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Women Suffering from Multiple Sources of Oppression in Upper Egypt: A Case Study of Intersectional Targeting and Integrated Development Interventions as the Way Out

By Laila El Baradei¹ and Passant Elwy²

Abstract

Scholars in the field of gender and development are strong advocates of the concept of “intersectionality,” first coined by Crenshaw in 1989, as a way of thinking about how marginalized groups may be subjected to oppression from various sources. The main purpose of this research is to make a case for how intersectional targeting, together with integrated development interventions, can be useful in helping vulnerable individuals, specifically women, suffering from multiple sources of poverty and oppression. A case study, coupled with in-depth field interviews, was the method employed for assessing the application of an intersectional lens by a nonprofit development organization (ENID) that targets vulnerable poor, illiterate, and unemployed women living in marginalized rural communities in South Egypt and employs integrated development interventions to get them out of poverty. Working on upgrading basic services, promoting small and micro enterprises, fostering sustainable agricultural development, initiating a program for knowledge dissemination and policy advocacy were some of the features of the integrated development approach utilized by ENID. The research findings indicated that ENID activities may have had a positive impact on reducing poverty and empowering women in the rural villages of South Egypt. Many challenges were faced related to government bureaucracy, restrictive cultural norms, and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, on the positive side, poverty was reported to have declined by 14.5% in absolute terms from 2015-2018 in Qena governorate where ENID works. More investments are being directed to the region, and the women beneficiaries attest to life-changing experiences, enhanced self-confidence, and empowerment.

Keywords: Poverty, Intersectionality, Impoverished Women, Rural Southern Egypt, Nonprofit organizations

Introduction

Scholars who study poverty consider it one of the most hindering and distressing factors in human life (Hernandez, 2020; Clark et al., 1981). It is a complex and multi-dimensional condition characterized by various deprivations in addition to low income, including but not limited to lack of fundamental requirements such as well-being, food, education, housing, security, voice, sense of power, and access to information (Abdel-Baki, 2011). Fighting poverty necessitates increasing investments and implementing a set of complicated policies (Corus et al., 2016). Poverty alleviation is at the forefront of global development agendas. “Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere” is the first Sustainable Development Goal out of

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17 set by the United Nations in 2015 (United Nations, 2019). Despite being a multi-faceted phenomenon, poverty levels are frequently reported through proxy measures related to revenue and consumption (Singh & Chudasama, 2020).³

Another complication of global poverty has to do with gender. Pearce (1978) was one of the scholars who coined the term “feminization of poverty.” Scholars in the field of gender and development are strong advocates of the concept of intersectionality, first coined by Crenshaw in 1989, to explain how marginalized groups may be subjected to oppression from various sources, and how there is a need to help them overcome these different challenges (Wright, 2017; Gopaldas, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; McShane, 2021). Intersectionality calls for the purposeful consideration of the interaction between two or more dimensions of oppression. It analyzes the impact of different forms of disadvantage on specific groups in society (Bastia, 2014; Weber, 2006). When the same group of individuals face various inequalities, the result is greater than the sum of the parts. This resulting synergistic effect of the inequalities further complicates the alleviation process (Al-Faham et al., 2019).

Impoverished individuals remain at risk unless significant changes modify the nature of policy formulation (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). Many policies lean on sole factor triggers (Al-Faham et al., 2019). For instance, when poverty is described as a lack of financial resources, the main issues that impoverished people are perceived to be experiencing relate to deficiencies in food, housing, clothing, and other material goods. The intersectionality lens and approach to poverty alleviation is considered a better option for dealing with multiple forms of deprivation that may hit the same group in any community or society to ensure that they are visible to the policymakers (Norris et al., 2010; Corus et al., 2016); intersectionality in the context of poverty speaks to the multiple sources of deprivation and oppression that the disadvantaged face.

