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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION

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GLOSSARY

The following glossary presents working definitions of terms which repeatedly appear in the text and are widely used in the literature on development. As there is still no standardized usage for these terms intraregionally or even internationally, their use may lead to some confusion when attempting to cross-reference definitions or compare them in different contexts.

Action research: An integrated research activity which involves social investigation and educational work, and which is action-oriented. As a method of inquiry, it departs from the practitioner-client hierarchical approach and involves the citizen-expert in a collaborative process geared to improving the lives of those involved.

Community-based organizations (CBOs): Non-profit and/or not-for-profit organizations involved in the delivery of services/goods of a public nature. CBOs can also be considered non-governmental organizations (see definition below), but they specifically operate at a local level, targeting beneficiaries at the level of the locality. They are also referred to as grass-roots organizations.

Civil society: A form of associational life linking individuals to the State. It comprises a variety of non-State actors such as political parties, trade unions, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. In some contexts, it is extended to include organizations in the private sector.

Empowerment:, The process of facilitating a transfer of, or access to, resources for disadvantaged groups or individuals in society. This involves access to economic, social and political power, and has clear implications that beneficiaries have control over the decision-making process concerning the use and allocation of these resources.

Enabling strategy: Often linked to an intervention by policy makers, it is designed to create a favourable policy environment by reforming or strengthening institutions and legislation and thereby allowing individuals, communities and private sector institutions to improve their productive capacity.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Organizations within civil society involved in the delivery of services/ goods of a public nature. They are non-profit or not-for-profit and usually operate on a mixture of voluntary and paid work. NGOs are extremely diverse in structure, scope, level of organization, agendas, sources of funding and constituencies. They are sometimes referred to as voluntary or charitable organizations.

Sustainable development: Promoting economic development while safeguarding natural resources; ensuring that social, environmental, political, economic and institutional development are pursued on equal footing. Increasingly, the concept of sustainability has been consolidating around the theme of human resource development, which advocates incorporating human welfare into any measurement of growth, notably economic growth.

Urban governance: A partnership among the different actors intervening in the production, provision, and allocation of urban services. It implies that the urban environment in all its complexity can only be managed in a multi-institutional framework. Therefore, although it is wider in scope than government, it has a an element of good government practice embedded in it, with the aim of promoting democratic, accountable and transparent institutions. At the urban level, governance translates into decentralization of planning, finance and decision-making authority to the municipalities, with enough leeway for community groups to take action and be partners in development.

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INTRODUCTION

Community participation in urban development presently seems to be the most paradoxical topic in planning. Among donors, policy makers, community workers and researchers it is a focal theme in the debate on approaches to urban development policies. None the less, the articulation of concepts and definitions of community participation into operational policies and measures remains a largely under-researched area. Even less adequately addressed is the methodology for monitoring the success of community participation initiatives, particularly when they are adopted as components of urban development projects and programmes. The identification of pertinent indicators to measure the impact of participation on the success or failure of the project in question, as well as the roles played by different social actors, is a research priority in this area.

Prospects for replicating successful participatory experiences or institutionalizing them in urban management structures still need to be thoroughly investigated and well-documented. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for a better understanding of the spill-over effect of a participatory process into other spheres of public life.

This study addresses current and timely questions on this debate, raising questions on the implications of a commitment to a participatory approach to urban development. What does participation mean in terms of resource allocation or restructuring of the public service sector? This question points to the need for further study of mechanisms and policies regarding decentralization, particularly in terms of decision-making, resource management and capacity-building at the municipal level.

This paper also looks at the rationale for promoting community participation on economic, socio-political and developmentalist grounds. As different social actors participate in public life, willingly or reluctantly, and for diverse reasons, the definition of participation itself and its translation into operational policies and measures differ accordingly. The paper examines how community participation is articulated in urban development projects in selected ESCWA member countries in light of the changing urban dynamics of the region. As it will be argued here, the increasing complexities and contradictions in the emerging urban environment are generated by the interplay of the different actors involved.

One of the main objectives of the study is to set the stage for building empirical evidence from the region on the mechanisms for popular participation in the urban development process. Thus, it includes a review of the important factors that underlie the shift in planning approaches and policies over the last decade, and the reasons why participation has become an important agenda item for donors, governments, NGOs and community groups. For this purpose a number of cases drawn from the literature on community participation in urban development are presented.

This review provides the analytical framework for three cases selected for field observation: Aqaba in Jordan, Nablus in the West Bank and Ismailia in Egypt. These case-studies offer interesting material for firsthand observation of how different types of actors, specifically international donors, central and local Government agencies, international and local NGOs and community groups, can facilitate or hinder a participatory approach in planning. These cases serve as a basis for the extrapolation of internal and external factors in an environment which may be conducive or repressive for participation.

Finally, the study draws some conclusions based on the lessons learned. These address policy measures for translating successful participatory urban development projects, which so far have been implemented on an ad hoc, discrete and one-time-only basis, into an integrated and ongoing process of

urban development. These recommendations are articulated, bearing in mind the complementary roles that could be played by international organizations, national and local governments, civil society and the private sector. Their efficient interplay remains essential for promoting what is increasingly referred to as a system of good urban governance.

I. THE RATIONALE FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The present chapter sets briefly the conceptual framework for understanding the methods and implications of a participatory approach in urban development projects. The evolution of this approach can be traced from its origins as a self-help project geared towards reducing construction costs to its present role as a major tool for empowering local communities. It is also important to understand why different actors engage in this process, and when. Furthermore, It should be stressed that community participation as a field of inquiry is much wider in scope than the present focus on its role in urban development projects initiated by donors or Governments. There is a wide range of collective action undertaken by people at the level of a locality that also represents community participation initiatives. While these are important dimensions of the concept of participation, they remain beyond the scope of the present paper.

A. DEFINITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The concept of community participation is inherently ambiguous. It is difficult to define not only what makes up a community, but also what is meant by participation. The literature is prolific on the subject, but there is today no consensus on defining these terms or delineating their conceptual boundaries. The interest here is not to enter into the theoretical debate on whether a community should be defined geographically, as a community of interests transcending the notion of physical proximity, or as a negotiated public space among groups with conflicting interests. In the present context, a community is referred to as groups of people living in a locality, which could be a neighbourhood or a district within a given settlement.

Conflict of interest is built into any community. This, however, does not mean that mobilization for collective action and consensus building are impossible at the level of a locality. However, in order to grasp the dynamics behind this mobilization, it is necessary to identify the issues and forces which become rallying points for public interest groups within the locality, e.g. landowners, tenants, refugees, migrants, the gender divide, ethnic or socio-economic status (Moser, 1989). Often policy makers and practitioners overlook these parameters, working on the assumption that a community is a homogeneous and harmonious entity. The ability to discern these variations at the pre-planning stage of any development project is critical for ensuring local support for a proposed development project.

It is important to understand that groups within a community develop alliances and relationships beyond the level of their geographical locality. The community may have social, economic and cultural ties beyond the physical or administrative boundaries of a project which affect the outcomes of the project at hand. For instance, information about a prospective or ongoing development may attract more people to the project site than originally planned. Community participation also has an important spillover effect in the policy domain and can generate demands for upgrading from residents in other neighbourhoods. This creates new sets of conditions at every stage of the process, which all actors (beneficiaries, policymakers, NGOs, donors) have to adjust to. Community participation in that sense becomes a process of ongoing negotiations among the different actors.

Interest in community participation in urban development has intensified at times of rapid urbanization; this was particularly true in the early 1960s. Incoming migrants to cities looking for employment opportunities were finding it increasingly difficult to wait passively for the responsible authorities to provide them with housing and basic amenities in the emerging urban areas. As a result, squatters settlements became the most practical alternatives for migrants, unleashing much debate among policymakers and housing experts. From a conservative stand, these settlements were perceived as a cancerous growth amid the modern urban environment. None the less, as their residents were contributing to the urban economy, a more liberal and positive view emerging in the literature (Abu Lughod, 1984) regarded these informal settlements as community initiatives.

In this view the presence of squatter settlements on land unauthorized for occupation was no longer perceived as a burden on public authorities, as empirical evidence from different parts of the developing world has systematically shown that squatters with relative security of tenure are quite willing and able to improve their living environment; through this process the value of their housing units and surrounding land appreciates accordingly. A number of field studies have shown how this process provides the migrants with an entry point into the urban economy, since in the process of house building, they concomitantly engage in income-generating activities, usually in the informal sector, within the limited financial and technical resources at their disposal (Ramirez, 1992). From the above, it can be seen that, depending how they are looked at, problems may present solutions (Turner, 1988, p 13).

Turner's most important contribution in his enabling and community-building approach may lie in the embedded assumption that the beneficiaries are a potential source of productivity. This marks an attitudinal shift, in which planners and policy makers can no longer approach a community with a bag full of ready-made solutions, but more as equal partners, working with the people, not for the people.

None the less, the fact that community participation is a desirable and viable tool in urban development projects does not guarantee its success. Community participation remains a highly political process. The understanding that the different partners have of the community participation process and their rationale for adopting it differ significantly for each project and at different stages of the same project. For these reasons, Turner's approach, although acclaimed on technical grounds, was none the less criticized as being apolitical as a concept of community building.

B. WHY DIFFERENT ACTORS PARTICIPATE

Community participation is almost always mentioned in project documents as an integral component of development strategies and planning, regardless of whether it is actually implemented or not. In addressing the reasons why discrepancies often exist between the stated objectives for participation and what takes place on the ground, it is important to identify the rationale mobilizing the different actors to commit themselves to participate. From the State's perspective, political expediency and the need to maintain the established order are often leading factors for pursuing community participation. From a donor's perspective it provides a viable alternative for reducing costs at a time when constraints on resources have become a chronic problem. Cost-sharing by the beneficiaries has become an important condition tied to their development agendas. For community and citizen groups, it should not be assumed that participation will be a welcome option under all circumstances. Thus, the targeted beneficiaries weigh factors such as affordability, cost savings, material gains or the possibility of acquiring a stake in decision-making at a higher level as preconditions for committing themselves to participation. Beneficiaries may also agree to participate at certain stages of the process, even if they are not in full agreement with the proposed projects. Their participation thus represents a means for entering into negotiation with the authorities concerned, to ensure a stronger bargaining stand for acquiring more access to public resources.

In practical terms, however, beneficiaries and community groups are usually drawn in at the implementation stage of operational activities, in order to promote a participatory approach in development. Their participation becomes necessary in order to reduce the cost of the projects or ensure the support of the community for a Government-set agenda, which would otherwise be met with some resistance. Furthermore, community participation is often introduced in projects with external technical assistance or funding in order to satisfy the requirements of donor agencies. It is widely believed that including a community participation component in a project proposal will increase the eligibility of the project for funding (Moser, 1989).

While different interpretations are presented in the literature as to why, how and when participation takes place, depending on whether it is used as a means or an end in itself,[1] they still do not address adequately how community participation recreates new conditions on the ground. As the different players concerned (beneficiaries, government officials and planners) interact throughout the stages of a development project, new problems, opportunities and solutions emerge in the process. This process reflects the open-ended nature of community participation, and suggests that the rationale for participation among the different actors in a community will be in a constant state of flux, in accordance with changes in their situation. Thus participation cannot be considered as a one-time, static condition. This open-ended process provides a useful framework for reviewing the community participation case-studies reviewed in the following chapter.

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[1] Moser (1989) draws on a number of conceptual frameworks which distinguish participation as a means for empowerment, or improving the quality of life of the communities involved, as opposed to serving as an end for the purposes of cost-reduction, political expediency or conservation of resources.

