – an authoritarian state, a rooted religion, and a deep bureaucracy.

## 8.2 Research contributions

This study makes a number of original contributions to various aspects; theoretical, empirical and practice based. **Theoretically,** the research adds to the existent knowledge about discourses as a concept, discursive institutionalism, in addition to the role of religion in development. The research provides a detailed example of the more comprehensive definition of discourse, aligned with Hajer, Hajer and Versteeg and Dryzek and Niemeyer (1995; 2005; 2008) presenting the ideas, categories and practices and moving beyond just text to include physical and non-physical aspects. More importantly the research presents a version of discursive institutionalism by presenting an empirical case study in which both institutions and discourses are affected by each other and by the actors working within them in a two-way relation, supporting the DI version presented by Arts and Buizer (2009). This is in contrast with the majority of DI theories which consider only the institutionalization of discourses, as a one-way process. In contrast this research follows Arts and Buizer with its underpinning by CR philosophy, in which both structures and agents hold causal powers, and discourses and institutions impact each other. It thus enriches Schmidt's (2008) better-known DI with its emphasis on a one-directional causal relationship in which discourse impacts institutions.

In the case of NGO-led village development in Egypt, the discourse is shaped by the surrounding institutions and involved actors' motivations. The discourse becomes hegemonic over time and, in turn, affects the institutions with regard to how development is envisioned and practiced, and similar to Pecurul-Botines' (2014) conceptualisation of DI within CR, institutions affect the formation and continuation of discourses. Confirming with CR the research accounted for the duality of structures and agents, while explaining the relation between discourses and institutions as structures, the research also shed light on the agents through drawing attention to the bricoleur's agential power. Agents' abilities are affected by surrounding structures, which in turn affects the processes in which they are involved (Cleaver, 2002).

The research sheds light not only on the practical motivations but also the importance of factoring for the spiritual or religious motivations especially in the development field, as a contribution to the midrange development theory. Adding to Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) who explain that invisible aspects of the world should be taken as seriously as the materialistic motivations with which they are intertwined, the research showed that religion influenced the discourses, the institutions and the agents at different levels. Because of the nature of generalisation within a CR study, there is a blurring of the distinction between empirical generalisation and new theorising about causal mechanisms resulting in contributions on different levels theory, midlevel theory and empirical. The research makes a contribution to the importance of religion in many contexts. Generally, the research adds to existent understanding of the role of religion and spirituality as a main player in development. Religion is sometimes dismissed in development literature despite the fact that it can be one of the institutional structures that helps to shape development visions. Specifically, the role of religion in development in Islamic countries. The religious institutional mechanisms such as *zakat* that direct donation and spending, and the religious motivations for volunteering and providing charity can be noted and generalised in Islamic countries that are both authoritarian and centralised – this includes a number of Middle Eastern and North African countries. The effects of Islam on the individual motivations of actors at various levels of the aid chain have been noted and can be generalised.

**Empirically,** the research contributes to the understanding of NGO-government relations, the role of intermediaries in aid chains especially in Islamic countries and the effect of religion on various agents' motivations and drives within aid chains. The research provides further understanding of the nature of NGO-state relationships in a centralized and authoritarian state with special reference to countries in the Middle East. The research highlights the special relationship which exists between NGOs and the government in a context that accepts organizational pluralism in an asymmetrical system of governance. This empirical work supports Najam's (2000) theory that collaboration takes place when both have a common means and goal. The research findings note that the NGO-government cooperation relationship becomes more formally established in cases when the NGOs offer welfare and are better connected to the poor population, thus they serve as a partner to the state. In this case the NGOs and the government collaborated in prioritizing and aiming at providing basic needs rather than human and social development. The research however does not comply with the work of Edwards and Hulme (1996) as being critical of a close government-NGO relationships, on the grounds of the difficulties that arise with government-funded NGOs relating to issues of autonomy and accountability to communities. While their explanation is that governmental funding can negatively affect accountability, performance, and legitimacy, and weaken NGO independence, and shift away from downwards accountability in this case both organizations had similar ends and similar processes. The findings are in line, though, with the work of Lewis (2013) who gave reasons for government-NGO collaboration in authoritarian states in other areas of the world beyond the Middle East. The similarity is in the criteria he sets including, first that the authoritarian state is able to control and regulate NGOs. Second that the NGOs reciprocate the same authoritarian regime in their own organizations as seen in the strong hierarchies in the large capital-based NGOs in Egypt. Finally, that NGOs perform interventions that coincide with the government's goals.