The variety of poverty-related factors and experiences of impoverishment have been increasingly acknowledged (Banks et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2007). Many scholars have analyzed the social and cultural factors to clarify the needs of vulnerable populations (Crockett et al., 2011). Additionally, people who fall in the intersections of multiple poverty-related factors are often vulnerable to “policy invisibility,” as they are not visible to policymakers and thus remain unsupported (Crenshaw, 1991).

This paper calls for policymakers to consider intersectionality in the formulation and execution of poverty alleviation and community development initiatives, especially when dealing with women. In this paper, the researchers explicate the problem of policy invisibility; provide a literature review of the concept of intersectionality and different community development strategies, including that of integrated development; explain poverty in Egypt; present the case of Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID Foundation); and finally clarify the importance of rethinking poverty, and the targeting of community development efforts, through an intersectional lens and an integrated approach.

Research Question

The main research question examined is: To what extent do intersectional targeting, coupled with integrated development interventions, effectively alleviate poverty for women suffering from multiple sources of oppression?

³ Even though “Ending Poverty in all its forms everywhere” is the first Sustainable Development Goal, and progress has been reported towards its achievement, yet still a lot more needs to be done. Criticisms have been directed to the formulation of SDG 1 for several reasons, including: the focus on extreme poverty, the utilization of a money metric \$1.25 as the main measure, and the failure to sufficiently emphasize the human rights-based duties related to poverty eradication (Sengupta, 2018). Additionally, the SDG framework itself has been criticized for promoting a capitalist perspective that favors commercial interests over universal entitlements to fundamental needs (Weber, 2017).

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Intersectionality

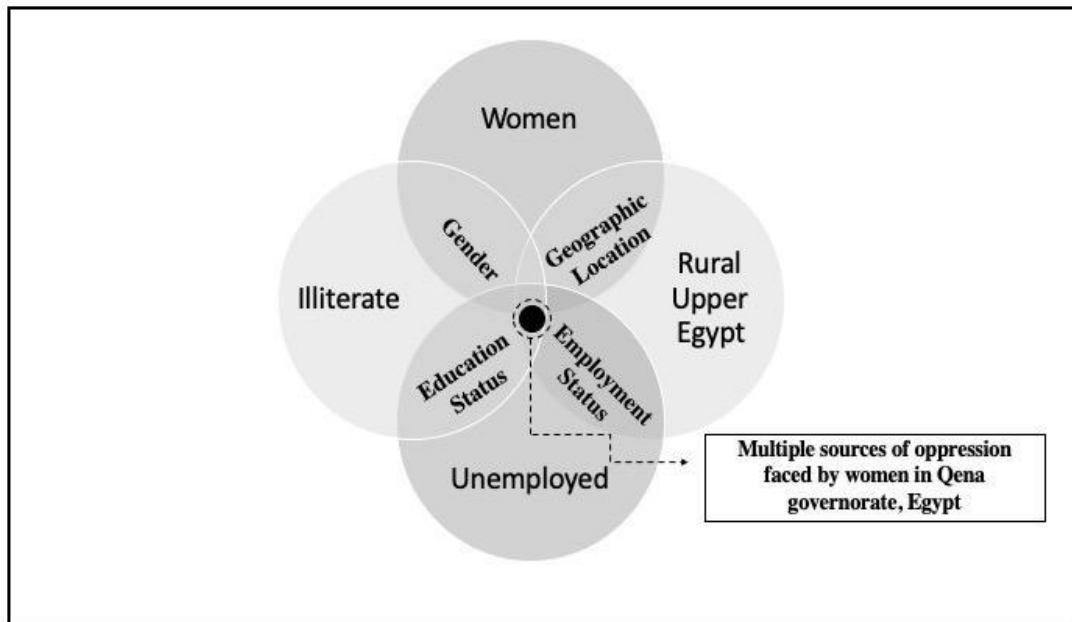
The concept of intersectionality has etched its way into the development field, where for example, instead of focusing on mainstreaming gender, development projects try to deal with multiple sources of oppression hitting their targeted beneficiaries (Grunenfelder & Schurr, 2014).

