



Development Plans & their Victims: Food Aid Villages around Lake Nasser



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This report discusses the villages of Food Aid Project around Lake Nasser.

The Food Aid Project is a development project established upon an agreement between Egypt, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The project extends to Shalateen, North Sinai, El Alamein, Kafr El Sheikh, Marsa Matruh and Lake Nasser. It was implemented first in Lake Nasser in 1990 and finished in 2011, on 3 phases; each phase has its requirements. Basically, the project is based on the resettlement of families from Upper Egypt around Lake Nasser and their support to reclaim the land there. However, the project was not implemented as planned, and it got worst until the state abandoned it. Meanwhile, Food Aid villages' families had been already relocated to the project's barren land amid promises of development and construction of typical villages to them. Following years, the development, promises and hopes vanished, while the real thing was how the families are suffering as a consequence of the development attempt failure. Presently, they have neither the basic necessities, nor the infrastructure necessary to run any lives. They live under threat in their land, houses and health, after they left their villages and believed in the state's project to reclaim the desert.

This report presents a detailed description of the project, its agreements and its implementation phases. It shows the state of affairs of Food Aid villages along with their families' lost rights.

Acknowledgement

The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) along with Social Justice Platform's research team extend thanks and appreciation to the villagers of Food Aid villages around Lake Nasser for their series cooperation, their provision of information necessary to complete this report as well as their welcome to the field research team during their visits.

To our knowledge; love, cordiality and generosity are what we are accustomed to receive from the people of Upper Egypt, where originality, goodness and warm reception do exist. We also express our greatest pride to them and commend their struggle through peaceful resistance over the past years; giving a rare example of alliance, solidarity, belongingness and belief in the right to a dignified life as guaranteed by the Constitution to be citizens and partners in this country.

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1-Introduction

First: Origin of the new urban planning, the notion of relocating the construction from the narrow strip of land along the Nile to new areas and the genesis of settlement project in Egypt .

The area of Arab Republic of Egypt is more than one million square kilometers; only a small area of approximately 34500 square kilometers of it is along the Nile Valley and Delta. In comparison with Egypt's total area, the cultivated area is undoubtedly very small, which should serve nearly 96 million inhabitants, pursuant to the official statistics. Accordingly, the cultivated areas, in comparison with the growing population, continue to shrink. Such a matter, according to the international developmental vision of Egypt, has many adverse consequences; whether on job opportunities or the sufficiency of crops to meet the citizens' needs. Timothy Mitchell, a writer, said that the notion that the Nile and its population density is one of the major obstacles to development and progress in Egypt has been completely stereotyped and became a natural and acceptable image, though the population density is completely acceptable in other countries such as China. Stereotyping such an image leads to overlooking many problems, such as income inequality, marginalization, corruption and other institutional problems relevant to the internal and international policies. Many international experts see that such a notion along with the use of technology are the answer to

deal with problems relevant to poverty, food and employment in Egypt. However, Food Aid villages like other projects prove the complete failure of this vision, lead us to reorder our priorities and orient our thinking towards basic problems, such as poverty, unemployment and food shortage in Egypt.

The government, in 1950s, had many studies to achieve the goal of resettling the population away from the banks of the Nile. Therefore, it cooperated with local and international organizations such as (The Danish International Development Agency «DANIDA») to attain optimal utilization of human, economic and natural resources through spreading and qualifying the urban field by attracting population to locations that have safe economic resources and environmental features, redistributing the population and getting out of the narrow valley and delta that lasted for thousand years. This is to maintain the agricultural land, and to maximize the benefit from the economic and natural resources that have not been correctly used yet.

Many studies analyzed the Egyptian urban planning for the purpose of determining its problems. Apparently, its most important problems are (High population density to the extent that people densely locate in certain areas- increasing rates of unplanned growth in Egypt- low environmental criteria in the urban settlements- extending construction on agricultural land). The studies, however, have identified the need to determine (The population size needed to be relocated from the Nile Valley and Delta- the areas of economic potential and reliable natural resources- areas suitable for construction and development- infrastructure supports the proposed development areas- the possibility of linking the new urban areas with the existing ones).

Hence, the Egyptian government requested a grant from International Labor Organization (ILO), and it was agreed on the training program to develop the resettlement communities in the new areas. The presidential decree No. 198 of 1985 of a USD 1,025,402 grant was issued as a first stage. The second stage agreement was based upon the presidential decree no. 133 of 1988; whereas the international contribution was estimated at USD 2,480,131, while the Egyptian government contribution was estimated at EGP 2,788,600.

Hence, the Egyptian government put together a five-year plan for the development and increase of agricultural production 1982/1983- 1986/1987 to meet the current needs of population. It developed a main objective policy, which is the horizontal expansion of the agricultural land (through reclaiming new plots in desert areas), for the purpose of the settlement of a large number of people as well as the increase of agricultural production and rural employment). The High Dam construction was among the most important elements of that policy. In addition to that, it allows the increase of irrigated land to more than 1 million acres. Some 1.1 million acres of new land were reclaimed during 1953-1979. Throughout the five-year plan (1979-1983), other plots of land, around 660,000 acres, were reclaimed (by using

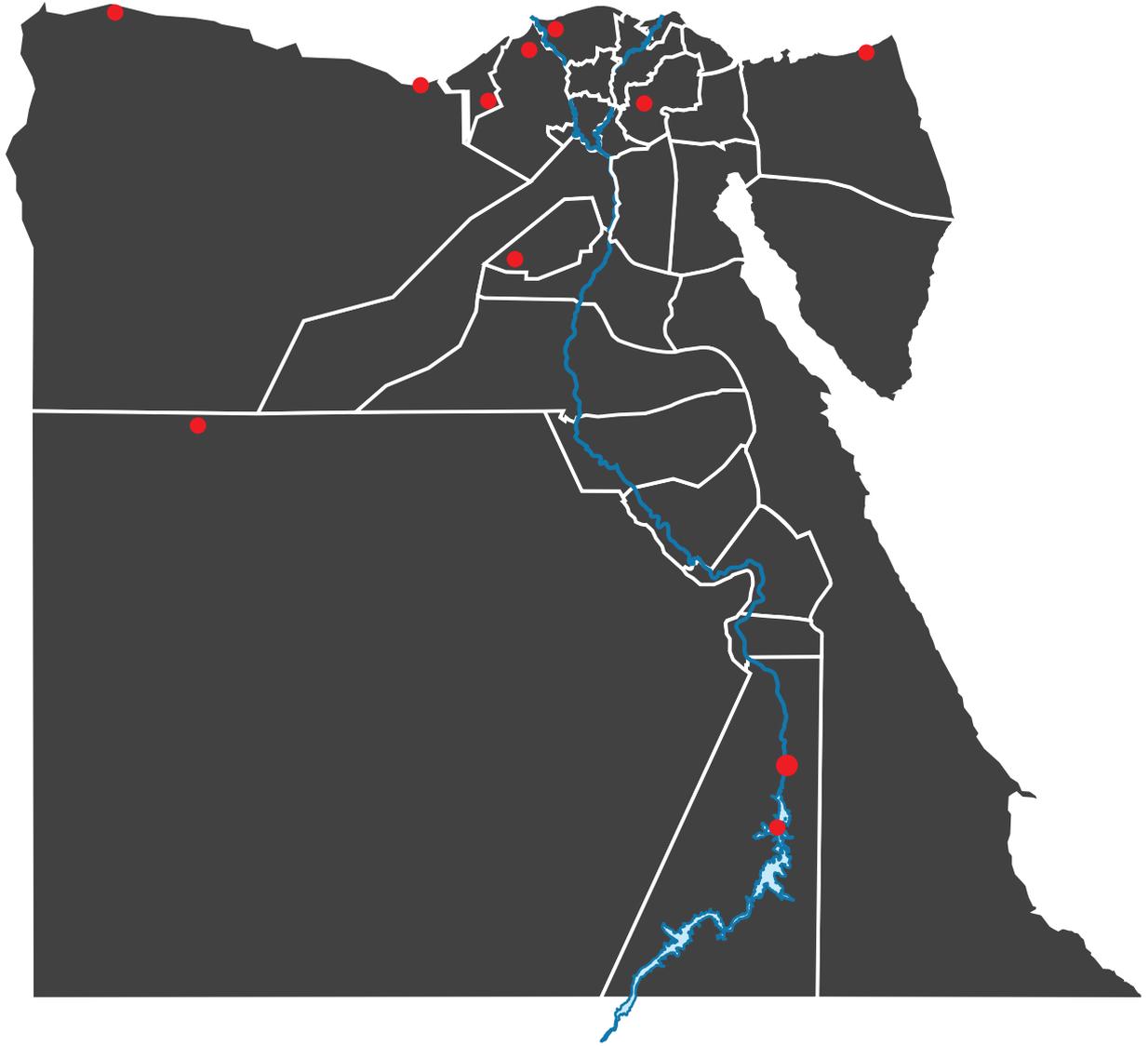
the Nile water, groundwater and rainwater). From 1967 to 1979, the Egyptian government had been resettling about 108,000 beneficiaries of the new land. Also, the resettlement of 6800 beneficiary families was taken into account in the new plan, and part of the land would be utilized to produce some agricultural industries. The Egyptian government follows the policy of distributing as much land as possible to the beneficiary families under the ownership system.

In the pursuit of the resettlement and land reclamation program implementation, the government had resorted to foreign aid, particularly WFP that has been supporting the land reclamation since 1970 through distributing food on workers and beneficiary families until they reach the self-sufficiency stage. To achieve more national goals in this program, ILO cooperated with WFP in sending missions and grants for the Food Aid projects; these projects are concerned with the resettlement of the penniless and poor farmers, who have no agricultural land and live overcrowded rural areas across Egypt. The resettlement in the new land process created several opportunities to work in the economic, social and administrative units of the new local communities.

