Informality and access to services among youth of Cairo's informal urban neighborhoods

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Informality is a defining characteristic of urban life in Egypt, spanning the extensive informal economy to the hidden fees associated with ostensibly free public services. The growth of informal urban settlements – known in Egypt as *ashwaiyyat* – is often attributed to the failure of urban housing policy and is a physical manifestation of the spread of informal markets that parallel many of Egypt's formal institutions. Popular and public policy discourse in Egypt has constructed the *ashwaiyyat* as problematic; they are widely seen as areas of insecurity, poverty and at times extremism (Bayat & Denis, 2000; Ismail, 2006). Young people growing up in informal areas are often assumed to be facing multiple inequalities of opportunity compared to formal urban dwellers. Yet there is substantial variation in poverty levels, security and access to services in the *ashwaiyyat*, blurring the boundaries between informal and formal neighborhoods of Greater Cairo. In this paper, we draw on representative survey of nearly 3,000 young people aged 15 – 29 and complementary qualitative interviews with youth in informal areas of Greater Cairo to examine how access to and experiences with formal services and institutions influence young people's lived experiences in the *ashwaiyyat*. We also explore how youth negotiate their inclusion/exclusion from formal services, and the informal mechanisms of social support, economic relationships and conflict resolution that they and their communities rely on in the face of unreliable public services.

1. Background

Young people living in informal urban areas in Egypt are often perceived as growing up in a context of multiple inequalities of opportunity. Popular and public policy discourse in Egypt purports that informal areas – popularly known as *ashwaiyyat* – are problematic; they are widely seen as areas of insecurity, poverty and at times extremism (Bayat and Denis 2000; Ismail 2006). It is widely thought that young people living in these areas are disproportionately exposed to multiple hazards and vulnerabilities, not only more than young people in formal urban areas but also more than youth in rural areas. Although the great diversity between and within Egypt's informal settlements has been highlighted in previous research,[1] it is often assumed that most informal urban residents still suffer from an "urban penalty," due to overcrowded living conditions, lack of security and poor quality of core public services (Jorgensen and Rice 2012).

Slums – or informal areas, as we term them in this paper because this is a more accurate representation of the *ashwaiyyat* in Egypt – are a "spatial manifestation of urban poverty and intra-city inequality" (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. xxvi) in which informality dominates many aspects of life, including employment, housing and local governance. At the same time, informal areas are highly diverse in their characteristics and residents' incomes; they are often the starting point for newer urban populations such as migrants and youth (UN-Habitat, 2003). The origins of Egypt's *ashwaiyyat* follow these global patterns, as we discuss in the next section, and the ashwaiyyat are similarly diverse in their characteristics. Previous surveys have found that the wealth gap between residents of informal and formal urban areas of Egypt are not as great as those between rural and urban areas (El-Zanaty & Way, 2004; Population Council, 2011). Existing research also indicates that the majority of residents of *ashwaiyyat* have access to basic services such as water, electricity, health and education. However, case studies indicate that the quality and accessibility of those services, as well as informal mechanisms of exclusion from them, vary widely across informal areas (El Zanaty and Way 2004; Centre for Development Services 2013; Sabry, 2010). The costs of accessing adequate services, as well as hidden fees, also pose a substantial burden on some households (Sabry, 2010).

Perhaps even more so than the variability in access to (quality) services that characterizes Egypt's *ashwaiyyat*, marginalization of informal residents may take place through political, economic and social processes. Bayat and Denis (2000) argue that Egypt's strict definition of urban districts and "the invention of the concept of *ashwaiyyat* as a political category" has contributed to exclusionary forms of urban development and a popular view of *ashwaiyyat* as "abnormal" manifestations of traditional life, informality and insecurity within an urban context. This view of the residents of *ashwaiyyat* as urban "outsiders" contributes to their marginalization from urban life. More broadly, UN-Habitat conceptualizes urban poverty as a concept that goes beyond income to encompass low human capital, including access to education and healthcare, and low social capital,

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[1] Contrary to the conventional view of slums, slum areas in Egypt include a significant percentage of wealthy households. Based on SYPE 2009 data, almost 58 percent of young people residing in informal urban areas (compared to 67 percent in formal urban neighborhoods) belonged to the top two wealth quintiles.

including weaker social and economic networks, exclusion and labeling or discrimination (UN-Habitat 2003).

In this paper, we draw on these broader understandings of urban exclusion to examine young people's access to basic formal services in the *ashwaiyyat*, as well as to explore how youth negotiate their inclusion or exclusion from these services, and the informal social mechanisms and resources that they rely on in their urban communities. We focus on youth in particular because of the significance of this large demographic group within the context of Egypt (Population Council 2011), and because the period of transition from childhood to adulthood is a time of life during which access to or exclusion from formal institutions and social structures can have long-lasting impacts on individual outcomes (Dhillon and Youssef 2009).

1.1 Evolution of Greater Cairo's informal areas

Historically, the informalization of Cairo started during the Nasser regime in the 1950s (Sims 2003), when industrialization policies resulted in internal migration from Upper Egypt and the Nile Delta to the more "developed" Cairo, with migrants settling mainly in historical districts. The 1960s were marked by the expansion of informal settlements on land around Cairo that was designated for agricultural use, a process that was accelerated during the 1970s and early 1980s with the expansion of external migration to oil-producing countries. The tightness of the formal urban housing market encouraged many migrant workers and others to invest in informal land and construction sites, which caused massive informal housing activity at the urban fringes (UN Habitat 2003; El-Batran & Arandel 1998; El Araby 2003).

Although there is broad agreement among researchers and government bodies on the historical patterns leading to the informalization of Cairo and the main characteristics of informal areas, there is no consensus regarding the exact definition of informal areas. Based on the history of how informal areas emerged, Sims (2003) classifies the main types of informal areas in Cairo as: 1) informal settlements on private, formerly agricultural lands; 2) informal settlements on state-owned desert land; 3) deteriorated sections of the old city core; and 4) deteriorated urban pockets. The General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP) uses the same definition and classification for identifying informal areas.