The research provides insights with regards to exploring aid chains especially within an Islamic country. Generally, the research contributes to the work there is on the role on the intermediaries (Swidler and Watkins, 2017, p.2) not only as "brokers as guides, fixers, and cultural translators" but as integral actors with causal powers within an aid chain. The study also contributes to the literature on 'aid chains' and the ways in which development discourses become institutionalised

on the ground. Although the aid chains are usually theorised as northern-southern in this case the aid chain is urban-rural. The role of intermediaries and the informal mechanisms are characteristic features of the aid chain in such contexts. In addition, donor domination and the power to direct comes generally from the funding institutions. Finally, the beneficiaries' minimal role and feedback in such top-down aid chains that are predominantly designed to help the beneficiaries. The research accepts Corbridge's (2007) highlight of the dependence of movement of resources on who you know rather than the knowledge you have but adds that it is not only who you know but also the institutional and agential agendas of those people. The specifics of researching aid chains in Islamic country have concluded that actors involved in providing interventions are motivated by the idea of pleasing God and achieving reward in this word and the hereafter. They view themselves as having been chosen to do their jobs and are of the opinion that they must, therefore, excel in the same. this positionality affects their ability to self-reflect in many cases. The beneficiaries on the other hand are motivated by Islamic beliefs to accept their position, though in a struggle between being content and voicing concerns they sometimes inhibit themselves from voicing their concerns. Neither providers nor beneficiaries are solely motivated by religion. They are also motivated by surrounding structures.

**Practice-based** contributions are mainly with regards to conducting research and drawing finings in Egypt a contested country with limited research. In general, there appears to be a gap in research about the development in the Middle East and North Africa and middle-income countries for several reasons including that fact that they are lower-middle rather than low-income countries, also because of the political and security difficulties in doing development research in such authoritarian counties. Ismail states that there is limited literature about the current authoritarian state in Egypt and explains that there is minimal literature about Egypt for the difficulty of conducting research in Egypt (Ismail, 2019). Thus, the originality of this research lies in its adding to existent literature about rural development in Egypt through identifying and explaining a hegemonic discourse of rural development and unfolding its' processes, actors, and institutional setting. The methodology of exploring this through NGO case studies contributes to broader knowledge about how development discourses work, whilst the findings may also resonate with other highly authoritarian contexts.

## 8.3 Research implications and future research avenues

The findings and practical implications of the study denote that the research might be beneficial to several actors and organizations. A typical perception of aid chains only involves NGOs, governments, donors, and beneficiaries. However, intermediaries are also an integral part of all aid chains. The intermediaries are the one of the key findings of this research. NGOs and government actors within chains can refer to the research to enhance communication and information flows through acknowledging the role of intermediaries and encouraging a feedback cycle that would include all involved actors. Decision makers can use the research as a guide by which to bring new perspectives regarding rural village development, in addition to identifying gaps in interventions and processes of the current discourse. Cumulatively, such aspects could contribute to better planned interventions in the future. The research might also be of significance to funders when it comes to encouraging possible diversification. This is especially important given that beneficiaries seem to be responsive to other types of interventions whenever they are provided. There is a lot of charity and development work being done by or through the NGOs, and yet there is a lack of systematic public data keeping and sharing. Having identified this oversight, this research could help accelerate MOSS's processes of automation and thereby help to empower better resource allocation of both local and international aid funds.

Through its in-depth qualitative approach, this research has uncovered the nature of the discourse and also explained its' endurance. Building upon this study's approach and findings, further research could reflect on the holistic comprehensive plans of additional factors of human development and livelihood. In addition, and to provide further insights, ethnographic research could be undertaken on various scales including mother villages and hamlets and study the day-to-day reflections of the people and the inter relationships that exist within the aid chains. Such an approach might possibly further highlight the roles of local governments in the same. Research into other types of NGO types, and perhaps also other places, would also be useful in validating the extent to which the findings herein presented are generalisable and adaptable to other contexts. A study focused on intermediaries with a larger and a more diversified sample would also provide

further insights on their importance and the extended roles that they may play in various aid chains that provide different interventions. Since religion plays an inevitable role in shaping and sustaining the discourse of rural development in Egypt, it would also be worthwhile to research the role of religion in other types of NGO in Egypt and other countries, especially those located in the Middle East and North Africa. More broadly, the research might also act as a possible starting point for further reflections and discussions upon research and achieving effective development in the context of religious and authoritarian state structures which in some ways limit actions and intellect, but where religion also offers powerful positive resources for motivating improvements in people's lives.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