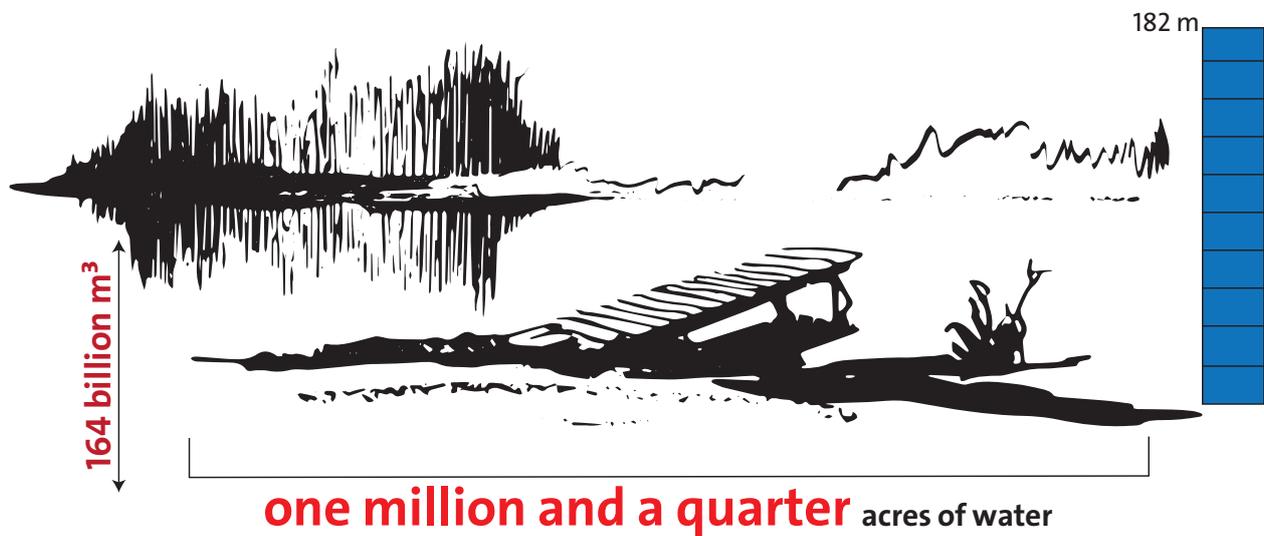
To provide the economic needs for the beneficiaries, the government established the «Cooperative Services for Reclaimed Land Sector» that encompassed 150 local associations, 15 joint associations and a national cooperative in 1979. The local associations include 300 and 500 beneficiary families (they own an area of 1000 to 2000 acres), while the joint associations have between 10 to 12 local ones; as the growth of the cooperative sector in the reclaimed land coincides with the continuation of integrated development programs. The agricultural cooperatives are the most important requirements of farmers owing to their important role in storing crops, marketing them, providing production inputs and distributing advances as well all goods in the new land. As the government plans to reclaim more plots of land, it also plans to establish cooperatives in the new reclamation areas; regarding it key institutions for the beneficiaries.

The Settlement Program's Target Areas were:

Komo Ombo- San Al-Hagar (Tanis)- Alexandria- Marsa Matrouh- North Sinai- North of the lake- Kafr Al Shiekh- Siwa- Al Fayoum- Eastern and Western North Coast- Shores of Lake Nasser in Aswan



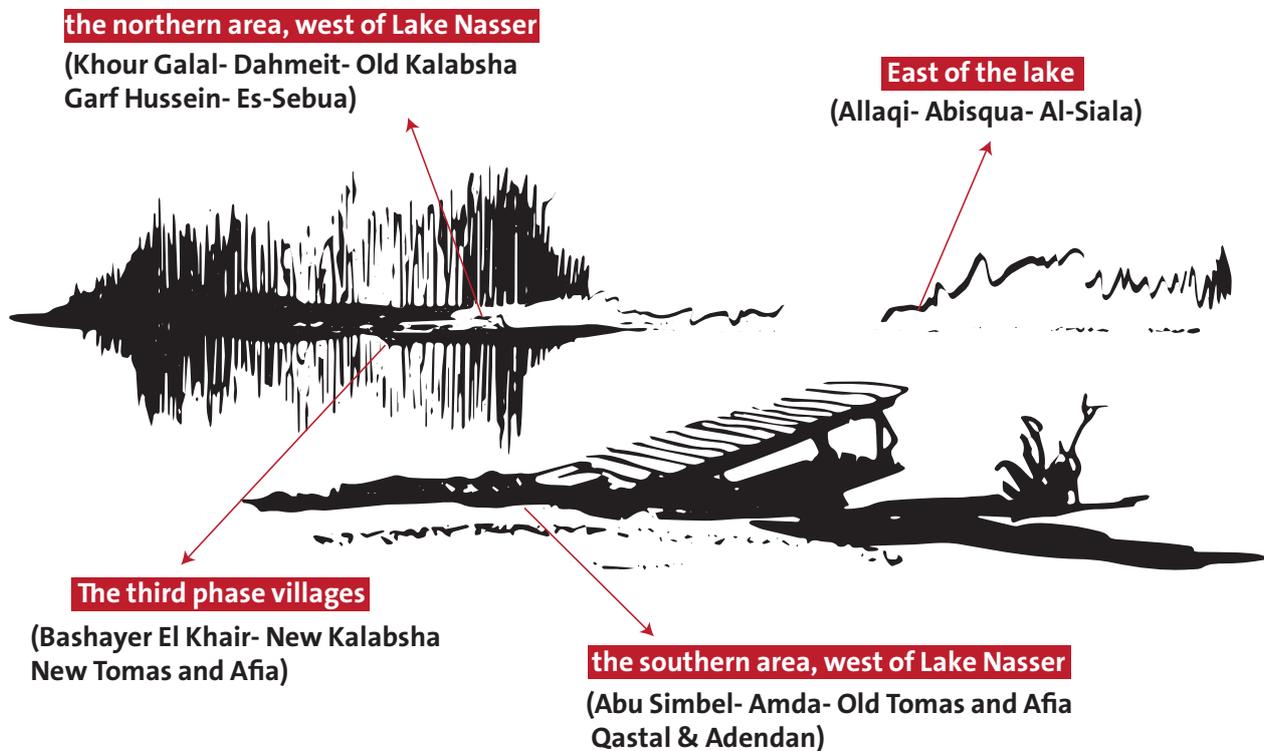
Second, Settlement and Land Reclamation along the Shores of Lake Nasser:



In this study, we are concerned with the shores of Lake Nasser that were formed as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, between 1963 and 1965, and its continuing water storage for long years until the current level stabilized at an average of 174 meters above sea level, and thus formed a water body of an area of 866.000 acres. Its maximum capacity is 164 billion m³ of water at the highest level, 182 m above sea level, forming an area of about one million and a quarter acres of water. The length of Lake Nasser from the wall of the High Dam in the north, up to the waterfalls of Dal village in Sudan in the south is about 500 km; about 150 km of which is in Sudan. Lake Nasser is Egypt's permanent water reservoir from which water is drawn daily for uses specified by the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources in view of Egypt's annual share of the Nile water, which is regulated by international agreements at 50.5 billion cubic meters annually.

Third: Food Aid Villages Project:

The Establishment of Food Aid villages in Lake Nasser began in 1990, till 2004.



Lake Nasser is one of the richest areas in Egypt. It has untapped affluent resources. The government initiated to conduct several studies; attempting to develop the lake area, use its sources, expand the agricultural land in Egypt, and relocate the population density from the densely-populated Nile Valley and Delta through the settlement around the under-populated Lake Nasser study. In order to use this potential, the government put together a multi-phase plan to develop this area and relocate about 4500 families, as a first stage, during the period (1990:1997), while 3100 families, as a second stage, were resettled during the period from (1997:2004), and finally about 4600 families, as a third stage, that started in 2004 and lasted till the end of resettlement project. In 2008, a presidential decree No. 287 of the year 2008 regarding the aids of World Food Program (WFP) to create fixed assets for the poor communities in Lake Nasser area was issued and lasted for 4 years (2007:2011). The government cooperated with local and international entities to finish this project, including Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Norwegian Government, the European Union (EU), Social Fund for Development (SFD), PBDAC, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International

Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Development Association (IDA). This cooperation was to increase the agricultural areas, enhance the food security in Egypt, utilize the sources of Lake Nasser, and resettle in new desert areas so as to relocate people from the crowded places in the old area of Nile Valley and Delta to the new areas.

The Egyptian government signed a basic agreement with the United Nations (UN) through Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1968. A presidential decree no. 476 of 1988 was issued to sign the agreement of the first phase of settlement, which was approved by the People's Assembly during a session held on 31-05-1988. To sign the agreement of the second phase, a presidential decree no. 267 of 1998 was issued; the presidential decree no. 283 of 2003 was issued to sign the third phase agreement. The establishment of Food Aid villages in Lake Nasser began in 1990, till 2004. In the northern area, west of Lake Nasser, there are the villages (Khour Galal- Dahmeit- Old Kalabsha- Garf Hussein- Es-Sebua), while in the southern area, west of Lake Nasser; there are the villages of (Abu Simbel- Amda- Old Tomas and Afia- Qastal & Adendan). In east of the lake, there are (Allaqi- Abisqua- Al-Siala) villages. The third phase villages are: (Bashayer El Khair- New Kalabsha- New Tomas and Afia).