In contrast, CAPMAS, the government statistical agency, defines informal areas based only on the legal status: "Neighborhoods that have been constructed by individuals either on their own agricultural land or on vacant state desert land under the process of 'hand claim' without formal licenses or building documents" (Khadr et al. 2008). Yet another definition has been adopted by the Informal Settlement Development Fund (ISDF), which distinguishes between unsafe and unplanned areas. Whereas unplanned areas simply do not comply with planning and building regulations, unsafe areas are defined as those in

which 50% of the housing structures satisfy one or more risk criteria.[2] These areas thus require more urgent intervention and are the ISDF's main focus (ISDF 2009).

Given the lack of a standard definition for informal areas, there is also no agreement on the number of informal areas, their geographical boundaries and their population size. Despite this considerable uncertainty about the population of Egypt's informal areas, estimates suggest that as much as 38% of the urban population (CAPMAS, 2008), and 65% of the population of Greater Cairo (Kipper & Fischer, 2009), live in informal settlements. The residents of Cairo's informal areas may thus constitute a marginalized majority of the city's residents.

2. Methods

This paper is based on a mixed-methods analysis of quantitative data from the Survey of Young People in Egypt – Informal Greater Cairo (SYPE-IGC) and a companion qualitative study with youth living in three informal areas conducted in 2016.

2.1 Quantitative data and methods

The SYPE-IGC 2016 was conducted by the Population Council in partnership with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). It is considered the most recent and comprehensive survey of youth characteristics and outcomes in informal areas of Cairo.[3] This survey covers a representative sample of 2,942 young people aged 15-29 from 2,991 households located in about 164 informal urban areas in the three governorates of Greater Cairo region: Cairo, Giza and Qalyubeya (for more information on the sample design see Roushdy et al. 2016).[4]

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[2] According to the ISDF, slums or unsafe areas are urban settlements where at least half of the housing are in areas subject to "i) direct life threat, and/or ii) with inappropriate shelter conditions and/or iii) areas exposed to health risk and/or iv) in areas with instable tenure (due to lack of tenure rights)" UNICEF & ISDF (2013).

[3] To our knowledge, there have been only a few major quantitative household surveys conducted on informal settlements in Egypt and none of them focused specifically on young people. The first representative survey of Greater Cairo informal areas was the 2003 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey in Greater Cairo Slums (El Zanaty and Way 2004). The second was conducted by the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo in collaboration with UN Habitat in 2007. This study constituted 4,139 households from Cairo governorates and focused on studying the living conditions and arrangements of the urban dwellers (Khadr et al. 2008). Most recently, CAPMAS in collaboration with the National Population Council conducted a mixed quantitative-qualitative method study, which covered only unsafe areas of Greater Cairo in 2014 (CAPMAS and NPC 2014).

[4] There is no consensus regarding the exact definition of informal areas in Egypt, and hence, there does not exist one standard official frame for informal areas of Greater Cairo. The SYPE-IGC survey sampling frame includes deteriorated and unplanned areas, which both the General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP) and the Participatory Development Program in Urban Areas, of the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform (MOPMAR) agree should be considered informal. Accordingly, three categories of areas are included in the survey: 1) legal but deteriorated structures, such as old inner-city houses; 2) structures that are illegally built but are in acceptable physical condition (probably suffering from a lack of basic services and infrastructure); and 3) areas with illegal and deteriorated structures.

The survey consisted of two questionnaires, a household questionnaire and an eligible young people's questionnaire. The young people's questionnaire covers a broad set of areas crucial to the transition to adulthood, including education, employment, health, migration, marriage and family formation, gender roles, life aspirations, political and civic engagement and exposure to different forms of violence, including gender-based violence. Furthermore, in order to understand the informalization phenomenon in urban Egypt and the challenges facing youth in the informal areas of Greater Cairo, several modules were included in the young people's questionnaire to provide information on opportunities and risks faced by youth in informal areas and how young people respond to these opportunities and risks. The questionnaire also included questions on the availability and quality of health, education, and recreation services within the young people's community, interpersonal relationships, community-level security and violence, neighborhood improvement initiatives, and household coping strategies.

In addition, the survey household questionnaire contains a great deal of information on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of members of young people's households, their housing conditions, ownership of durable goods, access to basic services and infrastructure (such as piped water, sanitation, garbage disposal and electricity), the quality of such services, and information on any household member who has migrated abroad, including remittances.

In this paper we present descriptive analyses of the components of the survey that focused on access to services, social integration and marginalization among youth in informal areas.

2.2 Qualitative data and methods

In order to complement the survey data, we conducted in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of young people living in informal areas. These interviews covered young people's perceptions of the advantages and challenges of their neighborhoods, the services available, relationships with their neighbors and the community more broadly, how their neighborhood compares to others in Cairo, and whether they experienced any discrimination or marginalization in employment, education or marriage due to where they lived.

The fieldwork was conducted by a local team in three informal areas of Cairo: Shubra El-Kheima, Imbaba and Manshiet Nasr. These areas were selected in order to cover one area from each of the governorates in Greater Cairo, and represented areas in which the level of government and civil society intervention has been low, medium and high, respectively. Local NGOs assisted the team in identifying respondents from their areas and providing a private space for the interviews to be held.

A total of 48 in-depth interviews were conducted with eight young men and eight young women in each of the three study areas. The selection of respondents aimed to cover a diverse group of young people in terms of age, education and employment status; the characteristics of the qualitative sample are summarized in Table 2.1. All interviews were

taped and later transcribed. We analyzed the interviews using an open coding approach, in which codes are derived from the data based on themes that emerged in the young people's responses.

Table 1: Characteristics of the qualitative interview sample

	Women	Men
Age group		
18-24	11	13
25-29	12	10
Missing	1	1
Education		
Preparatory or less	6	7
Secondary	8	11
Technical institute	3	2
University	7	4
Marital status		
Never married	11	18
Engaged	2	5
Married	9	1
Widowed/divorced	2	0
Employment status		
Out of labor force	10	0
Unemployed	2	2
Wage worker	7	16
Self-employed	1	5
Other	4	1
Total	**24**	**24**

3. Results

3.1 Access to basic services

The SYPE-IGC confirmed the nearly universal access of youth in informal areas to piped drinking water (99.3%), the public sewage system (98.8%) and electricity (98.9%). The main infrastructural challenge experienced by youth was lack of solid waste collection services, with 16.7% saying that their household dumped garbage on the street.