Over time, many researchers defined various types of intersectionality. The concept of intersecting oppressions was first used in relation to black women, focusing on the overlap between race and gender. The term “intersectionality” was coined by Crenshaw in 1989 and then took on a life of its own, as scholars in various fields started using the concept/theory in their analysis (Carbado, 203). Based on Crenshaw (1991), there are two concepts of intersectionality: structural and political intersectionality. Structural intersectionality is suitable for conceptualizing how marginalized communities find themselves poor because of certain structural boundaries, such as racism, sexism and/or inadequate infrastructure. On the other hand, political intersectionality relates to disparities imposed because of a chosen or imposed political affiliation (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Hancock (2007), intersectionality is an empirical approach that stresses the synergistic effect of groups or categories of differences. Categories mean the techniques of classifying certain social groups (e.g., women, migrants, homeless) based on shared commonalities (Cole, 2009). These categories shed light on either the unfair nature of social relations, such as low salary, being single, being unemployed, or far less commonly, on numerous advantages (Collins, 2000). Therefore, everyone is situated at the intersection of multiple social categories resulting in experiences of advantages and disadvantages (Corus et al., 2016).

Likewise, McCall (2001) fleshes out three main types of intersectionality which are: [a] intra-categorical intersectionality, [b] inter-categorical intersectionality and [c] anti-categorical intersectionality. Intra-categorical intersectionality focuses on the overlapping sources of oppression within the same social group (Corus et al., 2016). Inter-categorical intersectionality can be used when the research study aims to compare between more than one group to investigate the most prevailing categories of oppression (Winker & Degele, 2011). Unlike the two other types, anti-categorical intersectionality does not focus on social categories per se, but on how they were developed over time (Gopaldas, 2013).

The case study of ENID Foundation indicates the use of an intra-categorical intersectionality approach since it targets, as beneficiaries, citizens suffering from overlapping sources of oppression, but who otherwise belong to the same social community living in Upper Egypt. Figure 1 shows the multiple sources of oppression faced by women in Qena governorate/municipality and how these were the basis for selecting ENID Foundation beneficiaries. The intersectional lens used by ENID aimed at identifying this most deprived segment of the population to offer them its services and try to get them out of the poverty trap. The black circle in the diagram depicts the poverty trap wherein multiple sources of oppression impact poor, illiterate, unemployed women living in rural Upper Egypt. Upper Egypt is one of the poorest regions in Egypt, but the rural areas are even more impoverished and neglected compared to the urban areas.

Figure 1: Intersectionality Approach Implemented by ENID Foundation to Reduce Poverty in Qena Governorate, Egypt



Source: Authors' conceptualization

A Typology of Community Development Approaches

Community development approaches are seen as fundamental solutions to poverty eradication in low-income and marginalized communities worldwide (Hameed et al., 2017; El-Kogali et al., 2016). These approaches are not unidimensional; instead, they can cover different programs aiming at alleviating poverty through economic, social, and physical improvement of marginalized community members (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). Regarding the obvious failure of dominant, traditional, top-down community development approaches, there has been a move in the field of development towards community-based or bottom-up participatory approaches to development. The present review explores five main approaches of community development: the charity model, the needs-based approach, the rights-based approach, the asset-based community development approach (ABCD), and finally the integrated development approach.

Charity model: The Charity Model, also known as the generosity model, is considered the earliest and the most direct approach to community development (Hessin, 2014). It aims at fulfilling human needs and/or alleviating existing human suffering (Worth, 2014). It assumes that donors know the needy people and can meet their needs by giving them donations in various forms, including money, shelter, medical care, and clothing. This model does very little in achieving sustainable solutions for impoverished communities and/or fixing the causes of their problems (Hessin, 2014).

