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Internal Migration and Urban Food Security: Findings from Cairo

by
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1. Introduction:

Greater Cairo is the largest metropolitan area in Egypt, the Arab World, and Africa. With the concentration of industries, services, and job opportunities, Cairo is a historical destination area of internal migration for all other Egyptian regions. The informal Economy in Cairo comprises about 40% of the economic activity, in addition to the construction boom that Cairo witnesses in recent years attracts casual laborers, circular migrants, and semi-skilled workers from rural governorates to join the capital's economy. Internal migrants usually reside in slum areas in Cairo under humiliating living conditions. This presentation sheds some light on internal migration in Egypt with a special focus on migration to Cairo and food security among new and established migrants.

2. Internal Migration in Egypt

Compared to international standards, internal migration in Egypt is low (Herrera & Badr 2012). According to the last population census (2006), the total number of lifetime internal migrants in Egypt was 4.8 million representing about 6.6% of the total population (72.8 million).

2.1 Historical Development:

Historically, internal migration after Egypt's independence in 1956 was characterized by the following features:

1. Migration from South to North due to the fact that North was more developed than the South, in addition to the concentration of economic activities in the

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- North, and the concentration of University Education and advanced health centers in the North.
2. Migration from rural to urban where to match the expansion of industry in the north and the need for labor force to work in the industrial zones created at the time of Nasser around Cairo and in the Nile Delta governorates.
 3. Migration from the Nile Valley governorates to the Suez Canal governorates and the frontier governorates.

In the last three decades internal migration was characterized by the following features:

1. Continuation of the South to North migration pattern, but mainly to join the informal economic activities rather than representing an immediate need as was the case in the early phase.
2. A decreasing trend of rural/urban migration due to the dwindling gap between urban and rural regarding basic services, infrastructure and the widespread of educational and health services in all regions.
3. Migration from the core of mega cities to the new cities established in the 1970s such as 6 of October city, and 10th of Ramadan city. This type of migration attracts middle and upper-middle class people.
4. Migration from the core of mega cities to the newly established resorts and compounds in the desert such as Madinaty, Al-Rehab, and Fifth Settlement. This type of migration attracts the *nouveau riche* and high class people.
5. Migration from the core of mega cities to the peripheries – including slum areas and semi-urban areas - in search for cheap housing units and escaping economic pressures.
6. Direct migration to slum areas around mega cities such as Cairo and Alexandria. In addition, about 1.5 million Egyptians who cannot find housing elsewhere live among the dead in Cairo's cemeteries; known as the Cities of the Dead.

2.2 Reasons of Internal Migration

In the last three decades, internal migrants in Egypt were more often forced to move by dire economic necessity rather than the wish to seek a better living situation (Zohry 2009). The following factors are of the main motive for internal migration in Egypt:

a) Mounting Demographic Pressure:

Mounting demographic pressure is often inferred from the rising population density and rapid population growth in the twentieth century. Demographic pressure is not in itself a cause of migration; it becomes a causal factor when mediated through a relationship with economic resources such as employment, income, or land. In Egypt, high population density is assumed to interact most significantly with the extent of cultivable land. As the pressure increases, a population increment which cannot live off the land has to go somewhere; migration thus acts as a 'safety-valve' (Zohry 2002).

b) Declining Economic Opportunities:

Declining economic opportunities are explained in the case of rural areas in terms of the increasing number of landless families, the increasing fragmentation of land-holdings due to inheritance, thus making it progressively more difficult for a family to support itself, and the low level of wages for those who can find employment in their governorates of origin (Toth 1999). When there is limited demand for agricultural laborers, poor peasants were found to temporarily migrate to Cairo in search of unskilled work. A study by Aldakhil (1999) suggests that low income levels in Egyptian rural governorates encourage people to move towards high-income governorates. Theoretically, this should mean that inter-governorate wage differentials have been narrowed by migration, but the statistical evidence to verify this hypothesis hardly exists.

c) The economic power of mega cities:

Most studies of Egyptian migration have highlighted the tremendous concentration of production, employment opportunities, services, wealth, and political power in Egypt's major urban areas, especially Cairo and Alexandria. This concentration has made them unrivalled magnets for the country's internal migrants from both rural and smaller urban areas (Zohry 2002; 2005).