II. REVIEW OF SELECTED CASES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN UPGRADING PROJECTS

A. THE CHANGING URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION

The urban situation in the ESCWA region has been changing drastically owing to rapid urbanization and displacement. The number of people living in squatter settlements is growing as part of this urbanization process, which is placing an increasing burden on public services. The strain on the public sector coupled with the rising cost of services to Governments leads to the need to rationalize costs. Furthermore, parallel to the pressures for more services, pressures for democratization and participatory action are intensifying, particularly with the emerging trend of citizen action groups, NGOs and grass-roots organizations. Stirred by changes at the global, national and local levels, as the mobility of capital, people, information and ideas increases across borders, Governments are being pressured to adjust to a different development agenda.

In order to cope with urban changes, most urban development strategies in ESCWA member countries stress the importance of decentralization and institutional development. These policies relate to such issues as capacity-building, financial autonomy, availability of resources and improvement of performance under decentralized authority. Furthermore, these policies are also being adopted in response to donor agendas which revolve around a participatory process of development as a central theme. The Urban Programme of the World Bank, the Sustainable Human Development Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Enabling Strategy promoted by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the World Bank, and the Urban Management Programme (World Bank) all attest to this orientation, stressing the complementary roles of State and non-State actors, with a visible role to be played by the community. This has also influenced the agendas of international NGOs such as Save the Children Federation, Oxfam and Care, which represent important donors, as well as local NGOs and grassroots organizations. However, a pertinent question arises from empirical evidence in the region as to why the change from a project focus to a process of participatory development did not take place.

The Governments of the ESCWA region have long assumed the main responsibility for planning and management of the urban development process, at least through formal channels, while the private sector and community groups are usually expected to participate in implementing the ensuing programmes and projects. The participation of community groups and the private sector in urban development has so far been marginal through formal channels. This has led development initiatives to evolve in parallel to the public sector's activities, often thriving in the informal sector. The State's overriding responsibility for development activities has imposed heavy financial costs and bureaucratic burdens on public resources, often fuelling political unrest.

Most of the countries in the ESCWA region are now under intense pressure to introduce some reform measures to facilitate the process of urban development. These measures include streamlining public sector bureaucracies; reforming the procedures, funding levels and criteria for urban service delivery; and institutionalizing and expanding the participation of private and civil organizations in public life.

None the less, in the ESCWA region, the incidence of participation in urban development remains at an experimental stage, undertaken on an ad hoc basis in selective projects and programmes which are used as developmental showcases.

A number of case-studies have been compiled illustrating the dynamics of community participation in different contexts for urban development projects in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen (annex). These case-studies support the argument that participation in urban development contributes to the viability, cost-

effectiveness and political expediency of the project at hand. However, they also reveal that the different concerned parties in each case are ready to commit themselves to sharing costs, labour or operational initiatives, when they clearly perceive the dividends of their contribution in the participatory process.

For example, in the cases of the Helwan public housing project in Egypt (annex, box 1) and the East Wahdat upgrading project in Jordan (annex, box 2), security of tenure provided a viable incentive for the inhabitants to take up construction activities and maintenance on their own account. Sharing in the cost of construction represented for them a profitable investment, made possible by the public sector's granting of legal tenure. This represents one of the measures the State can take to create an enabling environment in which private initiatives can thrive.

Participation in a community development project often becomes a self-evident alternative in a crisis situation. It represents a workable solution when a community is faced with unbearable living conditions or an inadequate supply of public services, and in time of war or natural disaster, it offers a means of survival.

The Muqattam neighbourhood outside Cairo houses the Zabbaleen community (annex, box 3), where half of the city's garbage collectors reside. When the Government proposed a plan to introduce more modern and cost-effective techniques to dispose of the city's growing volume of waste, this community of garbage collectors faced the threat of losing its source of income. Unless they adjusted to the changing conditions in their living environment as well as in the organization of their work, they risked becoming redundant. By seeking a solution that included continuous consultation among the parties concerned--the Government, NGOs, private sector companies and representatives of the community--the Zabbaleens were able to obtain training in new techniques in waste management, improve living conditions in their neighbourhood and diversify their income base as well as gain access to credit, which they were normally unable to secure in formal financial markets without collateral.

The Zabbaleen community was motivated by the prospect of jobs and income-generating activities. These opportunities were made to seem feasible through the training and financial conditions that were offered to them. Participation in this project, from the community's perspective, was the means of safeguarding their livelihood and a viable alternative to displacement (UNDP 1995). This project is now being replicated in other areas of Cairo and Ismailia, and has been proposed for introduction in selected areas of East Amman.

In Yemen (annex, box 4), the self-help and mobilization of local communities' resources following the Dhamar earthquake in 1980 was not a matter of choice, but a necessity. Total dependence on public resources and international funding was not feasible. Therefore, the Government and the affected communities realized that local resources (cost-sharing, labour and traditional know-how) had to be tapped in order to complete the reconstruction of whole settlements. What was unique in this process was the involvement of the community in developing innovative, low-cost solutions to building techniques. Training in this case was developed not only for cost-reduction on the project at hand, but as a long-term strategy for empowering the local communities .

Training of local personnel proved particularly useful when Ibb province was hit by an earthquake in 1991. Yemen's High Council for the Reconstruction of Earthquake Damaged Areas, established in 1982, was able to mobilize efficiently its team of local, well-trained officers. Using community-based resources, the Government adopted the approach developed in the aftermath of the 1980 earthquake for reconstruction, training and crisis management.

As indicated above, it is important to question the impact of such projects on improving people's quality of life over the long-term as well as their contribution towards instituting a culture of partnership in

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development. Regardless of the marked improvements in the physical environment, and the economic and social conditions in the communities where the projects were undertaken, scaling-up the experiments in scope or extending them to other communities has so far been limited. Constraints can be identified both at the project level and in the planning environment.

Although well-planned to reflect the communities' needs, except in the case of Helwan in Egypt, where upgrading evolved out of a collective initiative by residents, the above projects were still conceived at a centralized level of authority, in consultation with donors. The beneficiaries are usually "surveyed" for the purpose of needs identification and then "informed" of the project idea, in order to accommodate some of their suggestions. To some extent, the Yemeni experience diverges from this pattern, as residents contributed to the development of the earthquake-resistant building model.

From these cases, one can conclude that in order to mobilize support at the local level, the beneficiaries have to realize that there are tangible and imminent benefits as a result of their inputs.

These cases correspond to the analytical framework proposed by Moser (see chapter I) for understanding the dynamics of community participation. The earlier participation is introduced in the planning process, the more local-level support the project is likely to receive. The timing of participation has been instrumental in the outcome of the projects. Similarly, how they were undertaken and who participates have been crucial factors in mobilizing popular support.

However, a number of questions remain unanswered in the literature. These relate to the implications of a participatory approach beyond the project level and whether a successful experiment can be replicated in other areas, or repeated at different time intervals. Would scaling-up the scope of a successful project experiment be matched with expanded benefits (quantitatively or qualitatively)? What does it take at the institutional level to move from a project to a process focus? These questions provided the analytical basis for the field observations of upgrading projects in the following case-studies.

The contexts of the three urban development cases (Ismailia, Aqaba and Nablus) highlighted below provide a satisfactory basis for comparison for the following reasons:

1.   All three cases are being implemented in secondary settlements, facing similar problems of urban expansion and serving as regional centres in their respective environments.

2.   They represent complex experiments in terms of the scale of physical development projects under implementation, and in all of them community participation represents an integral and explicitly-stated component of the urban development activities.

3.   They are all characterized by the interaction of a number of players, including central and local governments, international consultants and donors, NGOs and community groups. This illustrates the diversity in the different players' perceptions of what constitutes community participation, and how changing conditions on the ground can shape their rationale for intervention.

4.   Urban development activities are ongoing in all three cases, which is significant for policy considerations in the context of the present study. It opens the way for providing policy recommendations with reference to specific cases. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen institutional development and capacity-building at the local level. In chapter III, some proposals are made for undertaking action research in the three cities as a follow-up measure.

B. ISMAILIA URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

1. *Background and project setting*

Ismailia presents an interesting case for investigating how community participation was planned and implemented, with the intervention of the United Nations, Government agencies and citizen groups at different stages of the planning process. Although Egypt has a number of urban upgrading projects worth reviewing, such as Helwan and Aswan, Ismailia illustrates a success story when measured by the standards of the residents, the Government, the project consultants and the United Nations, albeit with significant variations.

Located on a central axis between the cities of Port Said and Suez, Ismailia is the capital of the Governorate and covers a total area of approximately 1,441.6 km^2. It has an estimated population of 740,000 (Abdel Aziz, 1996, p. 140). Ismailia also has historical and political significance, as its inhabitants have endured the hardship of two wars (1967 and 1973) and displacement. The return of its original inhabitants, compounded by the influx of migrants from other governorates, accounts for the high rate of population growth, as it increased by 50% between 1976 and 1986, and by an estimated 37% over the last 10 years (ibid.). Given these conditions, Ismailia urgently needed to reconstruct destroyed homes and upgrade dilapidated neighbourhoods. The decision to experiment with new approaches in urban planning, based on the participation of the beneficiaries, was therefore a welcome move by the higher authorities, in the context of post-war reconstruction. Ismailia was also part of the urban development plan for the three Canal cities, in order to provide a spatially balanced pattern of urban growth.

The city of Ismailia has over 63% of the Governorate's population. Considering the continuous influx of people, residential land covers some 48.7% of the total city area (table 1). Compared with the rest of Egypt, Ismailia offers some advantages as a strategically located, middle-sized urban area. With 344 persons per km^2, it has a relatively low level of population density and an acceptable record of environmental quality control. It also offers employment, opportunities for higher education, regional services for the Governorate, and a location in proximity to the Suez Canal. Additionally, the availability of water and good agricultural resources, as well as tourist attractions and commercial facilities, has encouraged a number of businesses, foreign missions and light industries to locate in the area.

TABLE 1. LAND DISTRIBUTION IN ISMAILIA CITY

Land use	Area (km^2)	Percentage
Residential	25.8	48.7
Central district	1.1	2
Local service centres	0.55	1.1
Industrial	1.8	3.4
University and higher education	6.25	11.7
Cemeteries	1.65	3.1
Waste disposal	1.75	3.3
Local roads and railway lines	4.50	8.5
Recreational and open space	2	3.8
Other	7.6	14.3
Total	53	100

Source: U. Abdel Aziz, "Tatweer Al Maneteq al muṭakahlifa wa atharaha al-tanmia al umrania lil-madinat, madinat al Ismailia". Unpublished Master's thesis (in Arabic), Cairo, Al-Azhar University, 1996, p. 144.

Nonetheless, with informal settlements covering an area of over 2,000 acres within the city, Ismailia has many of the problems associated with urban growth (map 1). Naturally bound by the Suez Canal to the east and by Timsah Lake to the south, urbanization has only been able to expand north and westward, encroaching on agricultural land. It also has large tracts of informal settlements or neighbourhoods with substandard quality of services. Hence, local authorities have been under constant pressure to provide land with services for urban development, as well as upgrade settlements, while containing the spread of illegal land subdivision and sale by farmers for urban development.