2-Methodology

This report was prepared by depending on several field visits in 2016 that included individual and group interviews by the field research team. These interviews were in the villages of Garf Hussein, Abu Droua, Al-Baft and Bashayer El Khair, affiliated to Food Aid Project to relocate the poor families on the shores of Lake Nasser.

Those interviews, which were about the situation of those villages, were conducted with the families according to their wishes along with maintaining their rights of not publishing their names or any personal data.

It was taken into consideration that the interviews encompass most of the strata of society in different age groups, elders, youth, children and women; depending on the ethnographic approach to access information that are distinguished with accuracy and impartiality.

Due to the general nature of the environment in Upper Egypt, which prevents access to villages, more than one mediator was asked to help in facilitating entry and interviewing.

The visits schedule was as follows:

Date	Visit Duration	Number of Interviews
April 2016	2 days	23 interviews
May 2016	4 days	38 interviews
June 2016	1 day	1 interview
July 2016	1 day	1 interview
August 2016	1day	1 interview
September 2016	1 day	1 interview
October 2016	1 day	1 interview
Total: 7 Months	11 days	66 interviews

3-Food Aid Project's Settlement Phases According to the Agreement:

Phase I

The Egyptian government demanded a grant from FAO with which Egypt signed the basic Agreement in September 1968 to help enhance the food security in Egypt. In 1988, the Egyptian government demanded aid from WFP for the purpose of implementing a land development and settlement project in Lake Nasser area (Food Aid Project No. 3214). A presidential decree no. 476 of 1988 on the agreement of Food Aid in Lake Nasser was issued after it was approved during a session of the People's Assembly on 31-5-1989. Its aim was relocating poor farmers and fishing boats workers (locally known as: Al-Araqa), as well as redistributing population through relocating 4500 families in Lake Nasser area, improving their standards of living, developing the agricultural lands and fishing industry, boosting tourist potential and developing the mining sector.

Within the framework of the national developmental plan between 1987 and 1992, the Egyptian government put together a plan to develop Lake Nasser area. It authorized the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development, as its representative, to supervise the agreement enforcement, as the ministry would be the focal point between the Egyptian government and FAO. The latter authorized the project manager of Food Aid Project to be its representative and the focal point with the Egyptian government.

The first phase Agreement stipulated that the settlement's target groups shall be divided into 2 groups:

- **The Group of farmers:** It consists of 2300 families of farmers and agricultural wage earners; 5 acres shall be allocated to each family so as to settle in the land above the contour line 182, about 11500 acres, provided that this land shall be cultivated fruit trees, including (date palm, lemon, oranges, mangoes and guava); 70 trees per one acre, in addition to the remaining crops in every acres of the lake area.
- **The Group of workers and fishers:** Those are who work on fishing boats «Al-Araqa». This group consists of 2200 families. 5 acres shall be allocated to each family as usufruct, with total of 11000 acres on the shores of Lake Nasser in the lower areas under the contour line 182.

The Agreement also obliged the Egyptian government to provide employees, help the families in settlement and land reclamation, establish nurseries, provide

irrigation methods, and finish the infrastructure projects; including the potable water, schools, health clinics, construction of side roads to connect these villages to main roads, and the allocation of the project budget. This program provides the settlers with food aid provided that the families pay 10% of the food rations' value, at the local prices, and these sums (EGP 1,673,100) will be restored back in the form of services and infrastructure. These rations are provided as aid to the farmers because those plots of land need almost 3 years to reap considerable profits. Thus, these rations are provided to support the farmers and encourage them to produce.

(G.M) said:

“The project was providing services during the first years of settlement. It was helping in the foodstuffs provision and likewise. That was because the land was barren and until it reap profits, the project would finish the aid then.”

In addition, they were providing a sum of EGP 2000 (1500 as a loan, and 500 as a non-refundable grant) as aid to the families to build their houses. Equally, the Egyptian government is committed to pay a similar sum to the amounts collected from the home loans so as to be restored back to the families in the form of services and infrastructure. The sum shall be deposited in a commercial bank and it shall be divided as follows (50% of the amount shall be allocated to establish a loans fund to the farmers and fishers- 25% shall be allocated as a capital for establishing cooperatives- 10% shall be allocated to the settlement-related activities- 15% shall be allocated to set up training productive centers for women).

The total cost of relocation in the first phase is worthy about USD 47,696,313.

Phase II

The Egyptian government signed an agreement with FAO to implement the first extension of the original phase that was started in 1989 in the Food Aid Project, for which the presidential decree no. 267 of 1998 was issued and published in the official gazette on 23-01-1998.

The purpose of the second phase was the relocation of more poor families in Lake Nasser area so as to increase their incomes and secure their food. Also, it was to achieve the goals of the Egyptian government of expanding the agricultural land and evacuating the Nile Valley and Delta from the population density to new areas.

The second phase agreement stipulated the following: the relocation of 3100 families of the poor farmers and the needy from the upper governorates in particular, and the lower governorates either, in 9 different settlements on an area of 15,500 acres provided that 5 acres are allocated to each breadwinner farmer.

However, two more acres are allocated for those who are accompanied by their wives for permanent accommodation. In case of relocating all farmers along with their wives permanently, the total area will be increased to be 21,700 acres.

The Egyptian government shall help the families in relocation and provide all services, irrigation methods (Flexible polyethylene or rubber pipes), and infrastructure projects, and construct side roads to link these villages to main roads.

FAO's food program shall provide food aid to the settlers, and the families shall waive 15% of these food rations' prices, at the local prices, so that those sums will be restored back in forms of services and infrastructures to the families (EGP 6,062,283, plus the remaining balance of the previous phase that is worthy EGP 942,756. So, the total balance is EGP 7,005,039).

This ration is provided to assist the farmers because those pieces of land need almost years to yield considerable profits to them. Therefore, these rations are provided to support the farmers and encourage them to produce; in addition to providing a sum of EGP 2000 (1500 as a loan, while 500 as a non-refundable grant) to help families to build their houses.

Equally, the Egyptian government is committed to pay a similar sum to the amounts collected from the home loans so as to be restored back to the families in the form of services and infrastructure. In the meantime, the project's funds will be deposited in a government bank's current account and run by the chairman of the board of the Food Project. It will be used as follows: (64% of the collected balances to provide interest-free loans to help settlers purchase agriculture supplies- 23% to provide some grants to the settlers' wives and female heads of families as capitals for farming- 13% of the collected balances to the gender program to develop, evaluate and follow up the project so as to increase the biological field inputs and others). The total cost of relocation in the second phase is worthy USD 18,200,255.

According to the processes agreed upon between the government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the UN (World Food Program), the government, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, supervised the agreement implementation, and was a focal point between the Egyptian government and FAO. In the meantime, FAO program authorized the director of the Food Aid Project to represent it and be a focal point with the Egyptian government's representative.

Phase III

The Egyptian government signed an agreement with FAO to implement the second extension of the original phase that was started in 1989 concerning the Food Aid Project, for which the presidential decree no. 283 of 2003 was issued and published in the official gazette on 15-04-2004. Owing to the aforementioned reasons in the second phase agreement, it was agreed on implementing the second extension “Third Phase”.

The third phase Agreement stipulated the following:

The relocation of 4700 beneficiaries on 23,000 acres in 6 settlements at different areas, in addition to providing them with the social infrastructure, provided that 5 acres shall be allocated to each breadwinner farmer. However, two more acres shall be allocated for those who are accompanied by their wives for permanent accommodation. In case of relocating all farmers along with their wives permanently, the total area will be increased to be 32000 acres.

The Egyptian government shall provide the necessities, construct side roads to link these villages to main roads, and allocate the budget necessary for the project. In the meantime, FAO shall provide food aid to settlers, and the latter shall waive 15% of these food rations' prices so that these sums (USD 1,798,897) would be restored back to the settlers in the form of services and infrastructure. This ration, however, is provided to help the farmers for the same mentioned reasons.

The project's funds shall be deposited in a government bank's current account and run by the chairman of the board of the Food Project. It shall be used as follows: (64% of the collected balances to provide interest-free loans to help settlers purchase agriculture supplies- 23% to provide some grants to the settlers' wives and female heads of families as capitals for farming- 13% of the collected balances to the gender program to develop, evaluate and follow up the project so as to increase the biological field inputs and others). The total cost of relocation in the third phase is with an estimate of USD 20,549,084.

Finally: WFP Agreement on Creating Fixed Assets for the Poor Communities in Lake Nasser Area:

The Egyptian government signed an agreement with FAO's food program concerning the aid of WFP to create fixed assets for the poor communities in Lake Nasser area for which the presidential decree no. 287 of 2008 was issued and published in the official gazette on 10-06-2007.

The purpose of this project is aiding the poor communities to confront problems and restrictions that impede them, such as poverty, malnutrition diseases, increasing unemployment and low yields of agricultural land and livestock. This project aims

at achieving the optimum utilization of water resources and agricultural land in Lake Nasser area to facilitate obtaining productive assets as income resources to the poor rural families; whereas the seasonal agriculture depends on the rise and limitation of water level in Lake Nasser, allowing the cultivation of only one type of crops. Such a matter is uneconomical.

Additionally, the families in those areas sustain difficult living conditions as well as the lack of basic services. A recent study, conducted by WFP, revealed that Lake Nasser area- which receives aid from WFP- is one of the poverty-stricken areas in Upper Egypt, and it undergoes a profound lack of basic services.