Data on internal migration in the last population census (2006) is incomplete. The Statistical Agency collected data on lifetime migration and published one table on the reasons of internal migration. As indicated in Table 1 below, the main reason of migration is accompanying family (28.8% of total migrants), followed by marriage (35.9% of total migrants), and then comes work as a reason for internal migration (23.2% of total migrants). Analysis of the reasons of migration by sex indicates that females, almost, have no say in the decision of migration where data indicates that 44.5% of them migrate because of marriage and 43.8% migrate to accompany family members who migrated before. The reasons behind male migration are mainly economic with 44.7% of males migrate for work.

Table 1
Reasons of Internal Migration by Sex, Egypt 2006

Reason of Migration	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Work	44.7	2.8	23.2
Study	3.1	1.4	2.2
Marriage	12.3	44.5	28.8
Divorce/Widow	0.2	1.1	0.6
Companion	27.5	43.8	35.9
Other Reasons	12.3	6.4	9.3
Total (%)	100	100	100
Total (N)	2,327,921	2,445,561	4,773,482

Source: Calculated from the data of 2006 Population Census, CAPMAS

3. Migration to Cairo

In the outskirts of Cairo lies a belt of informal areas that hosts migrants from the old and crowded areas of the capital and from other governorates. Migration from the old districts of the city to the peripheries has increased in the last two decades among families that face difficulties in securing housing units with reasonable rent rates. Moreover, such peripheries are more attractive to the newly migrated individuals and families to the capital than the center since they provide a social live similar to origin areas than the modern center of the city.

3.1 Reasons of migration to Cairo

As indicated in Table 2 below, the main reason of migration is marriage (34.4% of total migrants), followed by accompanying family (31.6% of total migrants), and then comes work as a reason for internal migration (22.3% of total migrants). Analysis of the reasons of migration by sex indicates that females, almost, have no say in the decision of migration where data indicates that 48.5% of them migrate because of marriage and 39.8% migrate to accompany family members who migrated before. The reasons behind male migration are mainly economic with 41.8% of males migrate for work.

Table 2

Reason of Migration to Greater Cairo Region by Governorate and Sex, Egypt 2006

Governorate	Sex	Reason of Migration						Total (%)	Total (N)
		Work	Study	Marriage	Divorce/ Widow	Companion	Other		
Cairo	M	52.0	4.9	14.2	0.2	20.8	7.9	100	494,908
	F	4.1	2.1	51.4	1.2	35.4	5.8	100	500,992
	T	27.9	3.5	32.9	0.7	28.1	6.9	100	995,900
Giza	M	38.4	2.6	23.5	0.3	24.0	11.4	100	456,153
	F	3.6	1.5	44.8	1.5	42.8	5.8	100	457,000
	T	20.9	2.0	34.2	0.9	33.4	8.6	100	913,153
Kalioubyia	M	30.0	0.9	24.4	0.2	26.6	17.9	100	297,836
	F	1.6	0.6	49.1	1.1	42.5	5.1	100	313,451
	T	15.4	0.8	37.0	0.7	34.8	11.4	100	611,287
Total GCR	M	41.8	3.1	20.0	0.2	23.4	11.6	100	1,248,897
	F	3.3	1.5	48.5	1.3	39.8	5.6	100	1,271,443
	T	22.3	2.3	34.4	0.8	31.6	8.6	100	2,520,340

Source: Calculated from 2006 Population Census, CAPMAS

3.2 Modes of Adjustment

A common feature in the adjustment pattern among migrants is seeking help from relatives or folk-kin in the new community in finding a place to live, and/or employment, and smoothing the acquaintance with the new community. The new migrants often reside with or near older migrants from their original community. This tends to create concentrated pockets of migrants from closely-related backgrounds in an otherwise impersonal urban world. These clusters also assist in finding employment nearby or in places where relatives, friends, and people of similar background are employed (Zohry 2002; 2005).

Moreover, the values of kinship and solidarity play a major role in attracting new arrivals from different regions and governorates; it is also common in such areas to find what can be called "satellite villages" or gathering of people from the same governorate, district, or village. Irregular direct means of transportation - usually minibuses – run between such satellite villages and villages of origin. Remittances are transferred through drivers and passengers, hand to hand, while region-specific products, usually food, are transmitted from origin to destination using the same means of transportation.

3.3 Migration and the growth of Slum areas in Cairo:

Slum areas are the outcomes of failed policies, neglect, and bad governance that prevailed in the last few decades in Egypt. Slum areas lack a quality basic services and infrastructure. Government interventions were not enough to curb the expanding trends of slum areas.