2. *Project components and analysis*

Ismailia has been the target of a number of planning activities spanning more than 20 years from 1974 to 1996. At different stages, these have included the Ismailia Area Master Plan (1974 - 1982), the upgrading of six informal settlements (table 2), and the Sustainable Ismailia Project (SIP) (see paragraph 2(c) below). Each of these planning activities has addressed different sets of needs and presents variations in scale and planning approaches. What they all have in common is a commitment, as a clear policy objective, to the participation of the community at all stages of each project. Following is a review of their main components:
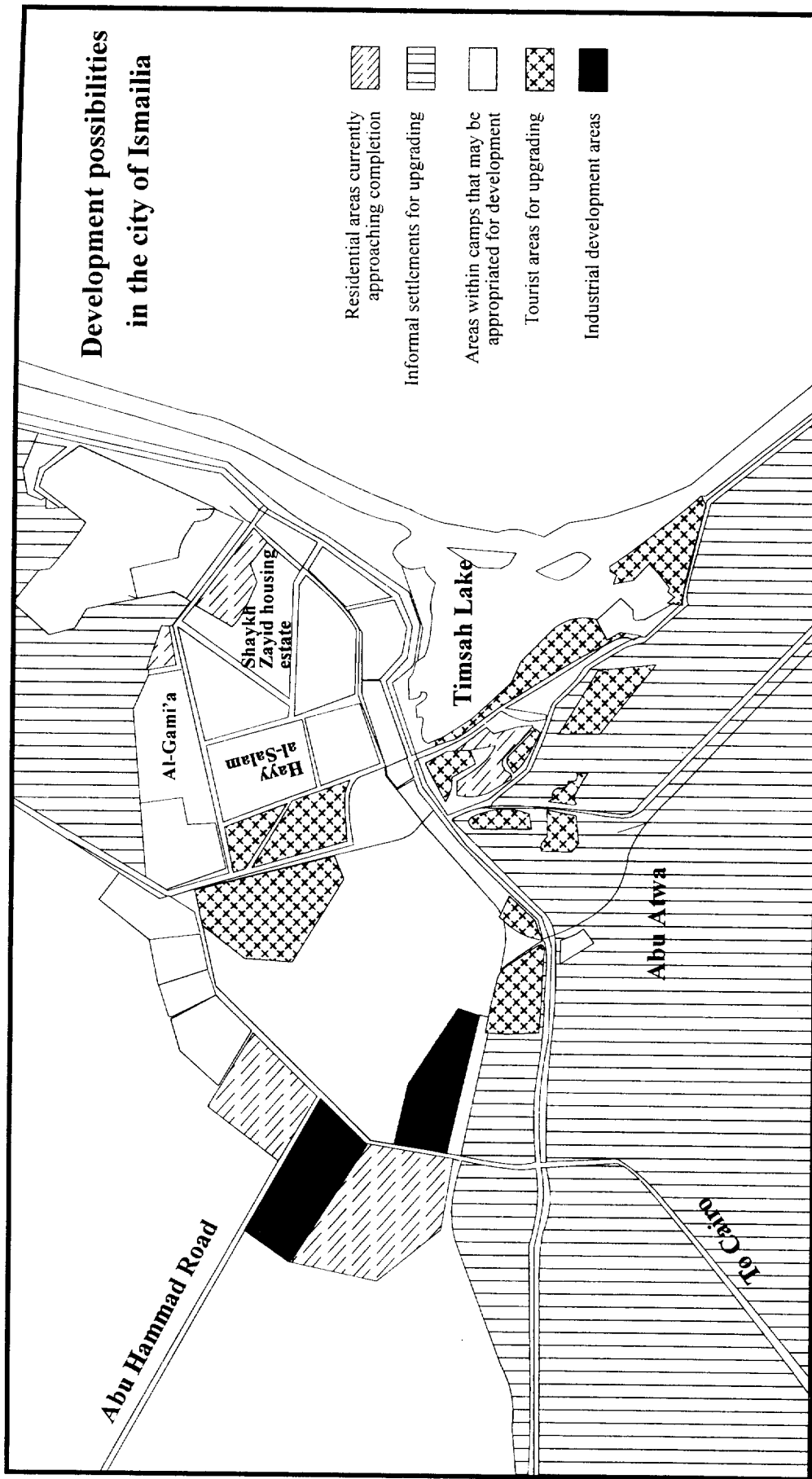
(a)   The Ismailia Master Plan (1974 - 1982), designed to accommodate 1.3 million people, out of whom 600,000 reside in Ismailia city, was directly related to the need to strengthen the Suez Canal Zone following the 1973 war (Davidson, 1982, p. 133). The determination to have this project as a showcase of appropriate planning policies and techniques gave it political and institutional backing. Technical support, in the form of expatriate consultants, and funding for preparation of the plan were provided by both the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and (UNDP).

The plan was comprehensive and somewhat ambitious, covering a span of over 20 years. Sustaining political commitment and institutional continuity over such a long period was problematic. However, an important aspect of the project revolved around the institutional component, which was the guiding theme for all subsequent projects. It consisted in establishing a planning board at the Governorate level to deal with technical, financial and policy issues, and the secondment and training of personnel from the Governorate and the Municipality.

(b)   The upgrading activities were undertaken first through the Demonstration Project from 1978 to 1983 and then as incremental upgrading of settlements until 1990. The projects covered land development, servicing and sale to beneficiaries, provision of infrastructure, construction of housing in compensation for appropriated properties, and construction of mosques, roads, schools, health and youth centres (table 2). The Demonstration Project originally identified six upgrading areas with a total area of 1,914.5 acres. However, upgrading soon became an ongoing activity owing to the continuous squatting taking place in the city and on surrounding agricultural land. Under the Demonstration Project, upgrading activities were undertaken in stages, starting with the El Hekr (Hai El Salam) neighbourhood, which was then outside the city's boundaries. It covered an area of 524 acres with 37, 000 inhabitants, and had very few public services.

The novelty and strength of this project lie in its institutional component. Planning was decentralized. This was accomplished at the local level by establishing a District planning board for managing land transactions and coordinating the planning activities of the semi-autonomous neighbourhood agencies. These agencies were located on the project site and were made up of residents working closely with Municipality personnel and consultants. They became the institutional channel for discussions with the community of all planning, financial and legislative issues related to their upgraded plots/ housing units and public services in their neighbourhoods. More importantly, funding for land servicing and communal activities was generated from local resources, thus ensuring the sustainability of the project and the ability

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MAP 1. SUSTAINABLE ISMAILIA PROJECT

Development possibilities in the city of Ismailia

Residential areas currently approaching completion

Informal settlements for upgrading

Areas within camps that may be appropriated for development

Tourist areas for upgrading

Industrial development areas

Shaykh Zayid housing estate

Al-Gami'a

Hayy al-Salam

Timsah Lake

Abu Atwa

Abu Hammad Road

To Cairo

TABLE 2. UPGRADING OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN ISMAILIA

| Region	Area (Acres)	Population (In thousands)		Number of housing units		Cost of infrastructure (Millions of Egyptian pounds)	Housing units in substitute buildings[a]	Services added to the region				
		Before upgrading	After upgrading	Before upgrading	After upgrading			Schools	Mosques	Health units	Youth centres	General services
Hai Al-Salam	524	37	117	4 800	23 400	11.5	560	5	8	2	2	9
Al-Shahada'	597	50	75	5 000	15 000	7.7	807	6	13	3	2	8
Abu Atwa	756	20	52	3 500	10 500	3.5	400	7	7	2	4	6
Al-Safa	16	2,5	5	217	1 000	1.35	100	2	2	-	-	1
Al-Marwa	15	2	4.5	163	900	1.35	80	1	2	-	1	1
Zamzam	5,5	.250	2	63	400	0.4	70	1	1	-	1	-
Total	1 914.5	112	255	13 716	51 200	26	2 017	22	33	7	10	25

Source: U. Abdel Aziz, Tatweer Al Manateq al mutakhalifa wa atharaha al-tanmia al umrania lil-madinat, madinat al Ismailia. Master's thesis (in Arabic), Al-Azhar University, Cairo, 1996, p. 181.

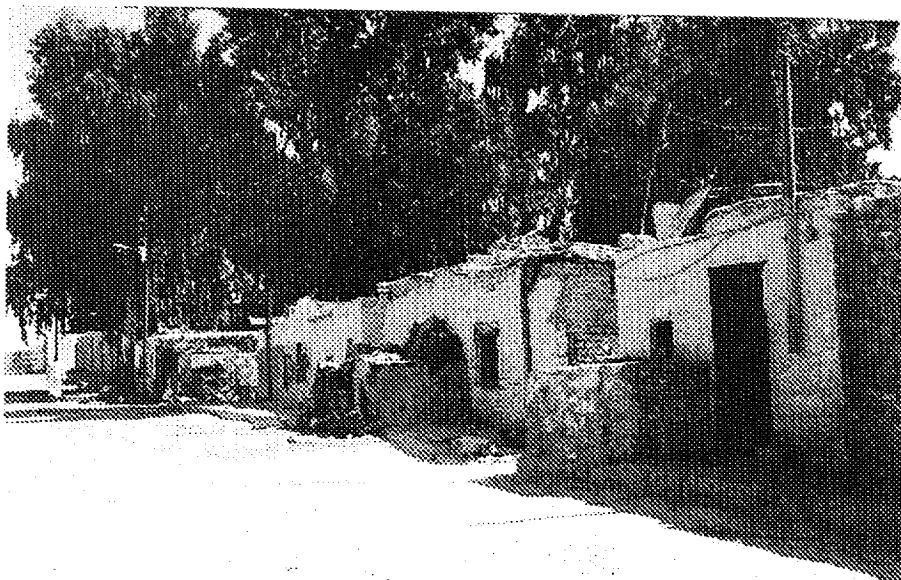a/ Houses provided in compensation for original housing units which were taken by the Government.