*NGO interventions, The 'menu'*

| | | | Alorman | Resala | Egyptian food bank | Misr Elkheir | LMF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Founded | | | 1993 | 2000 | 2006 | 2007 | 2011 |
| Activities | Direct Aid | Food bags | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | Meat | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | blankets | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | Clothes | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Medical | Surgeries | 1 | | | 1 | |
| | | hospitality | 1 | | | | |
| | | Awareness sessions | | 1 | | 1 | |
| | | Medication | | | 1 | | |
| | | Medical convoys | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | Prosthetic limbs | 1 | | | | |
| | | Hospitals | 1 | | | 1 | |
| | Education | Trainings | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | literacy | | 1 | 1 | | |
| | | Innovation | | | | 1 | |
| | | Education | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | Physical Interventions | Roofs | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | Houses | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | Recycling | | 1 | | | |
| | | Planting trees | | 1 | | | |
| | | Electricity meter installation | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | water meter instalment | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | water purification plants | 1 | | | | |
| | | Orphanages | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | | Orphan marriage | 1 | 1 | | | |
| | Micro finance | cattle | 1 | | | | |
| | | job vacancies | | | 1 | | |
| | | Kiosk | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| | | project finance | 1 | | | | |
| | | tricycle | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| | | Assist the wayfarer | | | | 1 | |
| | | Dept Redemption | 1 | | | 1 | |
| | | Anti-Drug campaigns | | | | | 1 |