Needs-based Approach: The needs-based/traditional approach for community development was introduced for tackling poverty in vulnerable communities (Hunter, 2012). It has a significant advantage over the generosity model. It engages community leaders in the development process and bases interventions on the needs of the deprived people by establishing a dialogue between donors and the poor (Nel, 2018). The community members identify their needs and problems through various needs-assessment tools (Russell & Smeaton, 2010). The criticism directed to this approach revolves around two main points. First, it makes

organizations ignore the strengths, resources, and assets existing within communities and instead focuses on problems (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Second, it may harm people's psychological well-being, as it defines communities by their problems, making them passive receivers of assistance offered (Nel, 2018).

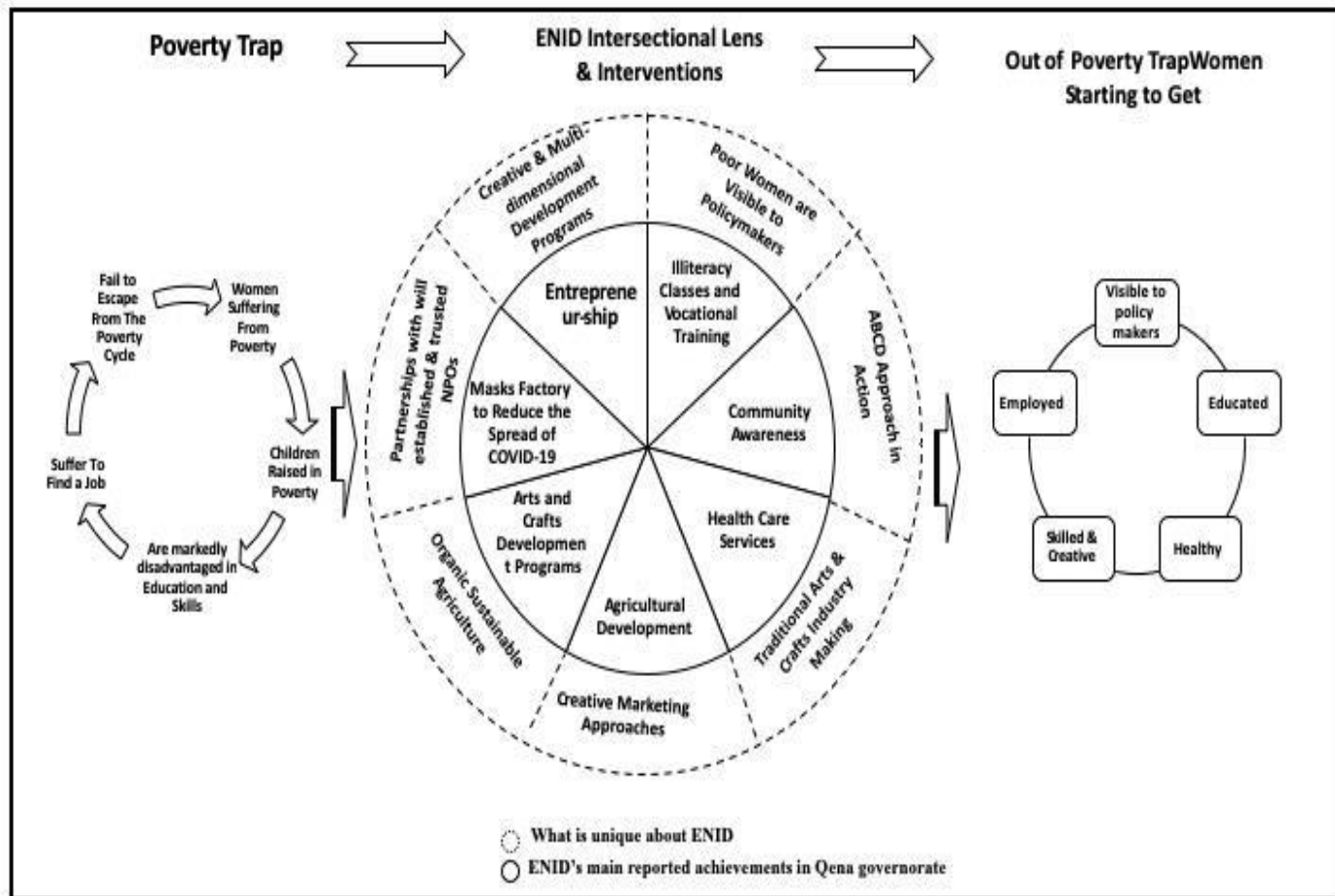
Rights-based approach: This approach for community development emerged in the late 1990s (Lewis, 2007). It brought economic, social, and cultural rights issues to the center stage, alongside civil and political rights. It is perceived to have several significant advantages compared to the earlier mentioned approaches. First, organizations that adopt this approach deal with the service recipients as active partners, and not as voiceless beneficiaries. Second, it emphasizes the need to work with the poorest people and enable them to participate in higher policy-making circles (Hessin, 2014; Lewis, 2007). Third, it focuses on long-term development and places the protection and realization of human needs in the center. Fourth, it considers accountability between government and citizens as a central piece of the development process. However, some of the nonprofits that adopt this community approach become politicized, which results in contentious relations between them and governments (Lewis, 2007).