Photos of upgrading projects in El Hekr
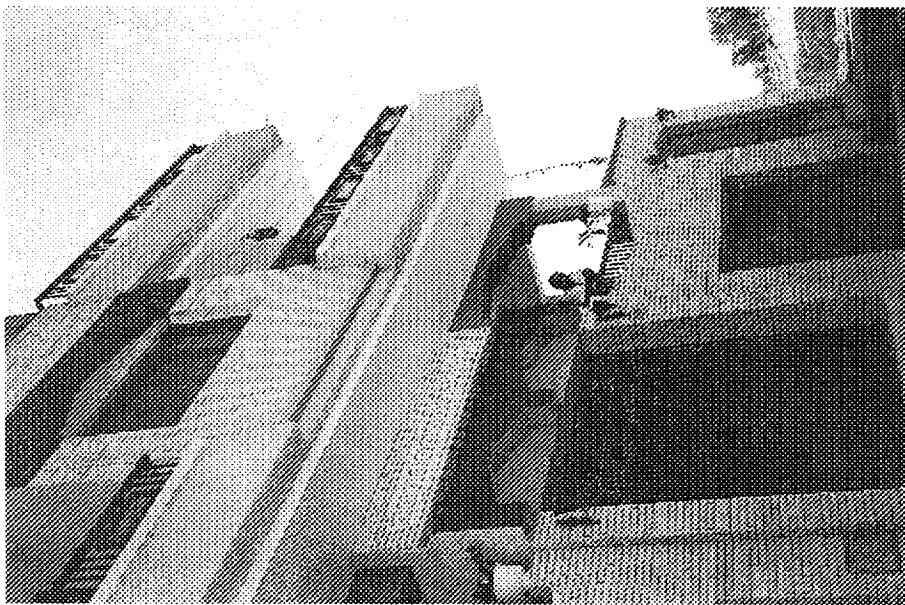## (Hai El Salam), Abu Atwa, Zamzam
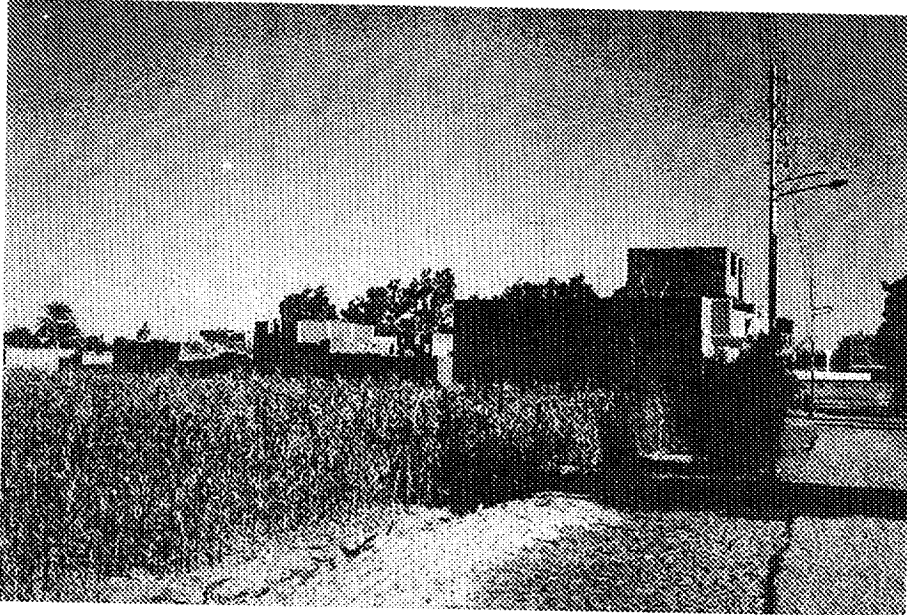
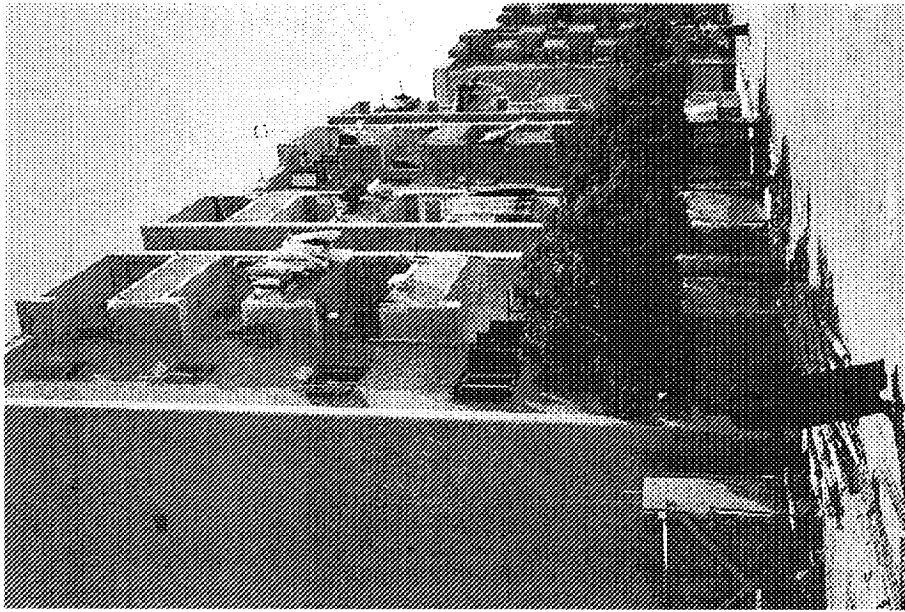Encroachment of informal settlements on agricultural land.
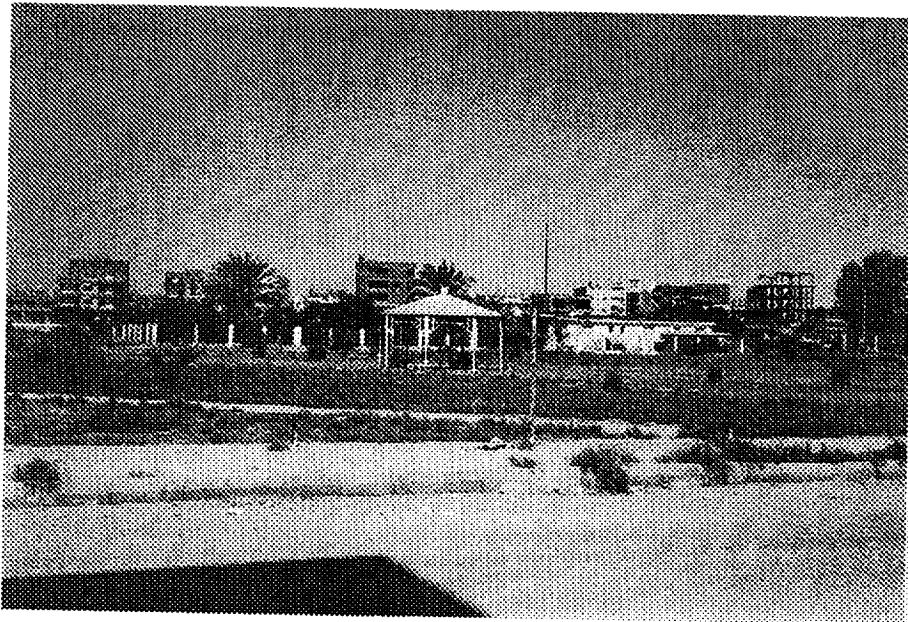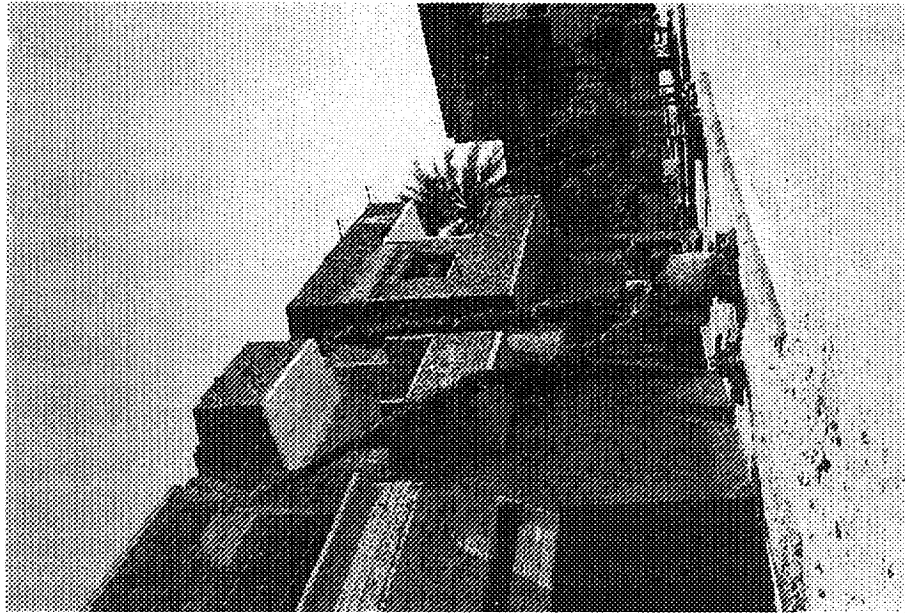
Planned open spaces.

Site proposed for upgrading.

Community initiative: improving the living environment.

Public housing project.

Post-upgrading site.

to replicate the process in other settlements. As a result, not only were visible physical improvements noted at the level of housing units, neighbourhoods and public spaces, but the project also registered a low level of default on payments, an increase in public awareness as indicated by a more rational use of water, and a sense of commitment to the project (Davidson, 1991, p. 123).

(c) The Sustainable Ismailia Project (SIP) is funded by Habitat and UNDP. It was initiated in the early 1990s as part of the global Sustainable Cities Programme, with external support roughly amounting to a total of US$ 900,000. The third phase of the project was due to start in 1997. It revolves around the concept of sustainability and has important agricultural and tourism components, including cleaning up the lakes, treating sewage and expanding green areas. Planting of greenery was undertaken on the 7 km internal road, with four acres of additional green space. Upgrading remains an ongoing activity of SIP, with work currently being undertaken on Kilo Thinen and Hay Al Mahata, as well as on selected improvement projects (making open spaces into green areas) and recycling garbage at upgraded sites.

Aiming to strengthen a participatory urban and environmental planning process, SIP has attempted to build on previous experience with the upgrading projects and revive the neighboorhood committees through the Working Group (WG) approach. The WGs are made up of stockholders, interest group beneficiaries and officials from the Municipality and the Governorate (UNDP, 1995, p. 8). Key staff involved in earlier phases of SIP were recruited to ensure institutional continuity. However, as it proved during the implementation, SIP could not be a simple replication of the upgrading project, since the two differed in their objectives, scale of operations and allocation of technical and financial resources. Additionally, the policy environment under which the upgrading project and SIP were implemented was different in each case.

In spite of the successes achieved in the earlier stage, the replication of the upgrading experience through SIP was not a simple process, and therefore the policy makers should not have assumed guaranteed success in mobilizing local support .

3. Comments and observations*

What role did community participation play in the different activities? As revealed through interviews and discussions with the different parties concerned, the extent of participation varied considerably with (a) the policy environment; (b) the scale of the project, mode of financing and implementation; (c) the degree of compatibility between various actors in defining participation and translating their definitions into operational measures; and (d) the personal relations binding project personnel, government officials, United Nations staff, expatriate consultants and citizen groups.

There is a tendency with all interviewees in the Ismailia case-study to assess the urban planning activities undertaken between 1978 and 1995 as two distinct periods: 1978-1985 and 1985-1995. The earlier period, involving the master plan and upgrading projects, with a capacity-building component, is perceived as a fruitful experiment in community participation. The consultations that took place throughout the project planning stages and the setting up of committees to follow up on the upgrading projects were, to a large extent, institutionalized in the urban management process at both the Governorate and Municipality levels. During the second planning period (1985-1995), although most planned activities were implemented, it was

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generally felt that little community involvement was pursued. The private sector was encouraged to invest, yet investors did not necessarily come from or live in Ismailia.

The success of the initial master plan and upgrading projects was a double-edged sword. Scaling-up the scope of activities and funding for the subsequent planning stage was a logical scenario for all parties concerned, especially when funding was made available. However, this unexpectedly restricted operational flexibility and complicated accounting and bureaucratic procedures. Furthermore, the scale of funding and, consequently, the implications for resource management were beyond the institutional and technical capacity of the Governorate and Municipalities. As a result, the management of the project remained outside the formal institutional structures, with the unfortunate consequence that all resources and assistance ended upon completion of the project.

Another unexpected by-product of participation was the need to contain the emergence of new informal settlements and the lucrative real-estate speculation that inhabitants indulged in. The knowledge about the benefits of participation, that is, the added market value of the improved housing units as a result of the upgrading and extension of infrastructural services, encouraged many inhabitants to rent their serviced lots or housing units to incoming migrants and squat on new, unserviced land, expecting that upgrading would follow. Of course, the problem here is not one of participation but rather one of managing urban change in its economic, environmental and infrastructural dimensions, and serves as a clear example of the open-ended process that community participation generates.

While mobilization at the local level, broad-based representation, and dedication and commitment of project personnel are a *sine qua non* for the success of community participation, the continuity and sustainability of the process remains dependent on the policy environment. Public sector restructuring initiated in 1989-1990 resulted in a more centralized pattern of decision-making. The nine planning boards established at the Governorate level in the early 1980s, with citizen representation, were amalgamated into one board under the total control of the Governor. This has affected the mood and even the confidence of the inhabitants in the participatory process established in the earlier stages, undermining the efficiency of the working groups set up under SIP in the early 1990s.