## Appendix B

*List of Participants*

| No | Final Code | Pseudonym | Occupation | Affiliation | Location | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | BEN-BH-BNS-F-14 | Sayeda | Beneficiary | BH | Benisuef | F |
| 2 | BEN-BH-FYM-M-14 | Ismail | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | M |
| 3 | BEN-BH-FYM-M-4 | Gamal | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | M |
| 4 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-1 | Aida | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 5 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-10 | Sawsan | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 6 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-11 | Reham | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 7 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-2 | Om Mariam | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 8 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-4 | Om Omar | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 9 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-5 | Om Sayed | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 10 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-6 | Mervat | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 11 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-8 | Zenat | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 12 | BEN-BH-FYM-F-3 | Zaynahom | Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 13 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-1 | Om Adel | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 14 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-14 | Karima | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 15 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-5 | Salem | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 16 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-6 | Abo Ayman | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 17 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-7 | Abo Menem | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 18 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-3 | Om Metwali | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 19 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-4 | Om Adham | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 20 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-8 | Mostafa | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 21 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-5 | Nelly | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 22 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-6 | Lawahez | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 23 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-7 | Om Mostafa | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 24 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-8 | Mariam | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 25 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-9 | Aisha | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 26 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-9 | Sheikh Metaal | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 27 | BEN-LMF-SHG-M-11 | Mahmoud | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | M |
| 28 | BEN-LMF-SHG-F-2 | Om Tawfeek | Beneficiary | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 29 | BEN-O-BNS-F-15 | Fawzeyaa | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 30 | BEN-O-BNS-M-2 | Gomaa | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | M |
| 31 | BEN-O-BNS-F-1 | Nehmedou | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 32 | BEN-O-BNS-F-2 | Fayza | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 33 | BEN-O-BNS-F-3 | Zeinab | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 34 | BEN-O-BNS-F-4 | Om Shehata | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 35 | BEN-O-BNS-F-5 | Hanan | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 36 | BEN-O-BNS-F-6 | Safiya | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 37 | BEN-O-BNS-F-7 | Om Bakr | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 38 | BEN-O-BNS-F-8 | Moushira | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 39 | BEN-O-BNS-F-10 | Om Madiha | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 40 | BEN-O-BNS-F-11 | Hanan | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 41 | BEN-O-BNS-F-12 | Shokreya | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 42 | BEN-O-BNS-F-13 | Om Ahmed | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 43 | BEN-O-BNS-F-14 | Manal | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 44 | BEN-O-BNS-M-1 | Magdy | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | M |
| 45 | BEN-O-BNS-M-3 | Mohamed | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | M |
| 46 | BEN-O-BNS-F-16 | Noha | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 47 | BEN-O-BNS-F-17 | Om Mohamed | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 48 | BEN-O-BNS-F-18 | Om Kareem | Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 49 | BEN-O-FYM-F-1 | Om Ayman | Beneficiary | O | Fayoum | F |
| 50 | BEN-O-FYM-F-2 | Om Kareem | Beneficiary | O | Fayoum | F |
| 51 | FW-MeK-MN-M-1 | Fieldworker MeK | Fieldworker | MeK | Alminya | M |
| 52 | FW-MeK-MN-M-2 | Fieldworker MeK | Fieldworker | MeK | Alminya | M |
| 53 | FW-O-FYM-M-1 | Hatem | Fieldworker | O | Fayoum | M |
| 54 | GOV_DIR-MOSS-BNS-F-1 | Government Director MOSS | Government Director | MOSS | Benisuef | F |
| 55 | GOV_EMP-CAPMAS-CAI-F-1 | Government Employee CAPMAS | Government Employee | CAPMAS | Cairo | F |
| 56 | GOV_EMP-CAPMAS-CAI-M-2 | Government Employee CAPMAS | Government Employee | CAPMAS | Cairo | M |
| 57 | INT-BH-BNS-M-1 | Badawy | Intermediary | BH | Benisuef | M |
| 58 | INT-BH-BNS-M-2 | Abo Mohamed | Intermediary | Resala | Benisuef | M |
| 59 | INT-BH-FYM-M-1 | Am Abdallah | Intermediary | BH | Fayoum | M |
| 60 | INT-BH-FYM-M-2 | Am Gomaa | Intermediary | BH | Fayoum | M |
| 61 | INT-BH-FYM-M-4 | Abo Youssef | Intermediary | BH | Fayoum | M |
| 62 | INT-LMF-FYM-M-3 | Sheikh Aly | Intermediary | LMF | Fayoum | M |
| 63 | INT-O-BNS-M-3 | Sheikh Sayed | Intermediary | O | Benisuef | M |
| 64 | EXC_MNG-MOSS-CAI-F-1 | Executive Manager MOSS | SK Executive Manager | MOSS | Cairo | F |
| 65 | MNG-HK-CAI-M-1 | MOSS Manager HK | HK Manager | MOSS | Cairo | M |
| 66 | VICE_DIR-MOSS-BNS-F-1 | Vice Director MOSS | MOSS Vice Director | MOSS | Benisuef | F |
| 67 | EMP-MeK-CAI-M-1 | Employee MeK | NGO Employee | MeK | Cairo | M |
| 68 | NGO_MNG-MeK-CAI-M-1 | Manager MeK | NGO Manager | MeK | Cairo | M |
| 69 | NGO_PM-BH-CAI-M-1 | NGO Project Manager BH | NGO Project Manager | BH | Cairo | M |
| 70 | NGO_BrM-MeK-MN-F-1 | NGO Branch Manager MeK | NGO-Branch manager | MeK | Alminya | F |
| 71 | NBN-BH-FYM-F-14 | Om Gamal | Non-Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 72 | NBN-NA-MN-M-1 | Fawzy | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Alminya | M |
| 73 | NBN-NA-MN-M-2 | Abdelnasser | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Alminya | M |
| 74 | NBN-NA-MN-F-3 | Non-Beneficiary Nurse | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Alminya | F |
| 75 | NBN-NA-MN-M-4 | Mohamed | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Alminya | M |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 76 | NBN-NA-MN-M-5 | Fathi | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Alminya | M |
| 77 | NBN-NA-BNS-F-1 | Mofida | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Benisuef | F |
| 78 | NBN-NA-FYM-M-1 | Hosni | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Fayoum | M |
| 79 | NBN-NA-SHG-F-10 | Nurse Soaad | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Sohag | F |
| 80 | NBN-NA-SHG-M-12 | Ayman | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Sohag | M |
| 81 | NBN-NA-SHG-M-15 | Abo Rabee | Non-Beneficiary | NA | Sohag | M |
| 82 | NBN-O-BNS-F-9 | Mona | Non-Beneficiary | O | Benisuef | F |
| 83 | NBN-BH-FYM-F-12 | Kawthar | Non-Beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 84 | NBN-BH-FYM-F-7 | Sara | Non beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 85 | NBN-BH-FYM-F-9 | Zakeya | Non beneficiary | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 86 | VICE_GOV-Loc_Gov-BNS-M-1 | Vice Governor | Vice Governor | Local Government | Benisuef | M |
| 87 | VICE_MIN-MOSS-CAI-F-1 | Vice Minister MOSS | Vice Minister | MOSS | Cairo | F |
| 88 | VLNF-BH-CAI-F-1 | Farah | Volunteer | BH | Cairo | F |
| 89 | VLNF-BH-FYM-F-1 | Yasmine | Volunteer | BH | Fayoum | F |
| 90 | VLNF-LMF-SHG-F-1 | Rahma | Volunteer/fieldworker | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 91 | VLNF-LMF-SHG-F-2 | Asmaa | Volunteer/fieldworker | LMF | Sohag | F |
| 92 | VLNF-LMF-SHG-F-3 | Elham | Volunteer/fieldworker | LMF | Sohag | F |
| **Additional Interviews** | | | | | | |
| 93 | CEO-Out_Egy-CAI-F-1 | CEO 1 | CEO | NGO | Cairo | F |
| 94 | CEO-Out_Egy-CAI-F-2 | CEO 2 | CEO | NGO | Cairo | F |
| 95 | F_CNSTR-O-FYM-M-1 | Field Construction Coordinator 1 | Field Construction Coordinator | O | Fayoum | M |
| 96 | F_CNSTR-O-FYM-M-2 | Field Construction Coordinator 2 | Field Construction Coordinator | O | Fayoum | M |
| 97 | FW-MeK-MN-F-1 | Fieldworker MeK | Fieldworker | MeK | Alminya | F |
| 98 | FW-MeK-MN-F-2 | Fieldworker MeK | Fieldworker | MeK | Alminya | F |
| 99 | EMP-MOSS-CAI-M-1 | Employee MOSS 1 | MOSS Employee | MOSS | Cairo | M |
| 99 | EMP-MOSS-CAI-M-2 | Employee MOSS 2 | MOSS Employee | MOSS | Cairo | M |
| 100 | NGO_MNG-NBNS-BNS-M-1 | NGO Manager NBNS 1 | NGO Manager | NBNS | Benisuef | M |
| 101 | NGO_MNG-NBNS-BNS-M-2 | NGO Manager NBNS 2 | NGO Manager | NBNS | Benisuef | M |
| 102 | NGO_MNG-Rot_Egy-CAI-F-1 | NGO Manager - Rotary | NGO Manager | Rotary Egypt | Cairo | F |
| 103 | PLN_PRF-GIZ-CAI-M-1 | GIZ Planning Professional | Planning Professional | GIZ | Cairo | M |