Basic education services were also quite commonly available inside young people's communities. Over 78% of young people reported the availability of kindergartens and primary schools inside the neighborhood, and 64.9% reported the availability of preparatory schools. General secondary (42.2%) and vocational secondary schools (30.3%)

were relatively less common in the informal neighborhoods, meaning that it is more likely that youth need to take transport to reach their schools once they reach the secondary level (Table A1).

The availability of health and recreation services inside youths' neighborhoods was more variable. Government health centers (59.7%), clinics related to a religious or a non-profit organization (58.0%) and family planning centers (53.9%) were the most frequently available health services inside young people's communities. In contrast, only 31.6% of youth reported the availability of public hospitals and 40.6% reported the availability of private hospitals (Table A2). On the other hand, a little over half of the sample of youth reported the availability of youth centers and sport playgrounds or private gyms in their neighborhoods. Culture and arts center were less common (19.4%) in informal areas of Greater Cairo (Table A2).

3.2 Priorities for service improvement

The SYPE-IGC asked young people about the services that they thought were priorities for improvement in the neighborhood. Education (26.1%) and health (18.6%) were the most common answers, followed by programs to employ youth and train them for the labor market (11.2%) and the improvement of roads (10.8%). Other infrastructural issues, such as electricity, sewage and water ranked relatively low in young people's priorities compared to these core social services. Young women were more likely to rate education as the top priority, whereas young men's views of the top priority were more distributed across some of the less common topics (Figure 1). Young people from the higher wealth quintiles were also somewhat more likely to rate education as the top priority, whereas those from the lowest were more likely to mention health.

Figure 1 Priority services for improvement in the neighborhood, by gender
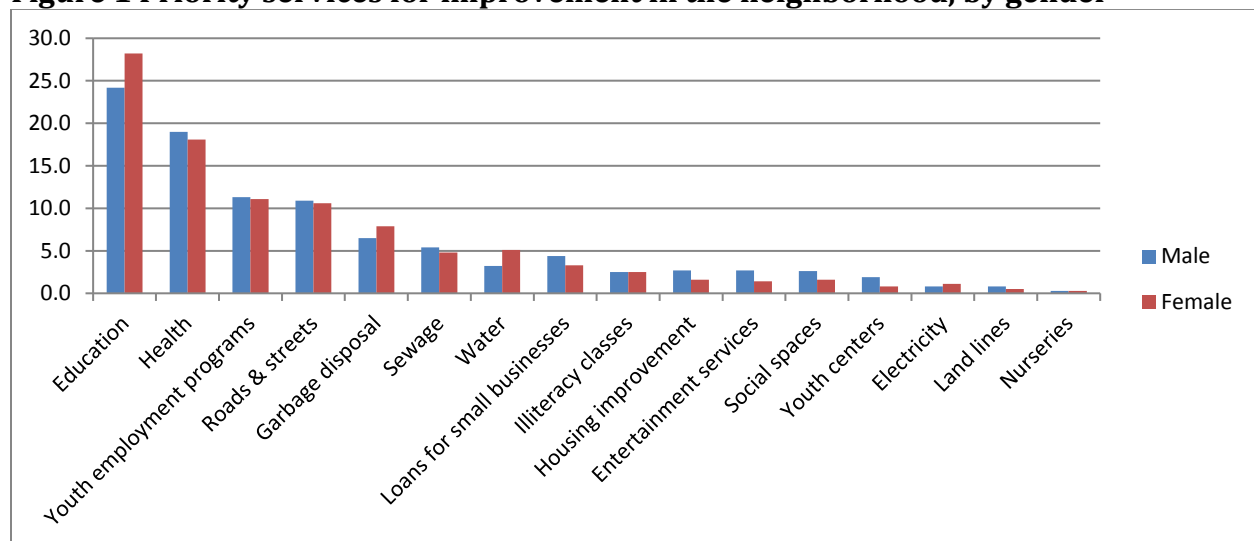
The respondents to the qualitative interviews similarly emphasized the urgent need to improve basic health and education services in their areas. Respondents described their areas as suffering from poor access to these services, both in terms of a lack of schools and health services, and in terms of the poor quality of those services that were available. As a result, residents of their neighborhoods were forced to go to neighboring areas in order to obtain services, or to rely on the private rather than public sector in order to obtain better quality services, which was a financial burden on their households.

In terms of health services, young people said that the public hospitals and health centers in their areas were characterized by inattentive staff and a lack of medical equipment and medicines needed for treatment. Many described experiences in which they, a family member, or a friend had a health problem and found that the local facility was unable to provide the necessary services.

> *"My son was sick once…so I went to the hospital and they gave him one treatment and wrote down another one, but I couldn't find this treatment. [Then] they wrote another one but I couldn't find that one either. Whatever they wrote I could not find. So I asked them 'What should I do?' They said 'And what we can do for you?'"* – Young woman, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 23, preparatory education or less

> *"I had an accident, a machine accident, so my coworkers took me to the first hospital here. They transferred me to the next hospital, and they couldn't do anything [either]. So they called my brother and he had to take me to [a hospital outside the neighborhood]. In [local hospital] it's hard to get them to do an operation."* – Young man, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 24, secondary education

As a result, young people emphasized the need to improve local health services, which many thought could be achieved through improved management and supervision of the facilities by the Ministry of Health, to enforce greater accountability of service providers.

Respondents also spoke of the poor quality of the education system inside informal areas, which many similarly attributed to a lack of accountability mechanisms. They noted the lack of management and oversight of schools and spread of corruption in schools, including paying of bribes, widespread practice of cheating and the prevalence of paid private tutoring, as well as lack of discipline in schools.

> *"There is no attention paid to the student. The student might skip school and they don't care…The students might push the teachers now, and I see students swearing at teachers. My sister works in a school here in the area, she sees many students paying 50 or 100 LE and he doesn't attend but still passes. A student will solve the question and they'll change the papers so the others cheat. She was told to let them cheat, and when she said no they made problems for her."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 20, university education

In this context, young people emphasized the need to improve the educational process in informal areas, particularly to improve students' educational level. A few respondents,

particularly in Shubra El-Kheima, also said that there was a shortage of schools in the neighborhood, so they had to travel long distances for school, or that schools were very overcrowded. These young people urged the building of additional schools closer to their homes.

