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On Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants – Urban Policies and Practice

The right to adequate housing of migrants factsheets

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The right to adequate housing for migrants - factsheets

The right to adequate housing for migrants is a series of thematic factsheets on migrants' level of access to adequate shelter in different urban contexts. Written by academic researchers and experts solicited by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, the factsheets were aimed at providing background information for the 2010 Report of UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Dr. Raquel Rolnik.

Besides presenting the picture of the overall housing situation of migrants in the concerned contexts, authors were asked to highlight what the conditions of international migrants (regular and undocumented) are with respect to

- access to public housing and/or government subsidies
- access to housing loans
- access to the private housing market (discriminatory attitudes)
- inclusion into regularization and land tenure policies (if any, highlighting whether it is a local or a central government policy)

Authors were also invited to underline whether differences in policies/attitudes between local (poor) population (including rural-urban migrants) and international migrants are put in place and if any particularly interesting policy is being implemented that could be pointed out as innovative example.

Through the network of the partner universities, research centres and other relevant actors, SSIIM UNESCO Chair on Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants - Urban Policies and Practices aims at:

- Identifying policies and practices that promote the urban inclusion of international migrants
- Supporting local governments in shaping adequate actions to foster effective urban governance and the social/spatial integration of international migrants
- Disseminating the experiences that can provide ground for effective policy exchange (good practices)
- Raising the awareness of policy-makers and the civil society at large, on the importance of international migrants' urban social and spatial inclusion

Egypt is a sending, receiving, and transit country. Historically, it was always known as a land of immigrants rather than emigrants. With the oil boom of the 1970s, labor migration from Egypt to the Gulf started to take place with a peak between 1973-1983. Today, in addition to receiving and sending, Egypt is becoming one of the major transit country hosting migrants and refugees seeking Egypt as a route to the West. The majority of refugees/migrants in Egypt are Sudanese but there is also a considerable number of Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Palestinians, Iraqis, and others.

Refugees and migrants in Egypt are concentrated in Greater Cairo (which includes the city of Cairo, the city of Giza, three other small cities, and some villages in the governorate of Qaliubia and Giza) while some are in Alexandria and few are located in other governorates. In Greater Cairo, they are not concentrated in specific areas but rather are spread over the entire city. Sudanese, for example, are spread over twenty locations. The geographical location of migrants/refugees depends on their income level with a great number of refugees, like many low income Egyptians, live in squatter areas with poor access to water and proper sanitation. It is very difficult to estimate the number of refugees/migrants living in squatter areas in Cairo as within the same areas, there are locations that are considered squatters (informal settlement) while others are not. For example, some of the areas of Ain Shames, where many Sudanese are residing, are considered informal while others are not. In a recent mapping process to identify the major locations of Sudanese in greater Cairo by the Center for migration and refugee studies in Cairo, it was indicated that 17% of a total number of 788 households are residing in Ain Shames, however it is not clear how many of this percentage are in the informal areas of Ain Shames. On the other hand, 14% are residing in the area of Arb was Nus which all of it is informal. Informal settlements are the most common for the poor in greater Cairo. In a study conducted in 1993, it was estimated that there are 23 informal settlements in greater Cairo with a population of 5.88 millions (El Batran and Arandel, 1998)

Access to Housing

The ability of international migrants to own property in Egypt depends on their economic and legal status. In the past, foreigners were prevented from owning immovable properties like lands, buildings and apartments. However, in 1996, Law No. 230 of 1996 was decreed allowing foreigners to own immovable properties for the purpose of encouraging foreign investment in real estate (Khalil, etl., 2005). Accordingly, migrants/refugees with proper documents and regular income can buy properties in Egypt. However, the majority of migrants/refugees in Egypt do not belong to such bracket and as such do not own their residential unit. In a survey on Iraqis in Egypt with a sample of 1000 households, only 7% owned their units (Fargues, etl., 2008). Consequently, most migrants/refugees in Egypt rent their units. Since there is no control over renting of privately owned-units, foreigners are usually charged higher rents. Overcrowding of flats (more than one family living together) is the consequence of high rent.

Access to public housing and/or government subsidies as well as to housing loans is limited to low-income Egyptians. The People's Assembly in Egypt passed the Real Estate Mortgage Law 148 in the year 2001. According to the law, both banks and non-bank mortgage companies can issue mortgages. Foreigners can apply for mortgage but are not eligible for the mortgage programs for Low income. One of these programs is administrated by the '*Guarantee and Subsidy Funds*' sponsored by the Egyptian government and the World Bank. The requirements for eligibility is to be an Egyptian citizen with a monthly regular income of no more than 2,500 per family or 1, 750 per person. ¹ Applying and getting

¹ Personnel interview with an employee of the 'Guarantee and Subsidy Funds.'

such loans is a long process, accordingly only a total of 16 mortgages for low income Egyptians were completed since the passing of the law (Overseas Private Investment Corporation, 2005).

Regularization schemes

Since the 1980s, a number of laws and decrees were passed aiming at creating a framework for the regularization and upgrading of squatter settlements. In 1981, public companies and private developers were given responsibility to upgrade informal settlements and in 1984, settlers were allowed to regularize their situation by buying their plots. The result was not very successful, by the end of 1987, fewer than 30,000 requests for regularization had been filed, representing about 5 per cent of the estimated number of eligible illegal occupants in Cairo. The law's failure was mainly due to the high prices set for buying the land from the government (El Batran and Arandel, 1998). According to a study done by the researcher in 2002 on one of the squatter areas in Cairo, the area was demolished completely, re-built, the inhabitants were resettled, less than half only were returned with renting rather than buying options (Ayoub, 2002) There are no study on how migrants/refugees are integrated in such regularization scheme but it is believed that if migrants/refugees are not eligible for housing loans, they will not be eligible for such scheme.

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