Even though Egypt, in the past years, has witnessed annual economic growth rates ranging between 3% and 6%, these rates do not manifest the difference of poverty level from one area to another. Whilst the urban areas experienced economic growth that hit almost (8%), other areas such as “Upper Egypt” sustained a negative growth rate for per capita income. Governorates of Upper Egypt- classified as the poorest ones- are the most areas sustaining a lack of food security in Egypt, whereas roughly (34.2%) of the population in those areas live below the poverty line, and (36.4%) of the total population consume low rates of the basics necessary for their supposed daily food needs. In addition, about (55%) of those live in extreme poverty are in Upper Egypt’s governorates, where poverty appears in its worst image.

The proliferation of small and medium-sized agriculture holdings, which exclude many and do not give them their title, helped to increase the rates of poverty in those areas; whereas roughly (47%) of the holders in Upper Egypt are classified within the destitute people group. The share of arable land per capita is less than one acre, while the landholdings to 35% of them range between 1 and 3 acres; hence, the smallholders represent more than 5% of total agriculture land in Upper Egypt region. Also, the area of landholdings is an important indicator with regard to the value of assets and future potential of food production.

In addition, the smallholders (less than 3 acres) are classified as poor as well, because they gain low returns from agriculture coupled with the type of low-yield crops they cultivate associated with inadequate counseling services. Furthermore, they can not afford to purchase livestock and some production inputs; in addition to the lack of borrowing opportunities.

These poor families encourage their children to work so as to face the poverty and hard economic circumstances. Also, they deprive girls of education. They get only the minimum of their needs and pay their prices later, and they participate in what is called “Gamia” (it is a system by which a certain number of persons collect money from each other and give to one of them every month).

The prevalence of poverty and malnutrition in Upper Egypt contradict the government’s implementation of a comprehensive program that provides government support to specific foodstuffs. This program, however, is implemented under the slogan of protecting the poor. These poor and marginalized groups in Upper Egypt are unable to derive much benefit from those programs; whereas

the government started taking steps towards reforming that system through the decision made by the Minister of Supply in 2013 to follow the bread system through specifying certain amounts given by ration cards. Thereafter, several decisions related to changing the subsidy system have been issued. Many of those interested in following developments of the steps are being taken by the state in this regard are turning to follow the statements that the officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issue about how will be the situation in Egypt.

IMF's interventions in the economic sector are resulted from the Egyptian government's dependence on a number of loans provided by the fund to the Egyptian government and successive reviews of the economic performance. Although many changes in the energy and food subsidy systems have been made, the deficit in the state budget or the balance of payment have not disappeared; as the total deficit in the fiscal year 2016/2017 amounted to EGP 635.39 billion. This represents an expected decrease in the total budget deficit for the fiscal year 2015/2016, which was estimated at EGP 664.59 billion. However, we should bear in mind that this decline may not be achieved as budget adjustments usually result in an increase in the expected deficit.

Objectives of the Agreement on Creating Fixed Assets in Lake Nasser:

The creation of fixed assets for the poor communities in Lake Nasser project aims at helping the poor families and communities increase their returns of agriculture and livestock, and providing them with basic services through creating material, social and human assets as follows: material assets that help to improve the living standard within these communities, while the social and human assets will be created through increasing the families' incomes from farming and livestock, improving basic services, providing training opportunities to beneficiaries so as to polish up their skills and raise their awareness of the significance of food habits and sound health.

The project beneficiaries' total number is more or less 15,000; representing the highest proportion of the poor population of Lake Nasser, about 30% of them are women. Selecting the project beneficiaries is based on criteria that are determined by the supervisory commission of the project. It is based on factors that include: economic situation, nutritional status, gender, permanent presence, sense of community, how the economic activities are pertinent to the objectives of the project, and how are they seriously committed to achieving the objectives of the project and its success.

The food aid that WFP quarterly provides to the beneficiaries is valued at \$25 monthly. The total food aid provided by WFP is 6,000 tons that subject to their availability by WFP. Also, the total cost of this project is estimated at USD 9,778,219. The government, however, contributes with EGP 30 to each family monthly,

provided that the collected amounts are deposited in the savings fund. It is expected that the savings fund receives a sum of EGP 4,320,000, in addition to the accumulated savings from the government's contributions during the previous period of this Agreement. The government's contributions shall be deposited to an account in a government bank, and the project's general supervisor and project manager shall be responsible for the financial management; including the project budget and the accounts of all financial transactions. By virtue of this Agreement, the food aid shall not be sold to the beneficiaries, and the government shall ensure that the beneficiaries will not claim any further payments.

According to this Agreement, the government shall authorize the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation as a liaison between the government and WFP regarding the project implementation policy. Also, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation shall appoint a general supervisor to act as a liaison regarding the details of the operation plan.

4-Phases of Project's Settlement as Told by Food Aid Families:

The application for settlement in Lake Nasser area was open, and the poor and destitute families as well as fishing boats workers (aka: Al-Araqa) were accepted. The relocation started early in 1990s, and advertisements were being displayed in the governorates and municipalities' buildings across Egypt. It was implemented on three phases - as we mentioned - until the project was completed according to the Agreement. Later on, it turned into a project to create fixed assets for the poor communities in Lake Nasser area during (2007: 2011).

(M.A) said:

“They displayed ads on banners in the municipality and authorities such as Building of Planning in Aswan, and they had advantages, thus, we came”

(A.Y) said:

“As you know the relocation started early in 1990s, and how it was implemented? People in the towns and governorates told each other that there plots of land and the state will relocate there the people wish, as they will live there with their children. Everyone wants to live there go to submit the required documents: copy of ID, copy of birth certificate and the criminal record certificate.. I mean the main documents needed for any procedure”

The arrival of the poor farmers in the first and second phases was filled with the feelings of hope and joy because of their acceptance of the settlement project; whereas 5 acres shall be allocated to each family. A group of 7 or more families join together and register their information in the settlement records that have the same name, number and date of settlement, and an area of 150-200 acres shall be allocated to them.

(S.K) says:

“They already brought poor people that worked and they were happy with the place. I, either, came here on the hope that I would get 5 acres, or as a group that we would receive plots according to the group number, and give an application or card on which the settlement date and the profession- farmer or fisher- are written.”

(M. A) says:

“What happened during the first and second phases was that they gathered some individuals and gave them a piece of land and called them “a group”. This group has a name and number in the settlement records. The official said that every 7- no less- are a group and they would receive a plot land from 150 to 200 acres. Then, the officials show us the border of the land and inform us with the neighbors.”

The groups’ areas were defined by the width of the lake, from 200 to 600 meters, up to the mountain opposite the lake. The boundary lines of the groups’ land on both sides are determined according to the canals of the neighboring groups’ land; i.e. the land of each group should have part of the lowland under the contour line 182, and part of it in the fixed highland above the contour line 182, whether the group’s families are farmers or fishermen. This matter, however, contradicts the provisions of the Food Aid Agreement and the government’s plan to settle the farmers in the fixed land above the contour line 182 so as to settle in the highland, continue the agricultural production and rely on the permanent agriculture. With regard to the fishing boats (Al-Araqa), the lowlands under the contour line 182 had been allocated them so that the fishermen would use this land in seasonal agriculture during the period when fishing is not permitted in the lake.

(S.H) says:

“The land we were receiving was starting from the lake and takes part from under the contour line 182 and the remaining part was from the highland. They call this “from the sea to the mountain”. This area is called “group”, as the neighbors are on the right and left lines, while the mountain and lake from up and down. If there is a fisherman, they give them a coastal land and high land. And if there a farmer, they give them the same. Everyone takes land along the lake. If you want to plant here, so plant here; i.e. they do not force you. There is no fisherman plant in a coastal land and there is a farmer plants in a high land are above him.”

When each group receives the area of land from the project engineer in charge of each area- called a site manager and responsible for an area of 15,000 to 20,000 acres- each group builds a temporary wicker hut until the families complete the construction of their houses themselves using local materials so that they could obtain a home loan (EGP 1500 as a loan to be paid over ten years- EGP 150 every year by bank checks with serial numbers- and EGP 500 as a non-refundable grant). The engineering management of the project oversees the construction of houses.

(A.M) says:

“The houses were not built randomly; there was site sketch design under the supervision of the engineering management.”

In addition to the food aid, each family receives a home loan on the condition that every beneficiary shall bring his wife and children. The loan as well as the aid ration value is allocated to provide services and develop the infrastructure of every phase.

(S.M) said:

“All the settlers at first came without their children. When we came here, we found everything is ok. But they told us we have to bring our family to be relocated, and we already brought them.”

The project and the Nasser Lake Development Authority are supplying irrigation water to the land of each group, and allocating agricultural crops to them, and then distributing the agricultural activity on each group, and following up its activity by the project engineer responsible for each area of the Food Aid Villages.

(Kh.A) said:

“Once the site manager delivers you the land and connects water, after you buy a machine, he writes a follow-up that proves you are here and what your activity is. For example, he writes how many acres you planted. This follow-up lasts throughout the season. Every week, he writes data on your activity and how many acres are planted tomatoes, for example, or vegetables. Then, he writes a report about each individual of the group and sends it to the settlement management immediately. According to the report, you may receive the food aid, because if you do not have an agricultural activity, you will not receive food aid.”

(F.M) said:

“They bring the diggers of the management to make you a canal and connect the water from the lake. The canal connects the irrigation water from the lake to the highland. They tell that we connected the water to your land, you now plant. And they make you a store in the highland with a length of 30 or 40 meters.”

The food aid villages' farmers are only a living example of diligence and struggle. By their own efforts, they have worked hard to reconstruct the lands allocated to them and sought to turn the desert into green gardens. Every farmer sold everything they own in their towns of origin, or even borrowed so as to reconstruct

and reclaim the land, and to turn the desert sands into meadows. The farmers continued to develop their land, the irrigation methods and canals through depending on the profits from the sale of their agricultural crops; hoping to achieve stability and live a decent life by their own efforts. This situation continued in the same manner. Such continuation attracted many people to be settled in the first and second phases, and the numbers were increasing to reach thousands.