Finally, one of the unique characteristics in Ismailia was the presence of external factors that created a predisposition to succeed. Therefore, while it is important to transfer components of a project that are particularly conducive to success, such as community-initiated recycling projects and community revolving funds for upgrading activities, successful replication should not be taken for granted. Some pivotal factors contributing to the success of the participatory experience remain outside the domain of the project. Thus the policy environment, socio-political conditions prevailing in a country at that point in time, good living conditions in a city, which can attract and retain a qualified or relatively more competitive labour force, and the motivation and high sense of identity such as that of Ismailia project personnel and fieldworkers are all representative of the important external factors which can make or break a project. The role that these factors play in building up momentum for a participatory approach should be well-identified and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

C. Upgrading of Informal Settlements in Aqaba

1. *Background and project setting*

Aqaba is an expanding city, with facilities for shipping, tourism, industry and trade. The peace process and, consequently, the prospects of expanding the tourism sector have turned the Aqaba region into a national focus of interest and therefore have made it more likely to receive institutional, economic and technical support from central Government and donor agencies. The city of Aqaba covers an area of 80 km^2 with 26 km of coastline; in 1995 the population was estimated at 63,000 inhabitants, and is expected to

reach 200,000 by 2020.[2] Its original inhabitants were Bedouin tribes, yet over the years Aqaba has witnessed an influx of migrants from surrounding governorates and other regions, as well as Palestinian refugees and returnees after the Gulf war.

In 1990, Aqaba was designated as a Governorate. As a result, a number of Government departments, such as the Electricity and Water Authorities, banks and other support services, have opened regional offices in Aqaba, generating demand for affordable housing and related infrastructure, social and health facilities. However, the main challenge facing the city remains how to contain the spread of informal settlements meshing into each other, especially on prime central city locations (map 2). Around 45 per cent of the population of Aqaba lives in informal settlements which cover a total area close to 460 dunums.[3] Beginning in 1984, a series of studies to investigate alternative approaches to upgrading on a cost-recovery basis were initiated, targeting Shallalah and the Old Town for the initial projects; however, work did not commence until 1987. Project proposals followed the World Bank policies of promoting sites and services and upgrading as a housing policy option. On that basis, the urban Development Department (UDD)[4] was commissioned with a loan from the World Bank to upgrade Salahaddin, Shallalah (North) and Old Town as an initial phase. This led to the initiation phase III of the Urban Development Programme, following phases I and II which were completed in Amman.

Upgrading activities in Aqaba span a decade (1984-1993).[5] They reflect a changing pattern of community participation in terms of approaches to project formulation, mode of implementation, and the rationale for seeking the participation of the beneficiaries, NGO's and the private sector. Furthermore, it is important to note that all this was taking place amid major public policy reform that sought to streamline public sector spending. Hence, the structural adjustment programme initiated in 1989 included a loan programme to the housing sector. This necessitated the restructuring of HUDC activities, affecting its mode of operation, including the planning, implementation and follow-up on upgrading and sites and services projects. The Aqaba project also included experiments with new planning approaches based on participation which were further encouraged by external donors and technical assistance (Harvard University, 1992).

2. Project components and analysis

Upgrading work in Aqaba started in 1987, in Salahaddin (73,000 m^2), followed by Shallalah (70,000 m^2) and Khazan (180,000 m^2), as a sites-and-services project providing plots for inhabitants in compensation for housing units lost through land appropriation. In addition, upgrading work has been initiated in the northern and southern parts of the Old Town (table 3). The total cost of the completed and ongoing projects is estimated at around Jordanian dinars (JD) 5.5 million.[6] To start up the process, loans were provided from the World Bank and the Housing Bank, as well as a grant from the Treasury, earmarked for public works. Costs were to be recovered through land sale and mortgage repayments.

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[2] Figures quoted by the Mayor of Aqaba during an interview on 20 July 1996..

[3] Housing and Urban Development Corporation (Jordan), Progress report on field visit to Aqaba (in Arabic), unpublished report, 1993.

[4] The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) is currently the main agency responsible for housing policies and programmes. Prior to their merger in 1992, both the Housing Corporation (HC) and the Urban Development Department (UDD), undertook housing projects separately, targeting different groups.

[5] The study for upgrading Shallalah and Old Town was undertaken in 1984, although upgrading activities did not start before 1987.

[6] HUDC, op.cit.

The focus of these projects was on improving living conditions in the settlements, in line with the standard of service provided in the planned parts of Aqaba, and incorporating them physically, economically and socially into the urban fabric. Thus, upgrading activities revolved around land development and regularization of titles as well as provision of clean water, sanitation and drainage to designated sites, road servicing and site allocation for social facilities and open spaces.

While extensive fieldwork was undertaken in the planning phases of the projects, participation of the beneficiaries was not really introduced until much later in the process. Apart from conventional needs assessment surveys, the beneficiaries did not take part in the design process itself, or contribute to deliberation on land valuation and cost-recovery options, or even provide input on the range of public resources[7] to be provided and the means for managing them.

To remedy this situation, HUDC facilitated a community participation project (1992-1994) which was funded by the Konrad Adenhauer Foundation in collaboration with Jordan University. The main focus was on encouraging NGOs and grass-roots organizations to initiate upgrading and income-generation activities in their neighbourhoods. The project consisted of involving the community in the planning and management of open spaces and public services, taking into consideration the special needs of children and women (Harvard University, 1992, pp. 72-86). It targeted the residents in the upgrading sites, except for Shallalah (South) site,[8] and involved extensive networking among the residents, NGOs operating in the area (around 27 participated) and senior officials from the Municipality, the Aqaba Region Authority and HUDC. It started with a series of training workshops on the planning process, with emphasis on strengthening a gender perspective. Then a working group was established, with representatives from the different parties concerned. The members of working group, in consultation with their respective constituencies, undertook the upgrading activities. In addition, a lawyer from Aqaba was recruited to advise the participants, predominately women, about their rights.[9]

During the life span of the project, the working group managed to collaborate successfully in surveying existing open spaces in upgrading sites and in identifying the environmentally hazardous ones, including those used as dumping sites for solid waste, open marshes and wasteland. In the follow-up stage, plans for establishing appropriate playgrounds on selected sites were undertaken at the level of the working group. Public sector representatives who were at a decision-making level were able to commit some resources, such as water connection by the Municipality, and site clearance and fencing by the Aqaba Region Authority. Extensive clean-up campaigns, information exchange and contribution of labour by some of the households were generated by members of the working groups. Nonetheless, while this activity corresponded to the stated objectives and resulted in visible physical improvements of the selected open spaces, it did not generate much development activity beyond the project. A number of development initiatives such as clean-up campaigns were undertaken by the members of the working group on an individual basis through local NGOs. Options for reactivating the working group are being considered by the project coordinators. One of the negative aspects noted at the level of the working group was the discrepancy in technical capacity identified among the participants. This made the working group prone to control by the more influential or vocal members, or those having more seniority in public service or enjoying political clout.

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[7] Based on interviews undertaken with project personnel, officials from HUDC, the Municipality, and Aqaba Region Authority.

[8] The decision regarding the alternative use for the land occupied by squatters in Shallalah South, and consequently the options for its residents, remain pending. This is a result of the recent transfer of this land to the Aqaba Region Authority, which is debating the matter in light of revisions to the Master Plan..

[9] Although effective in advocacy planning among marginal groups, it was suggested that some members of the group were as a result subjected to pressure from their own peers, as the objectives of the workshops, in particular the intervention of the lawyer for the women, were not well understood outside the working group circle, in their respective communities in Aqaba.

Map 2. Ongoing and planned upgrading; sites and services projects in Aqaba City
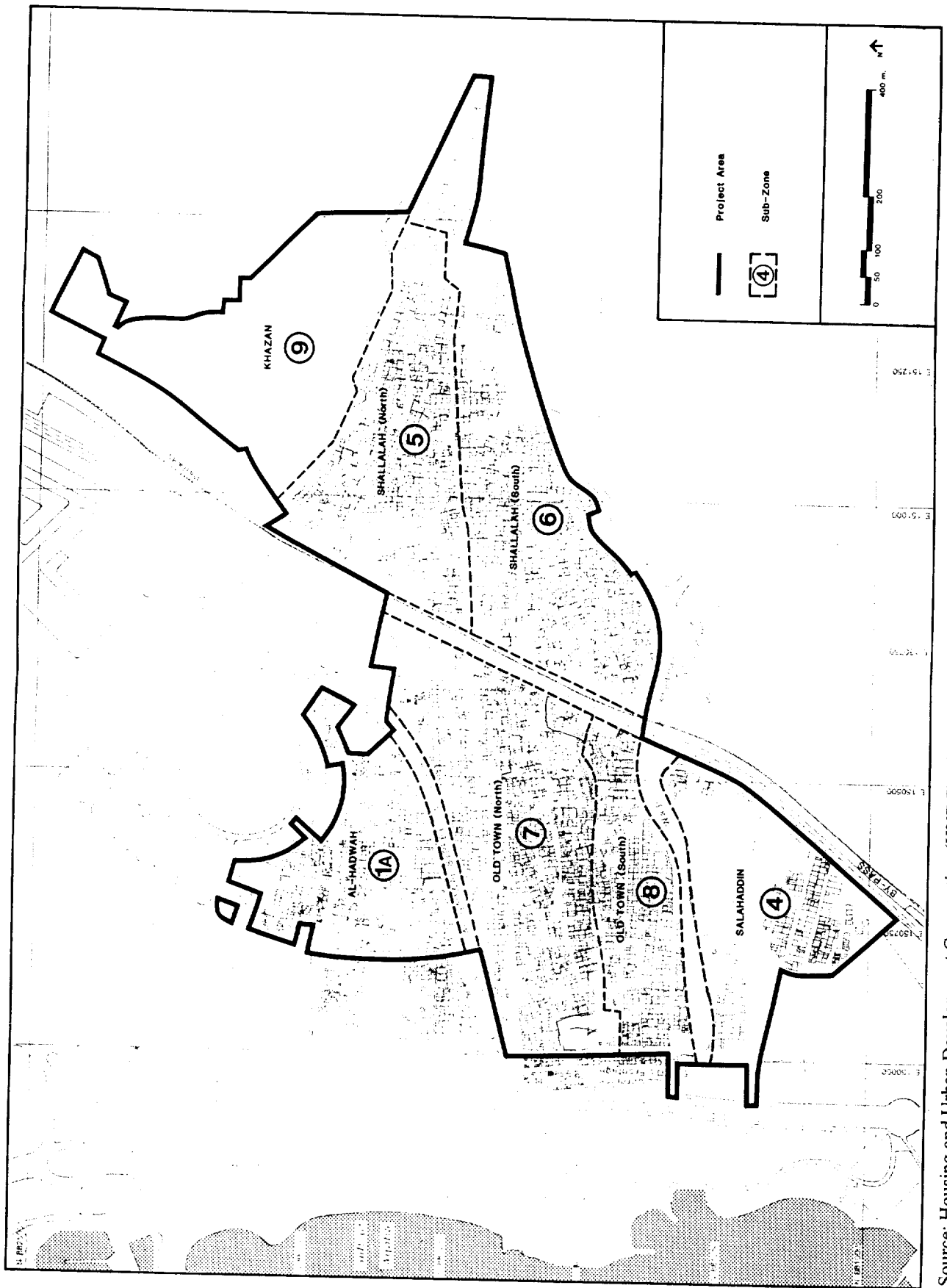
Source: Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) - Aqaba Office

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Photos from the Khazan and Shallalah sites

Shallalah, North and South.