The major reason behind the expansion of slum/unplanned areas in and around Cairo is the internal migration; within the Greater Cairo Region (GCR) and from other Governorates to the GCR. As shown in Table 3 below and as per the most recent available data (2008), the total number of slum areas in the GCR was 156 areas; about half of these areas belong to Cairo governorate, 58 areas in Kalubiya, and 23 areas in Giza. The total number of inhabitants of these slum areas was about 6.5 million. Slum inhabitants in Cairo governorates were about 3.1 million, followed by Giza (about 2.2

million), and Kalubiya with about 1.2 million inhabitants. Slum dwellers in the GCR comprised more than 50% of the total slum dwellers in Egypt.

Table 3
Number of Slum Areas and their population in Greater Cairo, 2008

Governorate	Number of Slum Areas	No of Slum Dwellers	% to slum dwellers in Egypt
Cairo	75	3,125,994	25.7
Giza	23	2,177,164	17.9
Kalubiya	58	1,162,746	9.6
GCR	156	6,465,904	53.2

Source: CAPMAS; a study done in 2008.

4. Food Security and Migration

Rapid population growth in the last four decades led the construction of more residential areas on the fertile strip of arable land of the Nile Valley and the Nile delta. This expansion of cement columns greatly reduced the productivity of agricultural sector. At the same time, overpopulation increased the demand for food. In 1960s Egypt was self sufficient in all food products except wheat where domestic product represented about 70%. Since 1960s, the gap has increased gradually. Currently Egypt imports about 40% of its food. The agricultural land base totals about 3.5 million hectare (8.4 million feddan). Of this agricultural land, 3.276 million hectare (7.8 million Feddan) lie within the Nile Basin and Nile Delta, and the remaining 210 thousand hectare (500 thousand feddan) are rain-fed or in the oases. Of the total area of the Nile Basin and Delta, about 2.268 hectare (5.4 million feddan) are old lands, the remaining 1.008 million hectare (2.4 million feddan) are new reclaimed lands.

4.1 Food Security in the GCR

About 40 percent of the capital's economy is informal. Most of migrants to the capital are absorbed in the informal economy where the mechanisms of employment in this sector

are more flexible than formal economy. Moreover, the underemployment in the government and public sector and the lack of job opportunities in the formal private sector pushes fresh graduates to join the informal economy.

Food insecurity affects the GCR more than any other region in Egypt due to the dependence of this region on the supply chain that convey food items from rural areas in other regions, the high population density and concentration, and the dependence on informal sector of the capital's economy. In addition, Egypt nowadays witnesses a shortage in gas that makes it difficult to satisfy the needs for the transportation sector, especially the subsidized gas for truck which resulted in the growth of a parallel market for gas which in turn increases the cost of transportation of goods and commodities.

4.2 Income and Expenditure on Food

Data of the household income and expenditure 2005 show that Egyptians spend about 50% of their budget on food. The results of this survey indicate that the higher is the income; the lower is the percent of budget spent on food (Sims, Kamal & Solomon 2008). With minor differences between different areas in the GCR and socioeconomic groups, about 97% of household heads are the primary providers for their families. However, the prevalence of sons and daughters as secondary household income providers is relatively high among the poor and slum areas where about 17% of other family members contribute to the income of the family (UN-HABITAT 2011). Slum areas are major sources for child labor also.

4.3 Cairo Food Security after the January 25th Revolution

After the January 25th 2011 revolution Cairo, as well as other regions, witnessed a food crisis due to the interruption of supply chains and the tendency of citizens to secure enough food to satisfy their basic needs at the time of the curfew that associated demonstrations has unsettled daily life and created household shortage of food basics such as bread, beans, and rice. With the curfew, there were no restaurants, food or gas. Basic goods were in shortage.

Egyptians voted for Islamic parties hoping for better life but it seems after the parliament elections and the presidential elections that food shortage is still the major problem that faces the government and the people. It's worth mentioning that food shortage in rural was less prevalent than urban due to the partial dependence on local products.

5. Conclusion

Urban areas are more affected by the fluctuations in food prices and the food supply chain than rural areas. Evidence from the post revolution Cairo indicates that food insecurity and the interruption of food chains affect migrants and non-migrants. However, due to the concentration of migrants in slum areas it seems that they are more affected by food insecurity than established residents.

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