(S.M) said:

“The people who settled here do not have any properties in their towns of origin. They sold their houses, land, or the jewelry of their wives so as to settle here. They sold everything they own and have nothing there any longer.”

(M.N) said:

“I was 23 years old when I came here. Now, I am 49, which means that I have spent half of life here; me and my children.”

The situation of farmers remained stable until the floods of the years (1998 - 1999 - 2000) in a row that eliminated all the crops in the lands under the contour line 182, representing a large part of the cultivated land. The floods eliminated years of hard working as well as the fruit of their work. Although both of the Egyptian government's plans and the Food Aid Agreement set the highlands above the contour line 182 for permanent agriculture, it was not carried out during the actual delivery time of the project. Noteworthy, the officials and staff of Lake Nasser Development Authority are still working in the same positions and have responsibilities in the management of the Food Aid Project, including their role in supervising the role of the other administration in implementing the entrusted responsibilities. Consequently, the executive body became the supervisory body at the same time and this led to many irregularities, in addition to the lack of an entity to which the beneficiaries can resort to and file complaints. Therefore, it requires legislative reform prevents the conflict of competencies because it leads to the loss of the settlers' rights. For example, the officials of Lake Nasser Development Authority did not alert farmers to the problem of the land under the contour line 182, which caused heavy losses to farmers.

(M.H) said:

“Since we received the land, there is no flood. Water was very low and we did not know that the sea may increase. This matter was clarified to us when the flood came in 1998 and 1999. It was highly above, and all the coastal land was inundated. It was supposed that any official informs us with such things. Since 1998, we know the system and our focus is to work away from that plot where the flood came.”

Thus, the government has disbursed nominal compensation on those affected. The farmers' prosperity years transformed into years of stagnation, the clash with officials and the project began because of the scarcity of services provided to farmers and the emergence of poor services and infrastructure. Lake Nasser Development Authority officials also filed reports and cases against the settlers; accusing them of encroaching the state property and polluting the Nile; in addition to not repaying checks.

(S.A) said:

“These cheques are at value of EGP 150 per each to be paid over 10 years. This is the installment of the house. We signed cheques with serial numbers, and they were bank cheques. As for those who got machines, they pay EGP 300 every 6 months; while those who got tractors, they pay EGP 600 every 6 months. It was rarely to find a farmer has a tractor. All these were without interest. This is what was written in the Agreement.”

(M.N) said:

“They convict me of not paying 12 cheques, but they are not mine. From one time to another, policemen hold me in custody for 3 days to the extent that a policeman told me if you came here once again, I will consider you a known felon. You want to consider me a known felon for doing nothing? This continued until the revolution in 2011.”

(A.A) said:

“Since 1977, we have been facing problems in payments. There is no money, we neither have money nor own properties.”

Even though the settlers sustain intense suffering and face problems and crises, they continue to challenge the obstacles, produce agricultural crops of distinct efficiency, and develop the land allocated to them. They even borrowed in order to face their harsh conditions. The absent role of the state in helping them and continually supporting them- as stipulated in the Food Aid Project Agreement- coupled with the scarcity of services and poor infrastructure has forced many of them, who were desperate, to leave their land and homes after they had sacrificed their lives and made every effort to rebuild the desert.

The third phase of settlement was more fortunate than the previous two ones. It was implemented as stipulated in the project agreement. The houses were built after a distinctive architectural style for the urban communities in dry desert areas. It is characterized by domes that help to reduce the temperature inside. This is due to the high temperature in desert areas. In addition to that, the land was reclaimed, latest irrigation systems were connected, and all services, facilities, and

infrastructure were provided. One of the most important factors to achieve that was the separation between the staff and officials of Lake Nasser Development Authority and the Food Aid Project administration. Each department had its employees and officials working in their departments only, not as in the previous two phases. The applicants for the third phase of settlement were selected, in addition to selecting the heads of each group of the families in the first and second phases. The state in the third phase continued to flourish until the Food Aid Project ended the third phase in 2004. The boat, used in irrigation, broke down due to the absence of an alternative and its continuous operation, which accelerated its depletion. Such a matter had led to the damage of agricultural crops due to the lack of irrigation of the land and high temperature degrees.

In general, Food Aid Villages lacked much urbanization, sustained severe service shortages, and infrastructure degradation, which is evident in the first and second phases.

5. Services, Facilities & Infrastructure in Food Aid Villages

The Food Aid villages in Lake Nasser lack many aspects of construction and infrastructure, and that was evident in the three phases of resettlement. The settlers sustain a lack of medical and educational services, electricity, potable water, sanitation and all essential aspects of life, which are the minimum rights that any human being must have in order to be able to practice his daily life. Even so, the settlers bear all these troubles; believing in their great role in helping the state to implement the development plans so that the prosperity will return to all the homeland people. In return, they were treated as if they had committed a misdeed. They were rewarded with nothing, and they were deprived of their basic right; losing hope to enjoy them. Ultimately, they have no other choice but to continue this suffering.

(M.A) said:

“Dear Mr., we here live in a lie; a big lie that this place will be inhabited and have a great future”

“When I came from my town, I was single and I got married here, where I faced troubles. I was deprived of learning and living in luxury; whereas I lived in darkness. I lived in Al-Tarish with scorpions, insects and all pests.”

a) Housing:

Early in 1990s, the families, at the beginning of the resettlement, were living in wicker huts until they built their houses themselves using local raw materials, as stipulated in the agreement. The building was made of bricks and fronds. After the construction process is completed, each family receives a subsidy of EGP 2000 from Food Aid Project (EGP1500 as a ten-year repayable loan and EGP 500 as a non-refundable grant), and the settler signs bank cheques with the loan value. As for the third phase, dome-styled houses were built so as to help reduce the temperature especially in the desert areas, where higher temperatures are. The third phase was built to serve as permanent villages for the settlers. By comparison with the two previous phases, the third phase provided better services and infrastructure.

(S.A) said:

«You make a hut to spend your nights in it until you build up the house where you stay in the land that they received. Some people bring bricks themselves and build a small room to live in it.»

(A.M) said:

“There was a system that every settler gets an EGP1500 loan as a grant to build their houses or to assist them.”

(M.K) said:

“People were signing cheques to get loans, as they would repay the loans to the administration. However, the families of the phase were returning back the loans along with the nominal sums- they took as grants- when they receive the food aid. They contributed with these sums because they wanted them back in the form of services after the project is finished.”

b) Roads & Transport

We mentioned earlier that these villages lacked urbanization. Most of the villages are almost 150:200 Km away from Aswan Governorates along the paved desert road, in addition to the unpaved roads (lane). For example, Kalabsha village is 195 Km away from Aswan Governorate; 150 Km of them are along the paved desert road “Aswan-Abu Simbel”, while 45 km is an unpaved road (lane). Also, Bashayer El Khair village is about 225 Km away from Aswan Governorate; 150 Km of them are along the paved desert road “Aswan-Abu Simbel”, while 75 km is an unpaved road (lane). That area also has another two villages (Garf Hussein- Al-Baft), and the whole area is called Garf Hussein. As for Tomas and Afia village, it is about 245 Km away from Aswan Governorate; 200 Km of them are along the paved desert road “Aswan-Abu Simbel”, while 45 Km are along an unpaved road (Lane). This has caused the settlers massive suffering because of the difficulty of getting the daily needs of food and drink, in addition to their needs of tools that help them in agriculture, such as fertilizers, seeds and agricultural machinery. Such a matter increased the financial burden on them; the state did not provide them with permanent means of transport, except for a vehicle that transported the residents to Aswan twice a week. Moreover, the families undergo the lack of specific tariff and a public transport route that cost them a lot of money because all the government bodies are located in Aswan. Therefore, when a family member is sick, they pay a minimum of LE 40 per person back and forth over and above the medications fees.

(S.M) said:

“The plots of land are about 150 km away from houses, and no transportation provided. There is just the project car that transfers the people to the governorate twice a week, and there is no other means. The people buy a large amount of bread loaves in sacks and they make them dry under the sun; when the families want to eat, they wet the loaves and start to eat.”

(S.N) said:

“When our kids feel sick, we cannot help them or transfer them to Aswan. The car fees per capita are EGP 20. So, can imagine how much money that the tour back and forth would cost me, and how many persons would accompany me; and this is if you found a car already. I have 2 sons, and when I settled here, they caught fever, and I did not find a car to go to Aswan. I ran about 4 or 5 km until I found a car near the lake. We took it and went to Aswan Hospital, where they hospitalized.”

c) Irrigation Methods and Land Reclamation:

Neither Lake Nasser Development Authority nor the Food Aid Project reclaimed the land before handing it over to the farmers. They only dug canals, which were not helpful enough to the farmers, and irrigation initially depended on immersion and traditional irrigation systems. Therefore, the farmers developed and improved the land by their own efforts. Such a matter, nonetheless, had burdened the families financially. Also, they purchased agricultural inputs, modern irrigation systems, and water pumping machines.

The farmers, however, were providing the cost of land reclamation as well as supplies by borrowing from the tents. They provided their agricultural crops to the tents; the owners of which take a commission on the sold crops over and above the estimated interest rate on the advance they received. This matter, accordingly, overburdened the farmers, and they frequently have no return; inasmuch as they carried all burdens. That was due to the lack of services, poor infrastructure and the state's failure to play their role in assisting them- as stipulated in the Agreement- providing loans to help them as well as services and infrastructure. The irrigation during the third phase was through a boat in the lake that has water; pumping water with pipes to the irrigation systems by dropping every piece of land. However, the farmers sustain the lack of regular access to agricultural land through canals. The problem of irrigation has been on a regular basis, but in varying degrees; as the lack of lake level leads to the lack of water reaching the boat by which lifting machines raise water for the agricultural land. Thus, the water is reduced or shut off for periods of time.