## Appendix C

# Participant Information Sheets

### NGO-led village development in Egypt: Intentions and Interventions

This is a request to participate in a PhD research project. Please take your time to read the following information about the project carefully, discuss it and ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Then take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.
Thank you for reading this;

This research is a requirement to complete a PhD at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the University of Sheffield, England. The study aims to understand the effect of an NGO-led village development programme in Egypt. This will be accomplished by comprehending its various processes, actors, interventions and its effect on the intended beneficiaries. This PhD research project is funded by the Newton Mosharafa fund, a science and innovation partnership between the UK and Egypt.

To accomplish the aim of the study, residents of villages that have been developed through an NGO, NGO field workers and government officials in Egypt are chosen to represent the various actors, who understand the diverse aspects of the programme.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and if you do not wish to take part, there will be no negative consequences. Also, if you wish to discontinue at any point you have the full right to do so.

If you decide to participate you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and a consent form to sign. If you wish to withdraw from the research (you do not have to give a reason), please just contact me Hoda Elhalaby 01222425081, haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk

This interview will take 45 minutes to an hour of your time, it will mainly include open ended questions, no follow up will be needed. You will be asked about your encounter with the NGO-led village development programme, the process, intentions, interventions, consequences, and the effects on your life over time if you are a village resident. This is specifically important to highlight the experiences of the beneficiaries and the decision-making process.

The audio recordings of the interview will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

There will be no direct benefits for you from participation, however your input will help better develop future interventions.

All personal information will be made anonymous, except if you wish and have given your consent for this.

The data collected will be accessed by the principal investigator and anonymised (except if agreed otherwise); the analysis of the interviews will be available in the full PhD thesis and papers published from that dissertation. The data will be saved on an external locked hard disk after being anonymised and translated.

The legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (Article 6(1)(e), an Article of – the EU General Data Protection Regulations). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice *https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general*

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning

In case of any complaint regarding the interview please contact the supervisor. If you don't feel that your complaint was handled properly please contact the Head of Department.

**For further information please contact:**

Principal Investigator: Hoda El Halaby haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk 002-01222425081
Supervisor: Dr Steve Connelly s.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
Head of Department: Professor Malcolm Tait m.tait@sheffield.ac.uk

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
University of Sheffield
Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TN
United Kingdom

**إستمارة معلومات للمشارك**
**تأثير مشروعات الجمعيات الخيرية لتنمية للقرى الفقيرة في مصر**

هذا طلب للمشاركة في مشروع بحث الدكتوراه. يرجى أخذ وقتك لقراءة المعلومات التالية حول المشروع بعناية ومناقشته وسؤالي إذا كان هناك أي شيء غير واضح أو إذا كنت ترغب في مزيد من المعلومات. ثم خذ وقتك لتقرر ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة أم لا.
شكرا لوقتك

هذا البحث هو شرط لاستكمال درجة الدكتوراه في قسم الدراسات والتخطيط الحضري في جامعة شيفيلد ، إنجلترا. تهدف الدراسة إلى فهم تأثير برنامج تنمية القرية الذي تقوده المنظمات غير الحكومية في مصر. سيتم تحقيق ذلك من خلال فهم مختلف عملياتها والجهات الفاعلة والتدخلات وتأثيرها على المستفيدين المستهدفين. يتم تمويل مشروع بحث الدكتوراه هذا من قبل صندوق نيوتن مشرفه ، وهي شراكة في العلوم والابتكار بين المملكة المتحدة ومصر.

لتحقيق هدف الدراسة ، يتم اختيار سكان القرى التي تم تطويرها من خلال منظمة غير حكومية ، والعاملين الميدانيين في المنظمات غير الحكومية ، والمسؤولين الحكوميين في مصر لتمثيل مختلف الجهات الفاعلة في البرنامج.

مشاركتك في البحث تطوعية تمامًا وإذا كنت لا ترغب في المشاركة ، فلن تكون هناك عواقب سلبية. أيضًا ، إذا كنت ترغب في التوقف في أي وقت ، فلديك الحق الكامل في القيام بذلك.