Although infrastructural concerns were ranked lower by youth who responded to the SYPE-IGC in their prioritization of neighborhood challenges to address, the qualitative responses revealed some problems with basic services that have important health and environmental implications. These problems originated from the density of informal areas, which places pressure on services and basic infrastructure: while access to services may be universal, there remain significant problems with their quality and with the consistency of delivery in some areas. As in the SYPE-IGC, solid waste collection emerged as a particular concern for youth in the qualitative study:

> *"The garbage [is a problem], and the sewage is always broken. There is a break [in the sewage line] almost every week, and it makes everything a mess. There are also problems with the water pressure – it's very weak. If you turn on the tap in the morning without putting on the motor, the water doesn't come out at all."*
> – Young woman, Imbaba, aged 27, secondary education

> *"Garbage fills the area. The people from the local government come every day and take it away and clean up, but then people keep throwing things out and it fills up again."*
> – Young woman, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 26, preparatory education or less

Some young people, like the man quoted above, attributed these environmental problems at least in part to poor education among residents, for example as demonstrated by the throwing of garbage in the streets. However, others attributed environmental problems to the lack of regular maintenance of the water and sewage lines, as well as the lack of attention paid by local governments to collecting garbage on a regular basis.

> *"The problem with the sewage is that whether they come and dig or don't, to find broken pipes, it doesn't matter. There aren't any regular checks…They don't fix things quickly [either]; if something is broken it takes two, three days before they can come and fix the problem."* – Young woman, Imbaba, aged 20, post-secondary technical education

Several young people said that these problems went back to the origins of the area as more thinly populated agricultural zones, and that with the increase in building and thus population density in the area, the quality of the basic infrastructure began to deteriorate.


3.3 Services and security

Although much of the discussion around informal areas in Cairo and elsewhere focuses on security of tenure and infrastructural conditions, in the SYPE-IGC young people's concerns about security in their areas focused more on social issues. The prevalence of drug use (62.1%), drug dealing (60.1%) and street harassment (48.0%) were the three security

challenges most widely cited as "very common" in their neighborhoods by young people (Figure 2).

A higher percentage of young people in Qalyubia reported all three problems as being very common, and a lower percentage of young people in Giza. In addition, half to three-quarters of young people in all areas said that these problems had increased in the five years prior to the survey. Theft was reported as being very common by 22.8% of young people overall, use of knives and other blades by 27.1%, and homicide and other violence by 19.1% of young people. About a third also reported each of these security challenges as "somewhat common." Other security challenges including theft, use of arms, and violence, were each reported as very common by 19–27% of young people, and somewhat common by an additional third.

Figure 2 Most common security challenges, by governorate
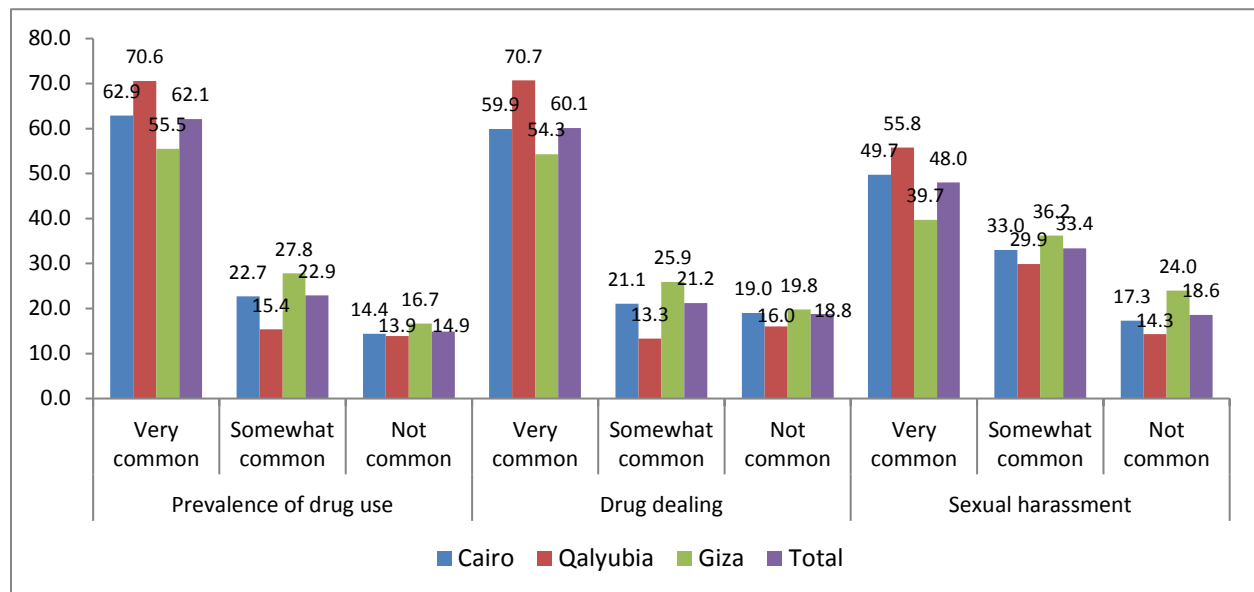
The qualitative results confirmed young people's primary concern with social issues such as drug use and dealing, street harassment, and perceived poor moral behavior in their neighborhoods. As in the quantitative survey, many of the qualitative respondents focused on these issues over those related to environmental and infrastructural challenges. Both young men and young women in the qualitative interviews emphasized that a lack of personal security was one of the main challenges that they faced in their areas.

> *"There are a lot of weapons now; you can find anyone carrying a weapon, not like before. If you see a guy, for example, standing and smoking hashish and all that, or someone taking [drugs], they used to be scared, but now that kind of thing is very normal."* – Young woman, Imbaba, aged 27, secondary education

> *"There are comments on a girl's body parts, everything, everything – I mean the parts from top to bottom, they make comments about them, from the older youth to the young boys. They might say those kind of words, and there's touching – like if there's a girl going to cross the bridge to the other side, they come up behind her and touch her wherever they want."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 29, preparatory education or less

Many young people thought that these security issues had become worse in their areas in recent years, and attributed this first and foremost to poor upbringing and the spread of a "thug" culture among youth, and particularly young men.