(M.A) said:

“Water in winter is ok, while in summer it is shut off and the plant dries. Since 2011, the boat in Bashayer El Khair is always broken down in April, amid hot weather. Hence, there was no water at all to the extent that we had been losing the summer season from 2011 to 2015.

There was a sharp decline in the lake's water level on 8-5-2012. As a ramification of that, the irrigation water was completely shut off, the land lay fallow, all the crops were damaged and the livestock died. The families filed many complaints to the director of the Food Aid Project and Aswan Governor, who formed a committee to make a report on the loss. The committee was chaired by Director General of Communication Affairs, while its members were the Director General of Water Resources and Irrigation Engineering, the Director General of Agricultural Affairs and the Executive Director of the Food Aid Project. When the aggrieved farmers' demands were delayed, they staged many sit-ins and protests and went on hunger strike until they received compensation in October. The compensation was estimated at EGP 2,303,615. That sum, however, is unfair, compared to the damage of farmers and their losses of agricultural crops as well as the death of cattle. With regard to the services of the agricultural cooperatives, they were absent during the first and second phases. Although there was an agricultural cooperative early during the settlement, it was then canceled. During the third stage, there was an agricultural association that provided some services, including the provision of land holdings and fertilizer.

(A.M) said:

“The government and administration are supposed to provide people with services, reclaim the land and provide the irrigation methods before they resettle us here. But that did not happen, in spite of the sum mentioned in the agreement of land reclamation. The administration gave only a plot of land to each group from which they make a guide to the high lands; that is it. However, the people were reaching to the land at their own expense. The people also bought machines to connect water and agricultural and irrigation machinery either at their own expense.”

(A.N) said:

“There were 14 agricultural cooperatives that we need one of them now. Each area had one, but the governor merged all of them in one cooperative; causing mess. The official said they are useless and need to be dissolved. And they already dissolved those cooperatives that demand nowadays.”

d) Electricity & Energy

Electricity and energy were not among the services available to the settlers in the Food Aid Villages. They were using primitive things such as «gas lamps» to resist the darkness. Nonetheless, the project provided lighting in some places that the settlers could afford. In 2013, the solar energy project was granted by the UAE to the project. It provided solar power units to the beneficiaries' houses in some

villages such as “Garf Hussein”, after its people lived in total darkness; whereas the state did not provide them with the electricity facility that is among the most important essentials of life. As for the electricity in the third phase, there were three power stations. The project manager, however, replaced them by a power generator, whose capacity that did not bear the loads of villages. Consequently, it had been broken down for eight months: from September 2015 to April 2016.

(N.G) said:

“There were 3 power stations here in Bashair that feed three areas. They removed them and brought us the generator. We have been living in darkness since 8 months.. Do you accept to live in darkness all that time?”

(H.M) said:

“Here, people at first used to light wicks by gas. And those have some money buy lanterns. Thereafter, the people started to buy the Chinese generators that were sold with EGP 2000. They use them until dinner time and they turn them off and sleep. After Maghrib prayers (6:00 pm), nobody can walk in the street; there are scorpions and pests everywhere.’

(Kh.A) said:

“The solar power granted to the village by the UAE. It comforted us after we were staying in darkness. But we do not know what to do, I swear. We barely live.

e) Communications:

Communications services in Food Aid villages were a distant dream for them, as they were isolated from the outside world. In critical cases, they cannot even call for ambulance, and there is no nearby hospital except in Aswan Governorate. Their suffering ended and their dream came true when the Saudi investor contracted with «Etisalat», a telecommunication company, to provide the service in the region so as to facilitate communications with employees at his own farm.

(K.N) said:

“Thanks God, everyone now has a cell phone and we can contact the outside world, after the Saudi investor established a cellular network.”

f) Health & Children Care:

The Food Aid Project built a health unit to provide care to the settlers. Nevertheless, it was empty, without equipment or doctors, although the harsh experiences the Food Aid villages’ people sustain, and the mountain nature of the place that is

full of insects and pests. These circumstances had left many injured and dead. Therefore, the settlers were resorting to the primitive methods of treatment, which was successful sometimes and fail many times. The settlers have been deprived of their right to adequate health care as well as the lack of child and maternal services in all the Food Aid Villages of Lake Nasser. They have been left victims to diseases, epidemics and pests. No other solution was left to the settlers except for going to the air defense battalion of the Armed Forces to receive health services and first aid, or going to Aswan Governorate. To escape diseases and death, the settlers carry heavy burdens; as they take a private car for EGP50 in order to go to the defense battalion.

(S.M) said:

“If my wife or son is sick, I take a car for EGP50 to go to the battalion, where I stand for a long time until anyone come out to give me some pills or an injection?”

(A.M) said:

“There is no health unit here; it is just one room on which there is a sign reads a health unit. But there is nobody already, and it is closed since its establishment. It is closed and has a sign on it, but has nobody inside.”

(A.S) said:

“We sometimes use the things that God granted us. For example, we read the Holy Quran to the sick until God heals them.”

(S.S) said:

“If someone is stung by a scorpion or bitten by any insect, we treat them only by cutting the part where is the bite, because the distance from here to Aswan is 150 km and there is no transport.”

g) Potable Water and Sanitation

The settlers were getting potable water either from the Food Aid Project through a trailer drawn by a tractor, directly from the lake and purified with gauze from mud and impurities, or from agricultural land irrigation canals.

In 2013, the fish weight port was established along the canal that provide the villages of Al-Bafat and Garf Hussein with irrigation and potable water, and since then it has become contaminated with the remains of dead fish and fishing boat waste as well as the chemicals used for cleaning. Consequently, the water that the settlers use in drinking and irrigation became contaminated. Through Community Development Association in Garf Hussein, the settlers went to the

Swiss Fund and CARE (donors working in this field) to deliver clean potable water to their houses. The donor accepted to assist them; it came into conflict with Lake Development Association, which demanded unfair conditions. Hence, the donor withdrew and refused the funding.

(S.A) said:

“We sometimes get contaminated water from sea and we cannot drink it. We keep purifying it by using gauze.”

h) Education:

The education file received no attention and care. During the first and second stages of the Food Aid Project, there was only one primary school, which is run by a teacher and a schoolmaster only. That school is located in Garf Hussein. (M.R.) said “There are no schools here but a one-classroom school that has only a teacher and a schoolmaster.” In order that the children can go to a school, they were taking the Food Aid Project’s car for about 40 km (a large car, like a police wagon, in which students are heaped in a non-human manner), to the school in Kalabsha- a village affiliated to the third phase. As for the third stage, the school was better than the first stage, where there is a classroom for each grade, but the school lacks teachers in some disciplines, such as mathematics, science and social studies.

(S.S) said:

“There is a primary school and the boys go there, but they did not study mathematics, for example, or even know what the curriculum is.”

(K.M) said

“They want to destroy the young generation. Without education, health or care, they will be as useless as rocks.”

(M.A) said:

“My school is in Kalabsha because there is no preparatory school here. I take two hours to arrive there. The distance is about 40 km, which mean I leave at 5:00 am to arrive there at 7 or 8 am.”

(H.M) said:

“The car that transfers students is not suitable for human use. It gets stuffed with kids.”

The Project: Abandoned by the State and Kept by the Citizens:

1. Continuing Despite Difficulties and Dereliction

Those families came to seek a life that guarantees them economic and social security- embodied in settlement- to possess a plot of agricultural land that increases their income and improves their standard of living, and to contribute to increasing agricultural production and expanding agricultural land in Egypt. Most of the families sold all they had in their original villages so that they could reclaim the land they had received during the settlement process. In the early years, they relied on self-help and support from the government that did not continue then.

(M.A) said:

“I paid all the money I saved to buy this land. I sold my house in the town to settle here and farm.”

In addition, they suffer inasmuch as Lake Nasser area is a dry desert area, where temperatures are high, and they need much work and effort to reclaim and cultivate their lands. It also has many toxic pests.

(M.S) said:

“We reclaimed the plots of land that we received on the shores of Lake Nasser at our own expense. They were desert, and there are hills, mountains, stones and mountain grass. Even the water, we connected it at our own expense.”

However, the families continued reclaiming the land and digging canals to irrigate and cultivate their land; hoping that their income increase, and get appropriate job opportunities in agriculture.

As we mentioned above, the project’s first and second phases witnessed gross dereliction for several reasons. The most important reason is the corruption of the project’s administrative board: the government represented by Lake Nasser Development Authority of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Communities and then turned into the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, along with the UN FAO, represented in the Food Aid Project. The authority staff was working as project supervisors during the first and second phases, which caused many problems in both phases because the project lacked the mechanisms of control and accountability.

(A.M) said:

“Lake Nasser Development Authority was running the project and failed.”

However, the situation during the third phase was better, as the employees were separated from the project, indicating the lack of equity in the distribution of resources allocated to the project at its various phases.

(S.A)- a first phase settler- said:

“We want to be treated like the settlers of the third phase. I mean that they should establish an agricultural cooperative and deliver us fertilizers.. Although we are from the first phase and should be treated better.”

2- Lack of Control and Accountability:

The settlers believe that this lack of control and accountability mechanisms menace their dream for which they sustained a lot of trouble that was about to perish them.

(Y.A) said:

“Supposedly, we deserve care more than others because we live in the mountain... but nobody help or care about us”.

This is a clear abandonment by the state institutions, as there is a near-deliberate siege and it appears that there is an authority works on their siege.