إذا قررت المشاركة ، فسوف تحصل على نسخة من إستمارة المعلومات هذه للاحتفاظ بها ونموذج موافقة للتوقيع. إذا كنت ترغب في الانسحاب من البحث (ليس عليك إعطاء سبب) ، يرجى فقط الاتصال بي هدى الحلبي 01222425081 ، haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk

ستستغرق هذه المقابلة 45 دقيقة إلى ساعة من وقتك ، وستتضمن بشكل أساسي أسئلة مفتوحة ، ولن تكون هناك حاجة إلى متابعة. سيتم سؤالك عن مواجهتك لبرنامج تطوير القرية الذي تقوده المنظمات غير الحكومية ، والعملية ، والتدخلات ، والعواقب ، والآثار على حياتك مع مرور الوقت إذا كنت مقيمًا في القرية. هذا مهم بشكل خاص لتسليط الضوء على تجارب المستفيدين وعملية صنع القرار.

سيتم استخدام التسجيلات الصوتية للمقابلة فقط للتحليل. لن يتم أي استخدام آخر دون إذن كتابي منك ، ولن يُسمح لأي شخص خارج المشروع بالوصول إلى التسجيلات الأصلية.
لن تكون هناك فوائد مباشرة لك من المشاركة ، ومع ذلك فإن مشاركتك ستساعد في تطوير التنمية المستقبلية بشكل أفضل.

سيتم جعل جميع المعلومات الشخصية مجهولة المصدر ، إلا إذا كنت ترغب في , الحصول على موافقتك عليها.

سيتم الوصول إلى البيانات التي تم جمعها من قبل المحقق الرئيسي ومجهول المصدر (ما لم يتفق على خلاف ذلك) ؛ سيكون تحليل المقابلات متاحًا في أطروحة الدكتوراه الكاملة والأوراق العلمية المنشورة من هذه الرسالة. سيتم حفظ البيانات على قرص ثابت مغلق خارجي بعد إخفاء هويتها وترجمتها.

الأساس القانوني الذي نطبقه من أجل معالجة بياناتك الشخصية هو أن المعالجة ضرورية لأداء مهمة تم تنفيذها لتحقيق المصلحة العامة (المادة 6 (1) (هـ) ، مادة - اللائحة العامة لحماية البيانات في الاتحاد الأوروبي ). يمكن العثور على مزيد من المعلومات في إشعار الخصوصية بالجامعةhttps://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general

ستعمل جامعة شيفيلد كمراقب للبيانات لهذه الدراسة. هذا يعني أن الجامعة مسؤولة عن رعاية معلوماتك واستخدامها بشكل صحيح.

تمت الموافقة على هذا المشروع من الناحية الأخلاقية من خلال إجراء مراجعة الأخلاقيات بجامعة شيفيلد ، الذي تديره إدارة الدراسات والتخطيط الحضري

في حال وجود أي شكوى بخصوص المقابلة ، يرجى الاتصال بالمشرف. إذا لم تشعر أن شكواك قد تمت معالجتها بشكل صحيح ، فالرجاء الاتصال برئيس القسم.
لمعلومات أكثر، يرجى الاتصال:
الباحث الرئيسي: هدى الحلبي002-01222425081 haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk
المشرف: الدكتور ستيف كونيليs.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
رئيس القسم: الأستاذ الدكتور مالكولم تايتm.tait@sheffield.ac.uk

قسم الدراسات والتخطيط الحضري
جامعة شيفيلد
الضفة الغربية
شيفيلد
S10 2TN
المملكة المتحدة

## Appendix D

# Elites Participant Consent Form

# Participant Consent Form

# NGO-led village development in Egypt: intentions and interventions. Consent Form

| *Please tick the appropriate boxes* | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 01/07/2019 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded. | | |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. | | |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | |
| I understand my personal details such as phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. | | |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | Date |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | Date |

**Project contact details for further information:**


Principal Investigator: Hoda El Halaby haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Steve Connelly s.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
Head of Department: Professor Malcolm Tait m.tait@sheffield.ac.uk

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
University of Sheffield Western Bank -Sheffield- S10 2TN
United Kingdom