Asset-based community development approach (ABCD): The ABCD is a bottom-up development approach that focuses on helping communities overcome the challenges they face through developing their own assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2008). The ABCD approach critiques the traditional development approaches, which assume that the community is fragmented and thus requires external assistance (Bruursema, 2015). It emphasizes building on existing strengths and draws attention to the qualities, resources, capabilities, and assets of vulnerable communities, rather than their problems, deficits, and weaknesses (Mathie & Cunningham, 2008). It also enables community members to be part of the development process and links the micro-assets of a community with the macro-external environment, and thus complements top-down methods for eradicating poverty and creating public value (Hessin, 2014).

The Integrated Development Approach: This approach has traditionally been described as a "holistic" and "coordinated" development approach aiming at solving the multitude of problems faced in any one community (Jones & Wiggle, 1987). More recent descriptions of the approach discuss how it emphasizes working on economic, social, and environmental development simultaneously, to improve the quality of life and overall well-being of citizens to make life "worth living." The assumption is that it is a step ahead of sustainable development through this focus on giving meaning to the life of citizens (Calatrava-Requena, 2018, 141; Koroneos & Rokos, 2012). This integrated development approach is what ENID Foundation, our case study, attempts to achieve.

Figure 2 depicts how ENID's use of an intersectional lens, coupled with an integrated socio-economic-environmental development approach, helped in pulling the targeted beneficiaries out of poverty.

Figure 2: Intersectional Lens Coupled with an Integrated Development Approach used by ENID Foundation to Alleviate Poverty in Rural Upper Egypt



Source: Designed by the authors

Methodology

This study adopts a case study methodology, coupled with in-depth field interviews, to assess the intersectional lens, and the integrated development approach, adopted by a nonprofit development organization (ENID) to target poor women living in marginalized rural communities in the South of Egypt and get them out of poverty. The researchers closely examined the work of ENID Foundation. Data collected depended on published reports, an examination of ENID website and publications, media news, YouTube video recordings, and unpublished documents shared by the Foundation, including an independent consultant evaluation report, internal monitoring matrices, and project documents. In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with various stakeholders, including ENID’s founder and “Godmother,” and a representative of the Ministry of Social Solidarity at the local level. Additionally, twenty semi-structured purposive interviews were held with women beneficiaries in Upper Egypt villages. The interviews with the women beneficiaries continued until no further insights were extracted. Participants’ confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and pseudonyms were used. All the informed consents for participation, pre-approved by the Institutional Review Board at the authors’ university, were either signed by the participants, or communicated verbally and recorded. The in-depth interview questions covered the beneficiaries’ education, marital status, hours of work, the impact of ENID NPO on their lives, challenges, and success stories, how their skills were developed, and their future.