Example from Khazan upgrading site.

View of Aqaba city from Shallalah upgrading site.

TABLE 3. SETTLEMENT UPGRADING IN AQABA

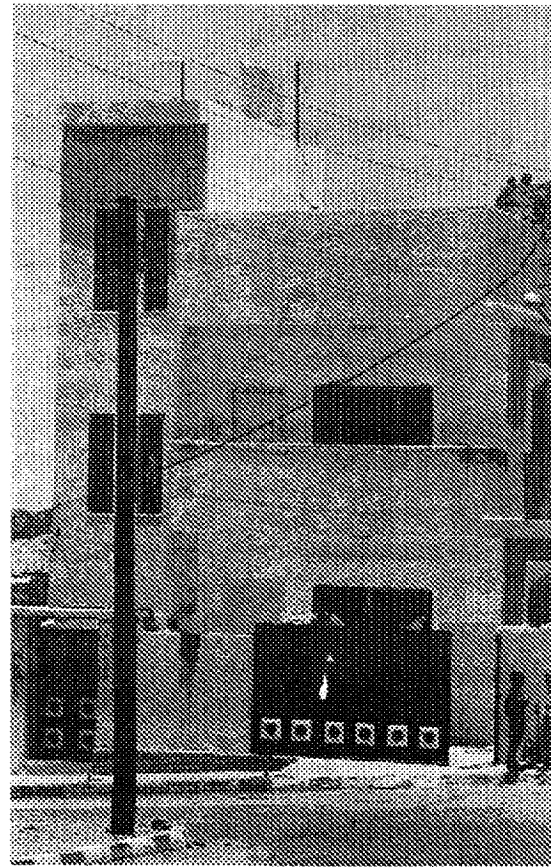| Settlement	Area (m²)	Number of beneficiaries	Dates	Total cost Thousands of Jordanian dinars
Salahaddin	73 000		1988-1989	518
Shallalah	70 000		1989-1990	1 600
Khazan	180 000		1990-1992	2 556
Old Town (South)	123 000	4 035	1993 ongoing	1 628
Old Town (North)	120 000	2 965	under study	1 190
Total	466 000			5 482

3. Comments and observations*

Although some physical improvements are visible (cleaner neighbourhoods, for example) in the rebuilt environment in the project areas, the upgrading sites as a whole remain visibly impoverished, particularly in comparison with the more affluent neighbourhoods in the city. This leads to the question of the extent to which isolated attempts such as these can substantially improve the overall quality of life of the residents. A major study on all upgrading projects in Aqaba is under way, initiated by HUDC in cooperation with the World Bank as the main donor, to assess the viability of the projects in terms of recovering costs, and creating a self-sustaining housing sector. However, the effectiveness of community participation remains outside the scope of this investigation, except as an external factor which affects the success of the project as measured by its cost-effectiveness.

The fact that Aqaba has three levels of Government in operation (Aqaba Regional Authority [ARA], the Municipality and the newly established Governorate) has been a mixed blessing with respect to the upgrading activities. The ARA represents a special case in the Kingdom where planning and decision-making are effectively decentralized to the regional level. ARA therefore commands sufficient institutional leverage to mobilize resources and translate policies into actions. This has proved to be particularly effective for supporting upgrading with investments in infrastructure, enacting legislation and facilitating access to land under ARA jurisdiction. But this structure is also vulnerable to problems of administrative overlap between the different levels of government, particularly with respect to allocating income generated from land transactions and various municipal taxes for the region, including Aqaba city. Furthermore, the Shallalah upgrading project provides a clear example of the effects of overlapping levels of administration. There is now a clear dividing line in Shallalah between the upgraded area and the unserviced area, as the programme (originally executed by HUDC in cooperation with the Municipality) was brought to a standstill after the land was transferred to the Aqaba Regional Authority. Problems have been identified, particularly concerning land valuation and options for relocating the inhabitants in light of the ARA proposed Master Plan.

At the project level, the physical upgrading activities and the community participation projects were targeting the same beneficiaries and therefore should have been more coordinated and integrated into a well-defined upgrading strategy based on a participatory approach. This outcome could be related to a difference in timing, since in the upgrading project community participation took place after the process was initiated. However, empirical evidence in other cases, such as that of Ismailia, indicates more chances of sustainability when community participation precedes the project, or is at least implemented in parallel.

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*   Based on an interview with the project coordinator.

Another factor lies in the difference in scale between the physical upgrading activities and the community participation project in terms of the size of the projects and budget allocated for each. The physical upgrading projects commanded more technical, administrative and financial resources. This availability of resources would de facto attract more political support from policymakers, whereas the community participation project was not only smaller in scope and in resources but was also funded by a donor which did not command the same political backing as the World Bank, the main funder for the upgrading projects. This difference affected the institutional and political priorities each project could generate, and therefore the effort deployed to make it succeed. In addition, the element of voluntarism in the community participation project was important in terms of securing commitment of the participants; yet, this voluntarism could not be realistically sustained in terms of retaining qualified members and technical resource persons at a time and in a region where employment opportunities are limited.

In spite of the difficulties described above, as in Ismailia, the community participation project in Aqaba has benefited from a favourable policy environment. As the project was undertaken at a time of institutional restructuring of HUDC, it opened the way for an expanded role of NGOs, including an international NGO donor and the 27 local NGOs mentioned above, enabling them to plan and organize urban service delivery, functions traditionally undertaken by HUDC.

D. NABLUS INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1. *Background and project setting*

The experience of Nablus Municipality in promoting a participatory process in urban development must be addressed within the political and historical context of Palestine. The history of occupation and the transition to self-rule initiated in 1994 have shaped the technical, financial and policy aspects of the planning and implementation of upgrading projects. More importantly, these conditions have added a clear political dimension to the meaning of community participation. Hence, community participation as articulated by members of local committees, NGO representatives and the beneficiaries of upgrading projects cannot be confined to an upgrading project in a given locality, but rather translates into a need for them to take an active role in building the emerging Palestinian State.[10]

Nablus District, the largest in the West Bank, lies in the North-Central region, with a total population estimated at around 342,000 in 1995 (UNDP/UNCDF, 1995, pp. ND 1-2). The District is composed of 3 municipalities (Nablus, Tubas and Salfit) and 99 rural communities.[11] Since about 75% of these do not have formal administrative structures, many municipal functions and urban services are delivered on an ad hoc basis by local village councils or locally-based planning committees supported by multilateral donors or local NGOs.

The District has a rich resource base, specializing in agro-processing industries and stone quarrying, which provide the largest share of employment in this sector of the West Bank. However, employment and income generation opportunities remain problematic, particularly since the closure of the Israeli borders in 1993, which resulted in job losses for day labourers (estimated at 8.31% in 1992: table 4). In addition, more than half of all rural communities either have no water supply or their network needs replacement.

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[10] Observations based on a number of interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Nablus City and the surrounding regions in the north (Janin, Qalqilia, Tabatia and Tamoun).

[11] According to the Palestine Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR, 1996), there are 70 villages in the Nablus District; however, the discrepancy in figures could not be accounted for. One interpretation for this could be the lack of standardized definitions of localities by different actors (NGOs, United Nations public sector agencies, Israeli sources).

Furthermore, none of these communities has sewage collection and disposal, and only 18 villages out of the 99 have solid waste disposal facilities, usually in open and uncontrolled sites (UNDP/UNCDF, pp ND. 51-55, 1995).

The city of Nablus, the District's capital, is an important financial and commercial centre. Other than East Jerusalem, Nablus city has the largest urban population in the West Bank, estimated at 124,555 in 1990, with an increase to 147,932 in 1995 (Nablus Municipality, 1995, p 70). The area of the city under self-rule (zone A as per the Oslo Agreement of 13 September 1993) covers 26,800 dunums, yielding a population density of about five persons per dunum. Density is particularly high in the centre (around 60 persons per dunum), especially in the Old City, which is characterized by high land subdivision. Density is even higher in the four refugee camps (Old Askar, New Askar, Balat and Ain Beit El-Ma'). Covering a total area of 472 dunums, the population of the camps, estimated at 26,113, lives in densely built-up areas with over six dwelling units to the dunum on lots not exceeding 200 m2 (ibid., p.69).[12]

The substandard quality and capacity of the physical infrastructure pose serious challenges to Nablus Municipality, in three important ways: (a) lack of sufficient funds for large-scale rehabilitation projects; (b) constraining topography which conditions the direction of urban expansion, and (c) the designation of areas of self-rule where boundaries are determined by political considerations rather than the physical elements of the terrain.

Amid these physical, financial and political constraints, there are pressing needs for expanding and upgrading the water, sewage and transport networks. While most neighborhoods are connected to a sewage network, it is not adequately treated and overflows cause environmental damage, particularly in the Wadi areas (UNDP/UNCDF, p. 63, 1995). The transport network is equally problematic, as all routes run along the East-West axis, adding congestion to the city center. The steep terrain to the north and south of the city limits urban development in these directions, where land servicing is too costly. As a result, urban expansion has moved westward, encroaching on valuable agricultural land (ibid., p. 57). Furthermore, the pattern of land ownership, which is predominantly in private hands, leaves a limited supply of public land, constituting only 4.6% of the total vacant land, for the Municipality to use for urban extension and provision of social facilities (table 5).

TABLE 4. PALESTINIAN LABOUR FORCE WORKING IN ISRAEL BY DISTRICT*

Districts	Percentage of total population
Hebron	10.83
East Jerusalem	16.91
Beit Lahem	7.34
Jenin	7.75
Ramallah	6.22
Tulkarem	10.52
Nablus	8.31
Gaza	5.34

* Percentages are based on information provided by ESCWA in "The Situation of Towns and Villages in the Occupied Territories and their Developmental Needs" (in Arabic), in press, 1997. It should be noted that statistics vary among different references.

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[12] The condition of infrastructure and the social services in refugee camps is worse than in the rest of the city; however, at present UNRWA is responsible for providing social and infrastructure services, while the Municipality supplies electricity and water, pending the outcome of the bilateral negotiations on refugee camps.

Finally the biggest challenges facing the Municipality are to build up its technical, financial, legislative and managerial capacities, and to ensure a representative local government, which was absent prior to self-rule. Since its establishment, the Municipality has considerably scaled up its activities; with 1,600 staff, it has sufficient technical capacity and political leverage to implement or coordinate large-scale public works, mostly through external funding, and usually with a matching fund, either through the Municipality or PECDAR. However, the Municipality still has limited experience with managing integrated upgrading projects or coordinating the intervention of a multitude of donors and development agencies operating at different scales.

TABLE 5. PUBLIC AND VACANT LAND IN NABLUS

	Public	Municipal	Islamic *Waqf*	Various institutions and organizations	Total
Total acreage	1 774 954	774 000	150 852	179 225	2 880 071
Percentage	61.6%	26.8%	5.3%	6.3%	100%
Empty land	1 616 477	85 387	65 532	96 145	1 863 541
Percentage	86.7%	4.6%	3.5%	5.2%	100%

Source: Master Plan for Nablus Municipality (1995), p. 50.