> *"There are people who think that 'If I have an argument, if I don't fight with a knife, if I don't hurt someone, then I'm not a man, I won't get my due.' They don't have an education."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 19, university education

> *"The boys who stand in the street, their families didn't raise them [well]. My family forbade me from hanging out with these bad kids – if people raised their kids in a certain way, we wouldn't have these problems."* – Young man, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 18, secondary education

Many respondents also attributed the increase in security challenges to the declining role of security forces and lack of law enforcement. Several noted the weakness of the security agencies in informal areas, as well as corruption within the police, and there was a general perception that the role of the security forces has been rolled back since the 2011 revolution.

> *"The system has changed since the revolution, and I don't think anyone is scared anymore…before they really used to pay attention to the police, but not anymore."* – Young woman, Imbaba, aged 27, secondary education

A few young people also related challenges of drugs and security in the area to the problem of youth unemployment and the poor economic situation of their neighborhoods. One young woman recounted being robbed in a tuk-tuk while on her way home from work after being paid, and attributed this to the combined problems of drugs and unemployment:

> *"The reason is the lack of money, and the drugs that they take. A person who takes drugs can't work. The reasons are drugs and unemployment, the lack of work."* – Young woman, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 26, preparatory education or less

Sexual harassment was a common part of young women's experiences in informal areas, and a highly visible form of gender-based violence to both young men and women in these neighborhoods. Just under half of young women reported that they had been harassed during the past six months, and exposure was highest among the youngest age group at 58.6% among 15-17 year olds, compared to 49.9% among 18-24 year olds and 39.4% among 25-29 year olds. The qualitative respondents similarly noted the prevalence of

harassment in their neighborhoods, both on the street and in other public places such as near schools.

> *"You see a lot that they are standing outside the girls' primary schools – not even preparatory or secondary. And the boys will say all kinds of words as they're passing by, and these behaviors, as the girl is walking by, they bother her."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 27, secondary education

In contrast to the high reported rates of security problems related to social issues, only 12.0% of young people in the SYPE-IGC said that unsafe buildings were very common in their areas, and 17.1% that they were somewhat common. However, as we might expect, respondents in the poorest wealth quintile were much more likely to say that unsafe buildings were very common in their neighborhoods (23.2%) than other quintiles (6.6–13.4%). There was little wealth gradient in young people's perceptions of other security challenges in their neighborhoods.

According to the qualitative interviewees' responses, the nature of problems with unsound buildings also depends on the type of informal settlement and the land that it was built on. Young people from Manshiet Nasr, where many houses are built on the slopes of hillsides and on desert land without planning, said that these buildings can collapse suddenly. The poor infrastructural basis of the buildings was related to the origins of the area.

> *"People built here randomly…My mom and dad told me that they just built here in order to claim the land. They closed it with corrugated tin and just took it. There are a lot of houses here that aren't even registered, or they took the land. People wanted to build something quickly so that it would be theirs, so of course it isn't built well when they didn't have anything [i.e. money] anyway."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 27, secondary education

In Shubra El-Kheima and Imbaba, on the other hand, families built their houses on agricultural land, which contributes to the fact that the water, sewage and electricity networks were not designed for the current levels of building and population, and have thus deteriorated rapidly. Some young people also said that this form of development and the associated infrastructure problems contributed to the collapse of buildings.

> *"Seven years ago my uncle's house, in that street behind, collapsed and took two other buildings next to it with it. The building was close to collapse, and the other two next to it were deteriorating, so it took them with it. The problem is the water and the pipes in the building burst, so the cement and all that become compromised over time, so it collapsed."* – Young man, Imbaba, aged 21, preparatory education or less

Nevertheless, security problems related to infrastructural deterioration played a minor role in young people's concerns about their neighborhoods as compared to social issues.

3.4 Social marginalization

The results of the qualitative study also revealed feelings of different forms of marginalization among young people due to their residence in the *ashwaiyyat*. Respondents were asked their views on the opportunities open to them in education, housing, work and marriage; many felt that they were marginalized to some degree, either in the public or private realm, due to their residence in an informal area.

When we specifically asked the qualitative respondents whether people in informal areas have the same opportunities in education as others in formal areas, most responded that if they were in a formal area they would get better opportunities in education. They said that they suffered from lack of amenities and general neglect in the education sector, particularly in the public schools. Private schools were not viewed as being available to residents of informal areas. Some respondents also said that people in slum areas do not care about education because the girls "will get married," and boys will work in informal jobs that do not require much education.

> *Where do you think that we can find good opportunity?! We can find Jobs only in the informal sector, our area reputation looks like a cancer, if anyone knew that you live here they will never hire you. Young woman, Mansheat Naser, aged 27, Secondary School*

> *People here don't care about the education, they say to girls that their future is marriage, and boys any way he can work in any field, no one here is interested in education.- Young woman, Imbaba, Un married, primary School*

Many young people, and particularly young men, felt that many of the risks they faced in their lives, whether in terms of security, economic or social factors, were due to their residence in informal areas. Some of the respondents expressed that this marginalization amounted to discrimination in the public sphere.

> *"When I ride the microbus, I always face many problems because of living in Shubra El Khema, especially when we get caught in a police ambush. The police officers ask about where I live. So when I say Shubra El Lhema he takes me and makes an investigation. At the same time there was another person who said that he lives in October [a high income neighborhood] but the policy didn't do anything to him and the police officer respected him more than me."* - Young man, Shubra El Khema, aged 25, university education.

> *"In school if they knew where I lived, Manshiet Nasr, they would distance themselves right away and start treating you like someone from Manshiet Nasr...Now I don't want to get my identity card, so that it doesn't have Manshiet Nasr written on it. As soon as they see the card and they see the name, the reaction on their face changes and you feel like they want to say 'Oh you're from Manshiet, that's where this and that.' It makes me feel like there's something wrong with me."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 20, university education

> *I was in a relationship with a respectable guy and he was in love with me, but his parent refused to let him marry me because I'm living in this area, they saw that I'm not suitable to their level.* – Young woman, Imbaba, unmarried , primary education or less

In the private sphere, young people were also asked about a scenario in which a young man from an informal area wants to propose to a woman who lives in a formal neighborhood. The majority of respondents, both men and women, said that her family should refuse the match due to the differences in their social and economic situation.