(F.M) said:

“The problems and obstacles they caused made me hate the place and regret that I came here. The problem is that I have no other place, so I am forced to live here. We need the officials to identify our conditions and improve them because we really live in troubles.”

In many cases, access to certain means of assistance is hampered to the extent that they could raise their complaints about the status of services and facilities that are considered a constitutional right that the state should ensure to them. On the other hand, Aswan Governor refuses to include the Food Aid Villages in Aswan to its dependency because of the lack of facilities, services and infrastructure, which will be a burden on the governorate.

In 2015, the Air Defense Forces Commander approved the establishment of a primary school in Garf Hussein instead of the current ramshackle school, but the Nasser Lake Development Authority refused to allocate a plot of land to build the school on the grounds that it was owned by it, and the school may not be built without its consent as the owner of the land.

3. Intransigence of Lake Nasser Development Authority

Lake Nasser Development Authority, on the other hand, refused to hand over the loan cheques that were granted to the settlers since the beginning of the settlement, although they paid these financial dues. Nevertheless, they were taken by surprise when the authority sued them on the basis of not paying these cheques and the demolition decisions on the pretext of the infringement upon the state-owned land.

The situation got worse when the authority forced the settlers to sign leases for the land and houses.

(M.A.) says:

“When the people refused to do this (to sign), the authority started to follow other methods against the families, it started to track them down, and in 1998, the authority issued demolition orders to remove their houses.”

When the families refused to sign in rejection to this illegal procedure, considering that they came to this area as settlers rather than leasers, the authority issued demolition orders for houses and the cultivated land and started sending warnings on the pretext of the infringement upon the state-owned land, in addition to filing environmental violations reports; claiming that those settlers planted coastal lands under the level of the contour line 182, while the lands of the families are above that level.

(A.R.) said:

“I farm the fixed land, and there are 2 two km between me and the lake on which there are machines, engines, and hoses, besides this is a well-developed irrigation system and doesn't cause any pollution to the environment. All of the people here are using a developed irrigation system, so how would we pollute the environment if we are using one kilogram of fertilizer per time in the fertilizing machine? You can talk about environmental pollution if we are living on a coastal land, but we are here above the level of the contour line 182.”

4. The State's Intransigence and Neglect to Settlers

The extent of the state's intransigence on the settlers is evident. We will cite what occurred in Al-Baft village, which was a model village for the Food Aid Villages in the delivery of the five acres to each family and the irrigation by boat system. In 1995, Lake Nasser Development Authority requested the beneficiaries to sign leases for the land and houses. When the beneficiaries refused, the authority

stopped the boat; leading to the damage of their agricultural crops. Moreover, the authority bargained with the families to pay EGP 500 for each plot in order to operate the boat. After that, the sum was increased to reach EGP1000 per plot. As a consequence, the farmers left their land, and there remained only 6 families out of 45 ones. Later on, the authority turned the reclaimed land into fish hatcheries, after the farmers left their land. Such a matter is a crime against the agricultural land, which the state criminalizes and punishes the perpetrators inasmuch as it erodes the reclaimed land.

(A.A) said:

“We asked the families in Al-Baft village to sign leases, but they refused. Thus, they stopped the boat for 4 or 5 years. The plant and trees dried. The farmers were planting mangoes and lemon. The authority sold the dried trees to the coal businessmen and demolished the houses. Everything happened under the supervision of the Legal Affairs Administration. They caused 45 families to leave. In addition to that, they turned their land into fish hatcheries.”

The state’s dereliction was not only limited to its commitments, which it had ratified with treaties, conventions and plans, but also it wasted funds allocated to many basic needs such as nurseries, on which large sums of money were spent and not used by farmers, who had not received any nurseries. The authority’s officials also prevented farmers from planting trees on their land for no reason, in spite of the approval of the Food Aid Agreement and the government’s plan to grow seventy trees per acre in order to yield profits help them in the difficulty of land reclamation.

(M.N) said:

“They tell you that you are brainless because of planting a tree or palm in the highland; meanwhile, the Agreement reads that the farmer plants palm, mangoes, oranges and lemon in the highland, and these seedlings are paid to the nurseries to be distributed on the farmers as a grant to plant 70 trees in an acre.»

The farmers were also disintitiled to get livestock from the project; as they were sold to non-settlers, despite being a grant to the farmers.

(S.W) said:

“Among the project conditions are that people receive anything supports their financial position and improves their living standard. They allocated an amount to buy livestock. They already brought sheep and camels, but they delivered them to non-settlers or relatives, and cows and buffaloes were distributed on other people, not us. And what proves that if someone said that they received livestock; ask them to show the contract by which we received them. None of the farmers settling here received livestock.”

5. The State’s Neglect to the Agreement & Project:

The state neither performed its role nor kept its promises with regard to the Food Aid Agreement the government’s plans for the project continuity and the services provision to the families settled in the area. The state only considers them part of the settlement project when it comes to collecting money. Substantially, this arouses the settlers’ discontent at the state.

(H.M) said:

“When you need services, the officials put the responsibility on each others’ shoulders, but when it comes to collecting money, every official says you belong to me. The project has installments on houses and machines, but the authority wants to take rent on the land.”

Apparently, the state follows a systematic approach to make them leave the land.

(M.M) said:

“The authority is putting pressure on us so as to make us leave. We really sustained too much trouble.”

While the state spares no effort to provide all the possibilities to the Saudi investor, Hamoud Al-Saleh, in Garf Hussein; whereas it provides all the agriculture inputs and services including fertilizer, fuel, infrastructure and others; it disentitles the poor farmers settling in the area, who are certainly the first to receive state support from the state.

(Kh.M) said:

“He deals as an investor and I deal just as a farmer. He receives large amounts of support, as he receives trailers of subsidized chemicals and fuel, while we receive nothing.”

(M.N) said:

“I receive nothing, while the farmer, who works with the Saudi investor, receives a share of subsidized fuel every day. The Ministry of Agriculture supervises the wheat they plant, as the ministry officials come to supervise the wheat, potatoes and clover. The Saudi investor freely plants what he wants. He transfers the wheat to mills in Aswan, and plants cantaloupe and potatoes for exporting. He exports to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.”

The discrimination has not been limited to that extent. The Saudi investors owned 1000 acres along with 4000 acres as usufruct for 59 years in return for only EGP 50 every year.

(S.Y) said:

“As a settler, I wear myself out and ultimately you ask me to pay rent, and I may not find you the coming year; i.e. I pay EGP 300 or 500 and then they tell me you own nothing. The investor, however, rents the acre per EGP 50 in a year and nobody increased the sum, although it is the same land and place.”

The state also refuses to change the settlers' place of residence to Food Aid Villages, without giving reasons for that.

b) Project Evaluation:

From the above plans of the settlement project and in accordance with the state's plans and international agreements that avowed numerous ambitious objectives and aspirations to enhance food security, provide aid to the poor and fishing boats' workers across the country, and promote their levels to have dignified lives; it is evident that the project has not attained any of its express objectives. It, rather, wasted huge sums of money without achieving the desired goal: no services, facilities or infrastructure. The provided services are considered sham, not real. It is mostly poor, whereas there is no service necessary to be provided the fullest to the settlers. The state abandoned the Food Aid Project, although it is a national project. If it was implemented as it should be, according to the government's plan, it would have saved Egypt from many of the crises it faces such as severe food shortages; threatening food security in Egypt.

In 2010, the Central Auditing Organization (CAO) issued a report indicating that the project, after 27 years, had not achieved more than 2% of the target for the completion of buildings, village construction, or reclamation. The current situation, however, is that a group of settlers live there without educational or health services, or any aspects of living, despite the huge amounts spent on the Food Aid Project in Lake Nasser. As a consequence, some families abandoned it, while others determined to stay despite the unbearable hard circumstances; hoping that the conditions get better and the problems will be solved.

In 2014, the administrative prosecution issued its report on the committee that investigated what took place in the Food Aid Villages of Lake Nasser on the case No. 610 of 2014, 1st Aswan, and the case No. 56 of 2015 in Aswan. The investigations of the administrative prosecution in accordance with the report of the director of the Directorate of Agriculture No. 35 in 2015, point out that the area of Al-Baft village in Garf Hussein is estimated at 150 acres and the cultivated area is estimated at 30 acres. As for the rest of the area, most of the plots lie fallow due to the lack of water irrigation. Most of the owners, accordingly, abandoned the land because the irrigation pipes and the water-lifting machine from the lake are dilapidated. The area of Bashaer al-Khair village is estimated at 350 acres, and the cultivated area is estimated at 186 acres for the same reasons mentioned above. Also, Tomas and Afia village undergoes the same previous problem, and the sanitation in Bashaer al-Khair village is poor in every street of the village.

The cares also are rickety and put people are at risk, especially children, because they are not covered. There is only one lighting machine, and it frequently breaks down. Also, there is one bakery that has a sole lighting machine, and when it breaks down, the farmers find no bread. There have been violations by officials of Lake Nasser Authority in the General Authority for Reconstruction and Agricultural Development Projects. These violations are: (Demolishing the farmers' houses in Garf Hussein despite the disbursement of a grant of about EGP 1500 to be paid over ten years, leading to the waste of public money- not taking proactive measures before the irrigation system is disrupted; resulting in the damage of crops- failing to implement the instructions of the governor to restrict farmers to coastal agriculture and give them permanent land; making farmers reclaim land at their own expense- the main irrigation machine is shabby and breaks down permanently- substantial negligence and shortening of service performance by project staff to create fixed assets for poor communities- demolishing all buildings in Al-Baft village from houses and facilities despite the deduction their cost from the settlers).