**إستمارة موافقة**

**تأثير مشروعات الجمعيات الخيرية لتنمية للقرى الفقيرة في مصر**

| يرجى وضع علامة في الخانات المناسبة | نعم | لا |
|---|---|---|
| **المشاركة في المشروع** | | |
| **لقد قرأت وفهمت ورقة معلومات المشروع بتاريخ 2019/07/01 أو تم شرح المشروع بالكامل لي. (إذا كانت إجابتك "لا" على هذا السؤال ، فيرجى عدم المتابعة مع نموذج الموافقة هذا حتى تكون مدركًا تمامًا لما تعنيه مشاركتك في المشروع).** | | |
| **لقد أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول المشروع.** | | |
| **أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع. أدرك أن المشاركة في المشروع ستشمل إجراء المقابلات وتسجيلها.** | | |
| **أفهم أن مشاركتي اختيارية وأنه يمكنني الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت ؛ لا يتعين علي تقديم أي أسباب لعدم رغبتي في المشاركة ولن تكون هناك عواقب سلبية إذا اخترت الانسحاب.** | | |
| **كيف سيتم استخدام معلوماتي أثناء وبعد المشروع** | | |
| **أدرك أن بياناتي الشخصية مثل رقم الهاتف والعنوان وعنوان البريد الإلكتروني وما إلى ذلك لن يتم الكشف عنها للأشخاص خارج المشروع.** | | |
| **أفهم وأوافق على أنه قد يتم نقل كلامي في المنشورات والتقارير وصفحات الويب وغيرها من مخرجات البحث.** | | |
| **أدرك أنه لن يتم ذكر اسمي في هذه المخرجات ما لم أطلب ذلك على وجه التحديد.** | | |
| **بحيث يمكن استخدام المعلومات التي تقدمها بشكل قانوني من قبل الباحثين** | | |
| **أوافق على تعيين حقوق الطبع والنشر التي أمتلكها في أي مواد تم إنشاؤها كجزء من هذا المشروع إلى جامعة شيفيلد.** | | |

**اسم المشارك** **التاريخ** **التوقيع**

**اسم الباحث** **التاريخ** **التوقيع**

تفاصيل الاتصال بالمشروع لمزيد من المعلومات:
المحقق الرئيسي: هدى الحلبيhaelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk
المشرف: الدكتور ستيف كونيليs.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
رئيس القسم: الأستاذ مالكولم تايتm.tait@sheffield.ac.uk
قسم الدراسات والتخطيط الحضري
جامعة شيفيلد
شيفيلد S10 2TN
المملكة المتحدة

## Appendix E

# Participant Consent Form

# NGO-led village development in Egypt: intentions and interventions. Consent Form

| *Please tick the appropriate boxes* | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 01/07/2019 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded. | | |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. | | |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. | | |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | Date |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | Date |

**Project contact details for further information:**


Principal Investigator: Hoda El Halaby haelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Steve Connelly s.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
Head of Department: Professor Malcolm Tait m.tait@sheffield.ac.uk

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
University of Sheffield
Western Bank- Sheffield - S10 2TN - United Kingdom

**إستمارة موافقة**

**تأثير مشروعات الجمعيات الخيرية لتنمية للقرى الفقيرة في مصر**

| يرجى وضع علامة في الخانات المناسبة | نعم | لا |
|---|---|---|
| **المشاركة في المشروع** | | |
| **لقد قرأت وفهمت ورقة معلومات المشروع بتاريخ 2019/07/01 أو تم شرح المشروع بالكامل لي. (إذا كانت إجابتك "لا" على هذا السؤال ، فيرجى عدم المتابعة مع نموذج الموافقة هذا حتى تكون مدركًا تمامًا لما تعنيه مشاركتك في المشروع).** | | |
| **لقد أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول المشروع.** | | |
| **أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع. أدرك أن المشاركة في المشروع ستشمل إجراء المقابلات وتسجيلها.** | | |
| **أفهم أن مشاركتي اختيارية وأنه يمكنني الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت ؛ لا يتعين علي تقديم أي أسباب لعدم رغبتي في المشاركة ولن تكون هناك عواقب سلبية إذا اخترت الانسحاب.** | | |
| **كيف سيتم استخدام معلوماتي أثناء وبعد المشروع** | | |
| **أدرك أن بياناتي الشخصية مثل اسمي و رقم الهاتف والعنوان وعنوان البريد الإلكتروني وما إلى ذلك لن يتم الكشف عنها للأشخاص خارج المشروع.** | | |
| **أفهم وأوافق على أنه قد يتم نقل كلامي في المنشورات والتقارير وصفحات الويب وغيرها من مخرجات البحث.** | | |
| **بحيث يمكن استخدام المعلومات التي تقدمها بشكل قانوني من قبل الباحثين** | | |
| **أوافق على تعيين حقوق الطبع والنشر التي أمتلكها في أي مواد تم إنشاؤها كجزء من هذا المشروع إلى جامعة شيفيلد.** | | |

**اسم المشارك** **التاريخ** **التوقيع**

**اسم الباحث** **التاريخ** **التوقيع**

تفاصيل الاتصال بالمشروع لمزيد من المعلومات:
المحقق الرئيسي: هدى الحلبيhaelhalaby1@sheffield.ac.uk
المشرف: الدكتور ستيف كونيليs.connelly@sheffield.ac.uk
رئيس القسم: الأستاذ مالكولم تايتm.tait@sheffield.ac.uk
قسم الدراسات والتخطيط الحضري
جامعة شيفيلد
شيفيلد S10 2TN
المملكة المتحدة