> *"They'll say, he lives a different life from our life. They might say they don't want to let her marry someone like that, she should marry someone from a nice neighborhood."* –
> – Young man, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 19, preparatory education or less

> *"I remember once I was out with some girls; I wasn't intending to start a relationship with her, the whole issue was that I didn't want to tell her I was from Manshiet Nasr. I don't know why, I guess not to say what everyone said. I saw all these people and lied, I said I was from Maqaweleen El-Arab."* – Young man, Manshiet Nasr, aged 22, secondary education

These stories suggest that some young people in informal areas feel an added psychological burden, or experience outright discrimination, due to outside perceptions of the neighborhood in which they live.

3.5 Resilience and coping strategies

Young people, their households and communities in informal areas have a variety of means of addressing or coping with challenges in their neighborhoods. In this section, we discuss such coping mechanisms, including informal networks and resolution mechanisms that may serve as resources for young people. These mechanisms are part of the resilience of communities in informal areas, namely their ability to adapt to their circumstances and to changes in their environment.

Young people in informal areas strive to solve the problems that they face in their daily life, whether social, economic, or security related, through reliance on their social support networks. Their families, local communities and neighbors are the basis for these networks of support and social solidarity, constituting a critical form of social capital for young people that they rely on in dealing with both daily problems and crises that arise, whether those are personal or collective. The qualitative component of the study revealed the strength of these local networks and their importance to young people's daily lives.

When asked who they turned to most when faced with challenges in the public (school, work) or private spheres (in the home), young men and women in the qualitative study revealed differences in their support networks. Whereas young women said that they most commonly relied on their siblings and parents, both for problems inside and outside the

home, young men primarily relied on their friends, particularly when facing problems related to the public sphere. When faced with problems at home, young men most commonly said that they did not turn to anyone for help.

> *"My sister. She is really the one who raised me since my mom has always worked, so she was the one who stayed home with me, so we're very close."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 19, preparatory education or less

> *"I might, if it's like an emotional question, it would be my friend. Maybe someone who is a little older or younger than you, by a year or two, so when you sit with him and say this and this happened, he might tell you 'you could look at the situation from another point of view' and give you advice. But any problem with violence or something like that, I don't go to anyone."* – Young man, Manshiet Nasr, aged 26, secondary education

In terms of their relationships with the community and particularly their neighbors, most young people indicated that there were strong social ties between the neighbors, maintained through continuous visits back and forth, as well as visits during special occasions. Many young people also indicated that it was common to help any neighbor who had a problem, and particularly to express solidarity with anyone who was facing some kind of crisis.

> *"There are a lot of girls my age, so we spend a lot of time together, for example each one will sit on her balcony and we'll talk together. We have a good relationship. And if there is any occasion we all go, we don't wait for an invitation, if anything is happening you find us all together, whether it is a happy occasion or a sad one, we're always together."* – Young woman, Imbaba, aged 27, secondary education

> *"For example, there was an apartment that caught on fire, and everyone came out – the owner of the apartment was out – so everyone tried to help, some climbed on the pipes to reach the apartment and others came to help from the balconies. We don't have anyone other than ourselves here in popular areas, not just here in Shubra El-Kheima, but in many areas there is no one to protect you but yourself and your neighbor."* – Young man, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 25, post-secondary technical education

In addition to their day-to-day reliance on social networks, informal communities similarly have informal mechanisms for managing social conflicts. When asked what they do if someone in the neighborhood experienced an accident or was the victim of violence, just under half of youth (43.7%) said that they go to the police, 23.0% said that they turn to community leaders, 19.1% that they do nothing and 14.2% that they solve the problem with violence. Young men were more likely to say that they go to the police (45.5%) or use violence (16.4%), whereas young women were more likely to say that they seek help from community leaders (24%) or do nothing (22.5%). The richest and the poorest young people were the least likely to say that they would report the incident to the police, and those in the richest quintiles were also most likely to say that they would do nothing.

The fact that fewer than half of SYPE-IGC respondents reported that they would go to the police in the case of an accident or crime likely relates to young people's views of the weakness of security forces in informal areas. As reflected in the survey results about solving problems with violence, a few young men also expressed the opinion that going to the police was a sign of weakness.

> *"The one who can take his rights with his own hand doesn't go to the police. The weak man who can't take his own sometimes goes to the police and sometimes just gives up, because he knows the police won't punish the one who did it."* – Young man, Manshiet Nasr, aged 22, secondary education

A number of young people also expressed mistrust of the police or viewed them as corrupt.

As in the survey results, many young people in the qualitative interviews also discussed the role of community leaders in their neighborhoods. Most expressed that community leaders played an important role in resolving conflicts in their areas, such that people did not resort to local officials or law enforcement.

> *"Most of the time if there is a problem that needs to be solved we find the elder from each side of what happened, so that they solve it. And if there is a conflict between groups that don't have an elder to decide, we look for a leader from the community to decide."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 25, university education

> *"If we have a fight, in order to solve the problem without going to the police...if two of us boys fight and it can't be solved, the elder from my side and the elder from his side, they'll sit down with us and reach a solution."* – Young man, Manshiet Nasr, aged 22, secondary education

## 3.6 Responsibility for service improvement in informal areas

Although young people relied heavily on informal networks and solutions to infrastructural gaps in their areas, the large majority viewed the government as responsible for improving services in informal areas and expressed little sense of agency in their ability to effect change in their local areas. Only 3.0% of young people said that they had participated in any kind of initiative to improve their neighborhoods in the past year, and the majority of this small group of young people had participated in an initiative to clean the neighborhood.