In spite of the settlers' suffering of and the state's abandonment them and the project implementation, they took to bear all the obstacles, and sacrificed dearly for the sake of the success of this national project; believing in their glorious role in the implementation of the State's plan for the development of the region, even if by their own efforts and borrowing to provide food for their children, and do everything they can to achieve this. This heroic role of the settlers is the reason behind the project continuity so far, and the production of many of the agricultural crops in the markets of vegetables and fruit in Egypt, which are characterized by high quality.

Among the most important demands of settlers are: the ownership of their land, the completion of the infrastructure and provision of services that will enable them to continue to support the state in the national development project. (N.W)

said: “We want to build the country, but we can not.” Therefore, the state should do them a favor back, for their stance on the development path, to lift the injustice and tragedies from them, and encourage them to reclaim their land and enhance the food security of Egypt until the culmination of their years of struggle with a fair return to because the troubles they have suffered are difficult to anyone to bear.

Suffering & Resistance of Food Aid Villages’ Families:

The people of Food Aid Villages around Lake Nasser are suffering from a siege that is represented in the lack of resources and services on one hand, and administrative corruption on the other hand; in addition to their poverty that made it impossible for them to think of leaving their land and go back to where they came from. They have sold everything they own to develop this land on the hope that the state will abide by the agreement; as they saw in the project their future and the future of their children. The settlers have submitted many complaints to both of Aswan Governor and the Cabinet. However, the officials reduced the whole issue to the level of media statements and promises that have not been fulfilled in reality.

The people there are still enduring the same suffering. To solve this crisis, however, we believe that the restructuring of Lake Nasser Development Authority is one solution, or the delegation of another authority to run the project on the condition that justice and transparency are the basis for managing this crisis.

(S.A.) said:

“This authority is not functioning. If it was really functioning, at least it would have succeeded long time ago in turning this project to a success story and yield mass production 20 years ago. Since they didn’t do this, would they start doing the right thing now? They didn’t cultivate the land 27 years ago, would they do this now? As long as the officials started walking in the way of damage, serious violations and the waste of public money, forget about it”.

Recently, several presidential decrees and ministerial statements have been issued on the state’s efforts to increase the agricultural land through several projects: the most important of which is the one and half million acres project that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi ordered starting its implementation in December 2015, to be considered as one of the major national projects that works on increasing the agricultural area by 20% and contributing to narrowing the food gap. In many occasions, statements of officials spread about those projects that will solve problems and build a future for the next generations. However, the project of Food Aid Villages that is for relocating Egyptians around the Lake Nasser is a blatant example of squandering rights, and the very blatant contradiction in media platforms. It would have been better for the state – represented in the High Dam Development Authority- instead of making these people leave and waste their rights, to invest their human resources and their ability to adapt and

produce in a hard atmosphere, in the development of the national income of Egypt, especially that they have already walked a long way in reclaiming land and increasing the agricultural production.

(A.S.) said:

“I suggested the idea that I want to implement on the head of the authority himself. In my opinion, instead of what they are doing, and making people leave and carry their pardon, they use these people and help them in producing grain, meat and fodder. The government now needs corn, wheat and fodder and fodders for cattle, and our region can have million heads of cattle. Help those people so we can yield national production.”

The settlers in those endemic villages, as they described them, still wandering about who will respond to their urgent appeals and numerous complaints without backfiring in their faces with much intransigence and siege as a form of punishment, as if the demand of rights is considered by them a crime punishable by the law? Or would their rights continue to be wasted because they do not belong to a better social rank?

(A.M.) said:

“We complained across the country, but in vain. Let me sum it up, how would they treat me if I complained, would they treat me in the same way they treat a doctor? They will investigate what the doctor is complaining about, but I’m just a farmer with no importance. Where are my rights? When I went and complained, nothing happened. On the contrary, the situation worsened and the pressure increased.”

In spite of the illegal security pressure on them, these settlers around Lake Nasser insist on their right to have the land on the basis of ownership, as stipulated in the two conventions on which based of the Presidential Decree No. 195 of 1985 and Presidential Decree No.133 of 1988 were issued. They demand from the state to enforce the law of justice, not the law of double standards.

(S.A) said:

“Land tenure is our right as settlers living here. Moreover, why the law would apply only if the interests of the state are touched, and when there is any benefit to us, the law is forgotten? Where is the state of law they are talking about?”

Although farmers' protests almost do not exist in comparison to labor protests because farmers have difficulty in leaving their land so as not to damage their crops, they have demanded their legitimate rights by all the peaceful and legal ways. The settlers submitted many complaints to senior officials, such as the Minister of Agriculture, Aswan Governor, the Council of Ministers, the People's Assembly, the Administrative Prosecution and the Presidency of the Republic; in addition to sit-ins and strikes, but without any response to the minimum rights that would enable them to live a decent life. The response to their demands always was by security and judicial prosecution.

(K.S) says:

“We have resorted to all the peaceful means that we can use, and everything is by the law, all these means would bring you to a certain level, but then smashed on your head. Either you accept the status quo, or you will be trampled.”

There is also one of the biggest crises that is facing the settlers: the security restrictions and their prosecution as if they are criminals and outlaws. Thus, they are subjects to imprisonment for crimes that they haven't committed. Their only crime is their responsiveness to the state in development and the provision of Egypt's food security. All of this led the settlers to have a sense of humiliation and lack of dignity in front of their families in their home villages.

(A.M.) said

“When security forces used to come to us, some people would go down in the water because they were afraid to be caught, and some other people would hide under the animals' dung, other would dig a trench so they can hide in it whenever they see a strange vehicle and remains there for awhile. It happened once that one of the settlers fled from them and entered in the middle of a large crop of eggplants, he was bitten. It was better for him to die than to let the members of the authority arrest him.”

(M.N) said

“As for the police forces, since the era of Mubarak we have night visitors, and we feel so humiliated among our families, we are now treated as if we stole the state funds, the authority makes it look this way. However, when you look for the truth, you will find that I am the one who cultivate and the one who struggles, I am not a thief...I am the one who supports the state, but their pyramid is upside down,” .

From Settlers to Tenants:

In 2006, Lake Nasser Development Authority issued a circular with the No. 105 of 2006, which stipulates that “Anyone wishes to have a plot of land in Lake Nasser area must have a contract with the Authority”, and that would turn the settlers to tenants. This matter aroused the anger of the settlers, who staged a sat-in outside the Food Aid Project headquarters in Aswan, while 6 of the settlers entered into hunger strike.

In 2014, the families filed a complaint to the presidency, which referred the complaints to the administrative prosecution for investigation. These complaints were because the irrigation water was shut off and Nasser Authority sent warnings to the farmers.

(M.N) said:

” We submitted several notes to Dr. Ali Hazin, the director of the project, and also went in vain, and finally we submitted a note to the Governor of Aswan, because of the lack of water and the failure to operate the machines on the scheduled dates, and that caused damage to crops.”

Accordingly, the administrative prosecution formed a committee consisted of the competent authorities to look for the truth in this matter, and it issued its report on the case with No. 610 of 2014 and the case No. 56 of 2015.

(A.A) said:

“Because of the lack of water over and above the warnings sent by the authority, I sent a fax to the presidency, and it was referred to the Administrative Control Authority, and also I filed complaints to the Attorney General in Cairo as well as the administrative prosecution in the Courts Complex and to the administrative prosecution in Cairo too.”

(S.A) said:” The Administrative Control Authority formed me a committee consisted of the Ministries of Irrigation, Environment, Electricity and Agriculture. When we came here, everything was fine. However, they wrote in the report No. 610 of 2014 as follows: ramshackle \houses, the irrigation specifications are non-conforming, the irrigation network is damaged, the machines are shabby and the land is barren because there is no water.”

Food Aid Villagers' Due Rights

According to the Egyptian Constitution, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the UN Agreement signed by the Egyptian State, these are the rights of the families of the Food Aid Project around Lake Nasser and their demands as they mentioned during the field research, which have been compiled in that paragraph and whose context, causes and consequences are described in the report. They also have a societal right to hold the officials accountable for the dereliction and corruption committed in the right of those villages; particularly the officials in charge of implementing and managing this project.

- 1- Helping the families of Food Aid Villages to take possession of their lands
- 2- Ending prosecution of the families and settle their legal status with Lake Nasser Development Authority and the Food Aid Project.
- 3- Settling the aforementioned issues of cheques and trust receipts.
- 4- Stopping the demolition of houses, compensating them for the damage they sustain and supporting them to rebuild their houses.
- 5- Constructing and operating wells; whereas 14 wells were established with a cost of one million Egyptian pounds per one well and have not been operated or utilized.
- 6- Solving water problems and providing potable water sources for the families.
- 7- Building safe roads:
 - a- The road from Kalabsha village to Aswan is 195 Km, 45 Km of them is unpaved (lane).
 - b- The road from Bashayer El Khair village to Aswan is 225 Km, while 75 km is an unpaved road (lane).
 - c- The road from Tomas and Afia village to Aswan is about 245 Km, 45 Km of the road is unpaved (Lane).
- 8- Solving the problem of the water filter of Lake Nasser Development Authority. The water filter that was built between 1998 and 1999 is next to a fish hatchery and it does not perform well as desired.
- 9- Providing public transport.
- 10- Providing health services to citizens, given that they are almost non-existent in the Food Aid villages.
- 11- Providing education, as there is only one school for the basic education and the study there is only 3 days per week.
- 12- Providing electricity and solving the frequent problem of float motors; in addition to that its place must be changed to a deeper location in the lake.
- 13- Establishing effective agricultural cooperatives to the settlers so as to meet their agricultural needs.