2. *Project components and analysis*

Nablus District has witnessed intensive upgrading and urban development activities in the city and surrounding communities, executed through a diversity of donors and development agencies. During the *intifadah*, funding targeted relief assistance and provision of social services, particularly medical and educational facilities. After the initiation of the peace process, funds were channelled to large construction projects and rehabilitation of the infrastructure (table 6). These projects vary markedly in size, budget, and methodology. They also differ in the application of standards and procedures for cost sharing by the beneficiaries, which often reflects the divergent agendas, scales and modes of operation of donors or executing agencies. Cost sharing by the beneficiaries or the municipality usually ranges between 10 and 50 per cent of total costs, depending on the donor involved. Such variations make it difficult to compare the effectiveness of the different projects, let alone monitor or coordinate them, especially for the Municipality.

Table 6 presents a selection of projects identified by the main actors who are funding, executing or supervising development projects in Nablus. While the list is not comprehensive, it none the less is indicative of the approach adopted in upgrading projects, which focuses on provision of infrastructure as turnkey projects. Crisis management in this situation becomes more important than the participatory process, which is usually time-consuming.

Furthermore, in Nablus there seems to be a marked difference in the approach to project planning and implementation between urban and rural settings, even when executed by the same donors. In the absence of formal institutional structures in the villages, integrated upgrading projects are adopted, including the setting up of local planning committees to coordinate and facilitate work on the ground. A good example is the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) project, conceived as an integrated rural development project and executed by UNDP. Social and income-generating components are integrated with public works components; projects are designed and prioritized by local planning committees; and committee members are trained in planning, administration and finance in order to facilitate local management of development activities. In contrast, UNDP projects in the city of Nablus consist of supervising or coordinating the implementation of engineering works in cooperation with the Municipality, with no attempts made to integrate social development or institution-building components in these projects.

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TABLE 6. SELECTED UPGRADING PROJECTS IN NABLUS CITY SINCE 1994
(Excluding Nablus municipality activities)

Name of project	Funding/Executing agency	Cost (Thousands of US dollars)	Type of participation
Construction of retaining walls	PECDAR*	86	in cooperation with Nablus Municipality
Maintenance of Rafidia Hospital	PECDAR	100	in cooperation with UNDP
Maintenance of Al-Watani Hospital	PECDAR	49	in cooperation with UNDP
3 drainage projects in congested neighbourhoods	PECDAR	1 800	in cooperation with Nablus Municipality
Upgrading of East Entrance	PECDAR	-	
Water connection emergency employment generation	PECDAR	475	in cooperation with Nablus Municipality
Upgrading and maintenance of water network	UNDP	1 400	in cooperation with Nablus Municipality
Pavement of side walks in the Old Town	UNDP	600	
Extension to primary and secondary schools	UNDP	400	
Hospital Extension	UNDP	1 800	in cooperation with Arab Women Federation
Sewage network in Balaha refugee camps	UNDP	600	in cooperation with UNRWA

* The Palestine Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction's (PECDAR) main donors include the World Bank, the European Community (EC), the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and bilateral donors such as the Norwegian and Saudi Arabian Governments, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and, recently, the Government of the Republic of Korea.

A Save the Children Federation Project (SCF) that was built on a community-based participatory approach presents an alternative for integrated upgrading projects in Nablus city and the surrounding villages. The project, small in scale, was designed as a pilot scheme in 1995 and covered sewage and solid waste disposal for four densely populated neighbourhoods, coupled with environmental health awareness activities (SCF, 1995, p. 7). The physical component of the project consisted of providing sub-surface drainage facilities and garbage containers, as well as transforming garbage dumps into multi-purpose playing fields in refugee camps. However the implementation of physical upgrading was discontinued in 1996 following restructuring in the Municipality; as a result, previous agreements with SCF had to be renegotiated, particularly over questions of fund administration.

The environmental component of the project targeted schools, children in the 9-13 age group as well as their parents, local NGOs and the Municipality, through the child-to-child programme. The program supported clean-up campaigns and environmental awareness competitions and fairs. Joint committees, which included children in the 9-13 age group, were set up to act as a pressure group on policy makers. The initial budget of US$ 54,000 was earmarked for workshops and advocacy campaigns. Part of the budget was set aside for grants for small sanitation projects in schools, provided on a 50-50 to 70-30 (SCF/beneficiaries) share basis, depending on the level of affordability, with additional financial and material support from the Municipality. However, It was expected that operational activities would generate a continuous source of funding, which so far has not materialized. A joint public/private planning committee was set up to oversee existing and planned projects, with 50% of its management board drawn from formal institutions. Although the committee was active in the initial stages, the spirit of voluntarism decreased over time and funding prospects became uncertain.

3. Comments and observations*

Physical upgrading was not adequately matched with the environmental awareness campaign in the SCF projects, in terms of timing, funding and mobilization of human resources to support the different activities. Environmental campaigns would have been more effective if they had been initiated prior to the physical upgrading and the duration of the range of activities extended over three years, instead of the one year budgeted for.

Owing to a lack of adequate resources, the initial motivation of committee members could not be sustained. The spirit of voluntarism decreased over time. There seems to be a point of saturation with committees, as people need jobs. It is questionable how much time can be given to unremunerated activities, given the overall economic hardship increasingly felt in the occupied territories.

Children were effective in their campaign role, especially with the clean-up campaigns in the selected neighborhoods, integrating an environmental perspective in school activities and marked physical improvements in the schools' sanitation. They also succeeded in securing financial support and equipment from the Municipality. As a matter of policy, the Municipality, the Government and the donor organizations prefer NGOs to serve as advocates rather than as service providers, particularly in the case of large-scale infrastructure work.

Upgrading activities in Nablus, carried out by a multiplicity of actors, reveal a wide diversity of agendas, standards for services delivered, approaches adopted and modes of cost recovery, with planning undertaken on a piecemeal, ad hoc basis. While this was inevitable, seeming to be the best possible arrangement prior to self-rule, its continuation at present can only perpetuate the fragmentation of the urban

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* Based on interviews with SCF field workers and focus group discussions with planning committee representatives set up for the city project and other communities in the District.

space, further constraining public institutions in their already difficult task of developing technical, managerial and financial resources, particularly at the municipal level.

The uniqueness of the Nablus case brings a new dimension to this study, as it reveals that willingness to participate is not only a function of affordability, but also has a clear political dimension at this juncture of time in the process of State-building. The history of occupation has made the Palestinian people more resilient and therefore able to endure hardship, which in the context of the upgrading projects takes the form of mobilizing locally-generated resources and outside assistance to sustain basic services, even if provided inconsistently. The role played by civil society in mobilizing resources collectively has also been important. This has translated into a greater capacity of the people to tolerate hardship.

The challenge facing Nablus municipality and other social actors in terms of redefining their roles in an environment where services are provided by multiple institutional sources, is representative of the debate taking place between the Palestinian Authority and different levels of government on the one hand, and NGOs and other organizations of civil society on the other hand. Questions of partnership, overlap of functions and conflict of interest are being addressed through different forums, workshops, planned legislation and donor funding methods.

It is increasingly popular to set up joint committees to participate in the planning and implementation of physical upgrading projects, not only in Nablus, but also in other areas. These committees seem to be more active and efficient in rural areas, in the absence of solid municipal structures. In contrast, Nablus Municipality, which commands financial, technical and political backing, can play more effectively the roles of regulator and central broker/coordinator of upgrading and development activities initiated by donors and NGOs.

In the occupied territories, NGOs, like other organizations of civil society, seem to draw on technical expertise and are actively networking among themselves and with donors and international NGOs. This is understandable in light of their active involvement in facing up to the Israeli occupation and in maintaining the social fabric of the community as well as providing essential public services. Alternatively, there seems to be a more crucial need for building up the technical, managerial and financial capacity of public institutions in the emerging Palestinian Authority, particularly at the local/municipal level.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SYNTHESIS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION

The diversity of experiences reviewed thus far, it must be stressed, has shown that each case is unique in terms of the interaction between internal and external factors which can contribute to the success or failure of the participatory approach. Therefore, in order to better understand the dynamics of community participation in an urban upgrading project, its components-activities, resources, mode of implementation-should be assessed in light of the actors who are initiating, executing and interacting with the project, as well as the geographical, socio-economic and political context in which the project is enacted. More importantly, none of these factors should be assessed in isolation.

It is also critical to look at the timing of the project as well as the political will and the commitment of donors and Governments to a participatory process. It is often underestimated how much participation is a time-consuming process whose benefits do not show immediately in any tangible way, as do the benefits in infrastructure development projects. The crucial question thus becomes the rationale for adopting community participation. Is its aim to empower local communities by giving them control? Or is it simply cost-effective and politically expedient (see chapter I). Bearing these parameters in mind, the main findings and lessons drawn from the experiences reviewed in this study are given below.

1. Community participation in urban development has been an increasing trend in the region, especially over the last 10 years. This has been fuelled mainly by structural changes in the political economy of the ESCWA member countries—privatization, structural adjustments, democratization—as well as conditionality of loans and grants from donor agencies that require a participatory approach before disbursing any funding for development projects. Hence, the time is ripe in the region, socially, politically and economically, for investing in the resources, research and institutional backstopping needed to strengthen a participatory approach to development.

2. In almost all cases, community participation in urban development remains at an experimental stage. It is usually undertaken on an ad hoc basis, for a variety of reasons which include cost sharing, failure to meet specific targets through a more conventional non-participatory approach, the need to secure the support of the beneficiaries, and compliance with the requirements of the donors. Only in rare cases does a community participation experience translate into a proactive strategy, whereby participation becomes a driving force which itself generates productive activities.

3. Participation is usually conceived at the project level, or limited to the locality where the project is initiated and to the targeted beneficiary groups. No clear vision is provided regarding how to manage and adapt the institutional structures in light of the social, political and economic changes taking place as a result of participation. Even less well-articulated is a strategy for replicating successful experiences and sustaining them. As evident in the Ismailia and Aqaba cases, participation seems to engender new sets of demands from the beneficiaries for expanding the scope of their involvement in public life. Thus, as participation spills over into policy issues, or beyond the locality of the project, it backfires, generating a shift to a more restrictive stand from higher authorities.

4. At the project level, the stage at which community participation is introduced has a direct bearing on the success of the project. The earlier in the process participation is introduced, the larger its potential to generate popular support, and the greater the willingness of participants to share in the costs and voluntary activities. However, there are limits to the extent participants can afford to share in the costs, or carry out voluntary work, while maintaining their income-earning activities or their reproductive activities, particularly in the case of women. The initial enthusiasm generated by the success of participation often

leads project personnel to scale-up the participatory experience. They then expect the beneficiaries to share accordingly, but overlook the physical, economic and psychological constraints they endure as a result. Consequently, the effectiveness of a participatory approach decreases over time, with people unable to cope with the pressure of more unremunerated work, even though it indirectly contributes to improving their living conditions.

5.   There is usually a discrepancy between the physical and the community participation components of the project. Whereas site preparation, infrastructure work, housing prototypes, costing and loan disbursement are well-articulated in detailed plans and designs, community participation remains only vaguely spelled out, in terms of a well-defined strategy for action and the methods for its implementation. There is also a discrepancy in resource allocation between the two areas, in terms of staffing, funding and administrative support. While physical improvements have the propensity to make a visible impact in upgrading projects, turning them into political showcases, it is, however, the less visible elements, such as a sense of identity with the place and a commitment to cooperate, which are a *sine qua non* for sustaining improvements in physical conditions beyond the initial phase.