In terms of their willingness to participate in improvements in the future, 51.7% of young people did say they would be willing if they had time or believed in the seriousness of the initiative, whereas 12.6% said they would not be willing and 35.7% that they would not be willing because no one does anything in the neighborhood. Young men were considerably more likely to say that they would be willing to participate (59.3%) than young women (43.3%), who were more likely to say that they would not be willing to participate at all

(18.6% vs. 7.1% among young men). Young people's mixed feelings about their own agency to engage in improvements to the neighborhood were also seen in their responses to the question "Do you think youth in your area can improve the area?" to which two-thirds either said "No" or "I don't know" (Figure 3).

Corresponding with this view, 89.8% of young people said that the government is responsible for improving services in their areas, whereas 6.0% said the people themselves, and even fewer cited other actors such as civil society. On the other hand, when faced with an actual problem in basic services, over a third of young people said that the people in the area either solve it themselves (15.5%) or gather money to fix it (24.7%), whereas about a third said that they call the government authorities and 26.8% that no one does anything. This suggests that in the absence of government intervention, or belief in government intervention, many communities do in fact band together to solve direct problems.

Figure 3 Agency and responsibility in improving the area
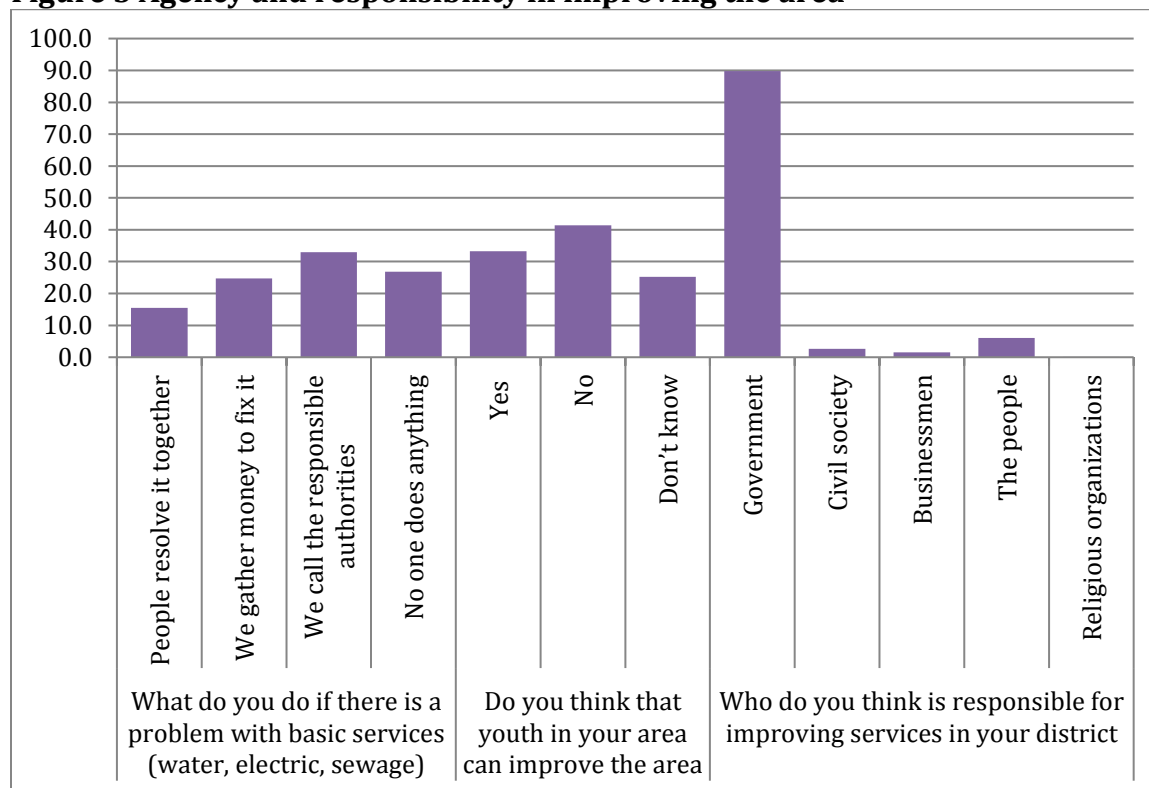
Young people also expressed fairly positive views about the willingness of members of their communities to help out should any initiative to improve the neighborhood be undertaken; 55.1% said that they thought people would contribute time, and 53.5% that they would contribute effort. In contrast, and likely reflecting the difficult economic circumstances in many communities, only 27.0% said they thought people would be willing to contribute money.

In the qualitative interviews, young people similarly expressed the opinion that the government bears the primary responsibility for improving basic services in the area. This was seen, for example, in their recommendations for local health and education services, which they thought needed greater oversight and investment from the central government agencies. In terms of infrastructure, young people in the qualitative interviews also emphasized the responsibility of the government to improve services. For example, young people emphasized the importance of government interventions to improve the sewage system in their areas to the level that could support the current population density, and also cited the importance of the responsible agencies conducting more regular maintenance.

> *"The pipes have to be larger, because the small pipes can't handle the high pressure. They should be bigger to support the density of people and last for longer."*
> – Young man, Shubra El-Kheima, aged 18, secondary education

Some young people also said that the community leaders were responsible for the area, in that they played a main role in solving problems that arose.

> *"The community leader is the one who speaks on our behalf. For example if there is a problem with the water or the sewage or anything, the men from the area or the street will go and talk to the community leader and he'll take care of it, go talk to the locality."* – Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 20, university education

There were, however, also areas in which young people thought that residents and young people themselves needed to make changes in their behavior, potentially supported by awareness campaigns. In addressing the spread of security challenges in their neighborhoods, for instance, young people emphasized the need for awareness campaigns to educate youth about the negative effects of risk behaviors on their communities and on themselves, as well as educating families on the proper upbringing of children. Some also noted that residents had to change their behavior in terms of garbage disposal and to take greater responsibility for maintaining the cleanliness of the neighborhood.

> *"The problem that bothers me the most is the garbage, that the neighborhood isn't clean at all. And really we tried a lot, but there isn't anyone who wants to help. Even if I find one or two that want to help [clean up] one day, the next day there isn't anyone else. So one really wants to see change on this point."* - Young woman, Manshiet Nasr, aged 20, university education

This young woman, however, was one of very few young people who mentioned their own participation, or leadership, in efforts to improve services or conditions in the neighborhood.