## Appendix F

### Interview guide

### Government officials

- What do you believe explains comprehensive development?
- Who made the decisions? Is the idea built on previous initiatives?
- How was the idea envisioned?
- What is your role in the process?
- Why did you choose geographical targeting?
- Why have you continued using the same idea even after the change in the government?
- How do you measure the success of the programme?
- How do you manage the NGOs and make sure the protocol is followed?
- In what ways do you interfere in the process and type of intervention?
- What are the future planned programmes for rural development?

### NGO, fieldworkers

- Can you walk me through the process of village development? (what is your role)
- May you describe your job?
- Who made the decisions?
- How was the idea envisioned?
- What type of activities / interventions did you plan?
- Did the signing of the protocol make a difference, if yes,..? What has changed before and after signing the protocol?
- Who are the other stakeholders, or gate keepers, your connections to the municipality who else matters
- Has it always been this way? what has changed and when?
- What are the efforts for improvement and change in process overtime?
- What are the efforts for improvement and change in interventions overtime?
- What affects your work positively and negatively?
- What happens after interventions are provided?
- How do you measure the impact?
- What was the intervention that brought the highest funds and why?
- Research has shown that funders and power Influence the NGO, Did that influence the choice of village and intervention?

**Village residents**

- Stories and ice breaking questions?
- Are there any NGOs working in the village?
- What do they generally do?
- What are the general procedures?
- Have you received any kind of intervention or help from NGOs
- What type of intervention?
- Who was the provider (middleman) and who is the main funder if you know?
- What were the procedure to receive any help?
- What happened after the interventions were provided?
- Reflections, pros and cons of the procedures
- Pros and cons of the intervention quality
- How did it affect your life?
- If you were in charge of the planning and budget what would you have done differently and what would be the prioritized between the interventions?
- What would mean comprehensive village development and what would be the interventions for the individuals and for the whole village?

**تأثير مشروعات الجمعيات الخيرية لتنمية  للقرى الفقيرة في مصر**

**أسئلة المقابلات**

المسؤولون الحكوميون

•لماذا اخترت الاستهداف الجغرافي؟

•لماذا واصلت استخدام نفس الفكرة حتى بعد التغيير في الحكومة؟

•كيف تقيس نجاح البرنامج؟

•كيف تدير المنظمات غير الحكومية وتأكد من اتباع البروتوكول؟

•ما هي الطرق التي تتداخل بها في عملية التدخل ونوعه؟

•ما هي البرامج المستقبلية المخططة للتنمية الريفية؟

**المنظمات غير الحكومية**

•هل يمكنك أن تصف عملك؟

•هل يمكنك السير معي خلال عملية تنمية القرية؟ (ما هو دورك)

•من الذي اتخذ القرارات - كيف كانت الفكرة المتصورة؟

•ما نوع الأنشطة / التدخلات التي كنت تخطط لها؟

•هل أحدث توقيع البروتوكول فرقًا ، إذا كان الجواب نعم ، ..؟ ما الذي تغير قبل وبعد التوقيع على البروتوكول؟

•من هم أصحاب المصلحة الآخرين ، أو حراس البوابة ، اتصالاتك بالبلدية التي تهمك

•أن لم يكن دائما على هذا النحو؟ ما الذي تغير ومتى؟

•ما هي الجهود المبذولة للتحسين والتغيير في تنمية القري؟

•ما هي الجهود المبذولة للتحسين والتغيير في التدخلات الإضافية؟

•ما الذي يؤثر على عملك إيجابًا وسلبًا؟

•ماذا يحدث بعد تقديم التدخلات؟

•كيف تقيس الأثر؟

•ما هو التدخل الذي جلب أعلى التبرعات ولماذا؟

**سكان القرية**

•هل هناك أي منظمات غير حكومية تعمل في القرية؟

•ماذا يفعلون عموما؟

•ما هي الإجراءات العامة؟

•هل تلقيت أي نوع من التدخل أو المساعدة من المنظمات غير الحكومية

•ما نوع التدخل؟

•من كان المزود (الوسيط) ومن هو الممول الرئيسي إذا كنت تعرف؟

•ما هو الإجراء لتلقي أي مساعدة؟

•ماذا حدث بعد تقديم المساعدة ؟

•إيجابيات وسلبيات الإجراءات

•إيجابيات وسلبيات نوعية المساعدات

•كيف أثرت في حياتك؟

•إذا كنت مسؤولاً عن التخطيط والميزانية ، فماذا كنت ستفعل بطريقة مختلفة وما هي الأولوية بين التدخلات؟