6.   The range of experiences presented above illustrate some success stories in participation and the type of changes they engender. The message is clear: they are feasible and viable. However, the paradox that they rarely evolve into an institutionalized participatory process remains unresolved. As indicated above, many of these projects are planned, executed and monitored <u>outside</u> the institutional structure, particularly at the level of local governments. Municipality staff are underpaid and badly trained in comparison with project personnel, and resource allocations for projects remain beyond the capacity of local governments to manage. Furthermore, the interest and commitment that a new project generates take precedence over the routine and possibly dull, yet necessary work of local governments, such as ongoing maintenance work, licence provisions or follow-up on planning breaches.

7.   The project management set-up is, in almost all of the experiences reviewed above, dependent on the project life-cycle, without advance preparations for transferring the follow-up to local institutions. This accounts for the institutional gap that project completion leaves behind. In attempting to remedy this situation, new projects are designed to follow up, which repeat the same cycle, and more importantly make development work highly dependent on the availability of foreign funding from donors or investors in a situation where planning and implementation of public services need a relatively high degree of continuity.

8.   Considering the interplay of factors at local, national and international levels, there is a need to be well aware of the limitations of local action, or a grass-roots approach to development taking place in isolation from national and international support for local initiatives.

9.   Finally, there is a need to investigate further the dynamics of a participatory approach. To accomplish this end, action research should be undertaken as part of field research, so that the beneficiary community can participate in and benefit from it. Such research should start at the planning phase and continue through the implementation as well as the evaluation stages. Among the experiences researched for this study, both the Ismailia and Aqaba projects could be further developed through action research, since they both have solid participatory elements to build upon.

B. FROM COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS TO A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN URBAN GOVERNANCE

As participation is tied to the locality and the context in which different groups interact, it is by definition a context-specific process. Thus it is not feasible to attempt to standardize a participatory approach to development or devise a set methodology of participation to be adopted as a blueprint. None

the less, the experiences, of the increasingly numerous development projects in the ESCWA region can enrich understanding of the dynamics of participatory development as well as the rationale for adopting it. Thus, what is at stake is making the transition from discrete/localized experiences in community participation projects to the practice of urban governance at the city or country levels. This entails rethinking the planning process at two levels: (a) introducing more effective approaches to project formulation; and (b) moving from a project focus to a process-oriented strategy, which would ultimately address policy issues, designed to affect sector-wide strategies.

At the project level, it is very important to strike the right balance between replicating successful experiences, or scaling-up positive elements tested in participatory developments, and containing the high expectations placed on localized action, in terms of substantially changing the living conditions of low-income communities. Local action and the willingness of the community to share in the costs and labour should not become a substitute for transferring resources from the public sector to these communities, nor a basis for expanding the size of the project (in terms of funds, resources, activities or geographical coverage). Scaling-up should therefore be carefully weighed on a case-by-case basis to determine what is an optimal scale of operation. These issues particularly concern central Governments as well as donors and international agencies who are interested in formulating development standards and prototypes that can be replicated in different contexts. They are equally relevant in situations where a larger scale of operation heightens the visibility of sponsors or executing agencies.

Furthermore, participation should be introduced as early as possible into the process, not merely as a matter of political expediency, but as a transparent and plainly-stated development alternative presented to the beneficiaries, which would allow them to assess the full implications of the project, and accept or reject it.[13]   Hence, it is important to spend time in the field discussing with the community not only their needs but developing jointly the project idea and mechanisms for implementation, although it may be difficult to convince donors to fund projects before detailed needs assessments are undertaken.

It is important to ensure that participation is not just lip service paid by the relevant authorities to move a project forward. Resources, time and political backing need to be deployed to carry a participatory approach throughout the development stages. Donors and NGOs can exert pressure and play an advocacy role to promote grass-roots participation. To promote sustainability beyond a project's life cycle, a number of measures can be taken. In addition to involving members in the planning and design of projects in the community, it is also important to strengthen the channels of communication between headquarters and operations in the field. This would include an ongoing horizontal exchange of information and secondment of personnel at all levels.

The above parameters should be taken into consideration by donors in order to monitor effectively the formulation and implementation of projects as well as to determine eligibility for funding. Thus, planners need to ensure that financial and technical resources and decision-making powers are devolved to the project level, and given equal weight with infrastructure development. Another measure lies in the ability of executing agencies to involve local personnel on a par with external project officers. In this regard, training and capacity-building programmes should not address the needs of the beneficiaries in isolation, but also jointly involve project personnel and staff from headquarters, in order to bring about an attitudinal change among development agents.

The biggest challenge facing urban development in the ESCWA region remains how to move from the context-specific process in the community to a dynamic development process leading to the practice of

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[13] Once again it is paramount not to underestimate the capacity of the beneficiaries to discern what benefits they would derive from participation, or from keeping out of it. In this regard, a good understanding of the dynamics of the different actors can make or a break a participatory approach.

urban governance at an institutional level. Thus, at the policy level it is important to ensure that urban upgrading projects are conceived and implemented within a well-articulated urban development strategy. Bearing in mind the fragmented nature of development agendas as well as activities of donors, Governments or NGOs, development projects will continue to be undertaken as independent activities, with a life cycle usually spanning the funding period of the project. Maintaining the continuity and coherence of the different activities and maximizing their synergetic developmental effect becomes an equally necessary and challenging task. Hence, while action at the local level is a necessary function of a participatory process, the coherence, continuity and linkages among these local initiatives necessitate coordination and backstopping from formal structures. The role of Governments cannot be underestimated; greater community participation is not a choice between Government and private/community sectors, but rather involves a greater coordination of their complementary roles. Thus, while capacity-building of the community, including the private sector and NGOs, is very important, the strengthening of public institutions is equally as important. In fact, capacity-building is the setting up of viable partnerships among the different social actors on the urban scene.

While it is a project-outlined approach that underlies the urban development process described above, a broader view, moving from the project level to the policy level, is called for. Decentralization and empowerment of local governments, as well as the encouragement of community action and involvement, are at the core of a policy for effective urban management and sustainable urban growth. Such a participatory approach would represent a move towards good governance, capable of managing the increasing complexity of the cities in the ESCWA region.

Annex

PROFILES OF SELECTED URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
WITH A COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION COMPONENT

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║        Box 1.  Self-help transformation of Government-built flats: the case of Helwan, Egypt        ║
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* *Background*

      Helwan town project, southwest of Cairo, was built in the early 1960s to house a low-income community mainly employed in the nearby industrial complex. The public housing project covers about 41 ha, with 6,800 flats built in five storey walk-ups, and serviced with shops, schools and a mosque. In the early 1980s the Government initiated measures to transfer tenure of the public housing to sitting tenants.

* *Community initiatives*

      The recent granting of tenure to tenants resulted in marked improvements in the physical environment. <u>The inhabitants carried out upgrading and clean-up campaigns, including housing construction and extension and self-help improvements</u>. Construction activities were gradually closing-up open spaces between blocks, as originally planned in the formal layout, resulting in a more traditional urban layout of narrow streets and alleyways. Yet, this seems to be more suited to the harsh desert climate of Egypt, while the survey undertaken revealed an enhanced sense of community and neighbourhood identity which did not exist before.

* *Programme's impact*

      This shows the benefits of the enabling role that the public sector can perform (providing security of tenure); and the positive response of the community, which given the right incentives, shows willingness, ability and innovation to participate in upgrading its living environment.

Source: Mathey et al, eds, *Beyond Self-Help Housing*, 1991.
(The participatory elements are shown in underlined type.)

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║              Box 2.  East Wahdat upgrading project: Amman, Jordan              ║
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* *Background*

      About 25% of the population of Amman lives below the poverty line, predominantly in informal settlements with no secured tenure and lacking basic services and social facilities. The Urban Development Department (UDD), with funding from the World Bank, was set up in 1978 to manage sites and services and upgrading projects on a cost-recovery basis.

* *Project components*

      In 1980, the East Wahdat upgrading project was initiated, covering about 8 hectares with 5,000 inhabitants, mainly refugees, poor and unemployed. The area was were densely populated, with houses built of temporary material and sanitation of very poor quality. The project revolved around provision of secure tenure, basic infrastructure, vocational training, loans for land purchase and housing construction, and for small business development. Resident groups were set up through UDD and community initiatives. Various income-generating and upgrading activities were encouraged.

* *Mode of partnership and participation*

      <u>Consultation between UDD, resident committees and beneficiaries on operational activities, modes of finance, cost recovery</u>.

* *Project's impact*

      Over 500 serviced plots were made available, benefiting 4,000 people. Home and infrastructure improvements were registered with a consequent drop in infant mortality. Investment in small businesses and some improvement in income were also reported. UDD maintained an active contact in the field, using field workers from within the community as much as possible. Training and skill improvements were emphasized throughout. The project became a model replicated in other low-income areas. Replication, however, had varying degrees of success. Some of the obstacles noted were the heavy financial burden on the beneficiaries in terms of cost-recovery; confusion about the sharing of responsibility for maintenance; and poor articulation of the transfer of administrative, financial and operational responsibility to local management.

Source: UNDP, 1995, monograph: 121-123.
(The participatory elements are shown in underlined type.)

Box 3. The Zabbaleen environment and development programme, Cairo, Egypt

* *Background*

Cairo, under the pressure of urban growth, is constrained by inadequate delivery of basic services, particularly in waste collection and processing. The project was conceived to improve the abysmal environmental conditions prevailing in Muqattam settlement, housing the Zabbaleen community, half of Cairo's garbage collectors.

* *Programme components*

A number of experimental activities were undertaken over a span of 10 years. They involved the setting of an efficient solid waste management model, using low-cost and innovative techniques; expanding and diversifying the income base of the community. Upgrading activities were integrated with the provision of social services, skill training, and loan schemes for small business development, targeting female headed households.

* *Mode of partnership and participation*

<u>Government, NGOs and community groups, private sector and international aid agencies (World Bank, AID, OXFAM European Community and Ford Foundation). Project originated from community groups and private sector companies; continuous consultation was pursued</u>.

* *Project impact*

Most visibly, it transformed the physical appearance of the settlement, with improved sanitary, health and social conditions. It has activated the local economy and increased household income by approximately 20 fold. Yet some of the noted obstacles were the poor coordination among the different partners, and the uneven participation among community members, favoring the community's elites in decision-making who reaped a larger share of the benefits.

Source: UNDP, 1995, monograph: 124-127.
(The participatory elements are shown in underlined type.)

Box 4. Post-earthquake reconstruction in Dhamar region, Yemen

* *Background*

The Dhamar Province in Yemen was hit by an earthquake in 1980, which resulted in the total destruction of 14,698 houses and damage of over 27,000 others. An emergency reconstruction project was initiated, with assistance from regional and international funding agencies, and under the supervision of the Supreme Council for Reconstruction of Dhamar, established in 1982 by the Government. The council was responsible for managing reconstruction, training and emergency relief works.

* *Project components*

Reconstruction activities were undertaken in parallel with a community training program on the use of appropriate building material and earthquake-resistant techniques. A self-help approach was adopted, with the council providing material, technical advice and a limited funding scheme to local communities.

* *Mode of partnership and participation*

Government initiation of the project. <u>Design plans for housing prototypes were prepared in consultation with local communities. Self-help approach with government technical, financial and institutional assistance</u>.

* *Project's impact*

The success of the project lies in its community-based planning and implementation efforts. The government played an enabling role by establishing the necessary institutional structure at the province level, which facilitated the transfer of resources to local communities. The use of local building material and techniques were emphasized, training the communities on safer construction methods and early detection <u>systems, which were replicated in other parts of the country</u>.

Source: ESCWA, 1993, Overview of human settlements policies and programmes in the Arab region: 101-102.
(The participatory elements are shown in underlined type.)

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