4. Conclusions

Although the results of the SYPE-IGC indicate that access to basic services in informal Greater Cairo is not necessarily worse than in other urban regions (Roushdy and

Sieverding 2014), the critical gap that the SYPE-IGC findings point to is in the quality of those services. The infrastructure in many informal areas was not designed for the current level of development or population size, putting a strain on services and causing breakdowns that local authorities often do not have the capacity to address. Young people also pointed to the inefficiency and inadequacy of local health and education services, pointing to an environment in which front-line service providers, whether teachers or healthcare workers, are not incentivized or provided the resources needed to offer quality services. In this context, health and education outweighed infrastructure and environmental concerns in young people's priorities for improvements in the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, security and social issues such as drug use and dealing, violence and sexual harassment, were more pressing daily concerns for most young people than problems related to basic services or infrastructure. This sense of insecurity – and personal experiences of violence – had a tangible impact on youth lives and wellbeing. Insecurity was related, in young people's view, to the weakness of institutions that should provide services to informal areas, particularly the police. In lieu of the police, communities have their own mechanisms for solving conflicts, such as the role of community leaders. However, these informal mechanisms also do not guarantee equity in conflict resolution. From a policy and programmatic standpoint, establishing equitable, community-based approaches to policing and informal conflict resolution is thus a critical step in improving living conditions in informal areas. At the same time, young people viewed insecurity as both a mechanism that excluded them from participation in urban life and – due to others' perceptions of the insecurity of the *ashwaiyyat* – a marker that marginalized them within Cairo. For researchers, additional work should thus be done to understand security as a part of the urban inequality that marks informal areas or slums, in Cairo and beyond.

Finally, the informal areas of Cairo are young areas, with large youth populations. These youth could be an enormous resource for the improvement of their neighborhoods, if their potential is harnessed. Yet young people in informal areas expressed very mixed opinions about their own agency to generate change in their communities, as well as uncertainty about the likelihood that others would join any initiatives that were started to improve the area. In the qualitative interviews, young people also expressed a sense of marginalization and lack of opportunity based specifically on where they lived. This residential marginalization of informal youth may compound the processes of exclusion from formal institutions that challenge youth development in the Middle East and North Africa region more broadly (Dhillon and Youssef 2009). Youth empowerment and leadership training should thus be an integral element of initiatives to provide improved services and address existing challenges in informal areas, as well as efforts to better integrate informal areas with the formal areas that surround them. A new approach to urban development is needed in Egypt that adopts a more participatory model to address the priorities and needs of local communities.

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Table A1: Availability of education services inside or outside young people's communities

	Governorate			
		Qalyoubia		
	Cairo	a	Giza	Total
Are kindergartens available?				
Inside the neighborhood	86.4	93.4	84.2	86.8
Outside the neighborhood but near	8.9	6.2	11.3	9.2
Outside the neighborhood and far	4.7	0.4	4.5	4.0
Are general/ Azhar primary schools available?				
Inside the neighborhood	78.7	84.4	76.4	78.9
Outside the neighborhood but near	15.3	15.1	19.2	16.4
Outside the neighborhood and far	6.0	0.5	4.3	4.7
Are general/ Azhar preparatory schools available?				
Inside the neighborhood	65.9	64.0	63.3	64.9
Outside the neighborhood but near	24.5	32.8	27.4	26.6
Outside the neighborhood and far	9.6	3.2	9.3	8.5
Are general/ Azhar secondary schools available?				
Inside the neighborhood	41.6	43.9	42.4	42.2
Outside the neighborhood but near	32.1	38.8	30.4	32.6
Outside the neighborhood and far	26.3	17.2	27.2	25.2
Are vocational secondary schools available?				
Inside the neighborhood	25.7	38.1	35.1	30.3
Outside the neighborhood but near	26.4	33.9	27.8	28.0
Outside the neighborhood and far	47.9	27.9	37.1	41.7
Are literacy classes available?				
Inside the neighborhood	29.8	36.4	40.9	34.0
Outside the neighborhood but near	18.6	27.9	20.2	20.5
Outside the neighborhood and far	51.5	35.6	38.9	45.5
Total sample	1,800	470	670	2,940

Table A2: Availability of health and recreation services inside or outside young people's communities

	Governorate			
	Cairo	Qalyoubia	Giza	Total
Are governmental health centers available?				
Inside the neighborhood	54.1	63.9	68.5	59.7
Outside the neighborhood but near	25.2	20.1	19.3	22.7
Outside the neighborhood and far	20.7	16.1	12.2	17.6
Are family planning centers available?				
Inside the neighborhood	48.7	51.4	65.4	53.9
Outside the neighborhood but near	26.2	32.9	21.7	25.9
Outside the neighborhood and far	25.1	15.7	12.9	20.2
Are local hospitals available?				
Inside the neighborhood	27.3	31.2	40.4	31.6
Outside the neighborhood but near	33	43.3	25.1	32.3
Outside the neighborhood and far	39.7	25.5	34.4	36
Are Private hospitals available?				
Inside the neighborhood	37.9	39.9	46.4	40.6
Outside the neighborhood but near	30.1	39.4	34.9	32.9
Outside the neighborhood and far	32.1	20.7	18.8	26.5
Are clinics related to a religious or a non-profit organization available?				
Inside the neighborhood	54.9	48.6	69.1	58
Outside the neighborhood but near	22.8	42.5	20.8	25.3
Outside the neighborhood and far	22.3	8.9	10.2	16.7
Are youth centers available?				
Inside the neighborhood	44.3	65.8	56.9	51.2
Outside the neighborhood but near	22.2	15.2	21.9	21
Outside the neighborhood and far	33.5	19.0	21.2	27.7
Are sport playgrounds/private gyms available?				
Inside the neighborhood	48.1	55.2	64.8	53.9
Outside the neighborhood but near	25.4	34.1	26.2	27
Outside the neighborhood and far	26.5	10.6	9.1	19.1
Are cultural and arts centers available?				
Inside the neighborhood	15.0	20.5	27.3	19.4
Outside the neighborhood but near	21.4	32.4	25.1	24.2
Outside the neighborhood and far	63.6	47.1	47.6	56.5
Total sample	1,800	470	670	2,940