Research Background

Poverty in Egypt

Poverty has been a persistent problem and a serious challenge for Egypt (Shirazi, 2014). Although a well-resourced nation positioned at a strategic geopolitical juncture between three continents, many historical factors have contributed to its persistent poverty rates, including: successive colonization by the Ottomans, the British, and the French; the various wars the country engaged in; and the weak governance systems exercised by successive regimes over the past seventy years.

Egypt is counted as the most populated country in North Africa and the Arab world, with a population of 102 million in 2020. Although Egypt is classified as a middle-income country, it faces severe and long-standing development problems (Armanious, 2020). The latest official poverty rate announced in Egypt reached 32.5% (BBC News, 30 July 2019).

The exploration and analysis of poverty, and interventions aiming at poverty alleviation in Egypt, are further complicated by difficulties of spatial heterogeneity (EL Leithy & Armanious, 2018). Upper Egypt is nearly one-third of Egypt's population, with a population growth rate of 2.5% per year, a high rate that does not make people feel the development that is taking place. There is also an illiteracy problem as 24.6% of Egypt's population is illiterate (Egypt Innovate, 2021). Although poverty exists in all Egyptian governorates, it reaches the highest level in rural Upper⁴ Egypt governorates, compared to other urban governorates such as Cairo, Giza, or Alexandria. Poverty in rural Upper Egypt was recorded at 51.9 percent in 2018 (CAPMAS, 2020) and is described as “chronic” poverty that is driven by lack of infrastructure, low investment in human capital, absence of job opportunities, high school dropout rates, and deteriorated healthcare services, all resulting in overall poor living standards (Hessin, 2014).

Table 1: Poverty Rates in Egypt 2018

Poverty Rates in 2018 in Different Geographic Areas in Egypt According to National Poverty Measurements	
<i>Areas</i>	<i>2017/2018</i>
Total Egypt	32.5
Urban Governorates	26.7
Lower Urban	14.3
Lower Rural	27.3
Upper Urban	30.0
Upper Rural	51.9

Source: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), “Egypt in Numbers: Income and Consumption”, (2020). https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/Publications.aspx?page_id=5104&Year=23427

⁴ Upper Egypt refers to the South of Egypt terrain which is relatively elevated compared to the North of Egypt referred to as Lower Egypt, because the river Nile flows from South to North. There are 27 governorates or administrative divisions in Egypt, equivalent to provinces.

Multiple Oppressions Affecting Women in Egypt

According to many indexes measuring gender inequality, Egypt has a low ranking for women's economic participation (World Bank, 2019). The unemployment rate for Egyptian women was recorded as 22.1% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020a), and the percentage of their participation in the labor force was recorded as 23.9%, much lower than the world average of 39.6% (World Bank, 2016). The fact that 46% of Egypt's female workforce are agricultural workers (World Bank, 2012) not counted in official labor statistics, and that women who work in the informal sector are also not included, partially accounts for the relatively low percentage recorded for their participation in the labor force. They work but are invisible within the official statistics.

Illiteracy rates for women across Egypt are higher than for men. In 2017, illiteracy rates for men were 21.1%, and 30.8% for women (CAPMAS, 2017). According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 (OECD, 2020), Egypt is classified as "very high" in gender discrimination. Egypt ranks 129 out of 156 nations in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Situation of Women in Upper Egypt

The problem of women in rural Upper Egypt is compounded. Not only are women relatively deprived of many of their economic, educational, and social rights, but they live in some of the most underprivileged and poor geographical areas of Egypt, and additionally in rural areas, known to be less serviced by the government and less privileged compared to urban areas. Although the latest published poverty rates in Egypt reached 32.5% on a national level, and averaged 51.9% in rural Upper Egypt (CAPMAS, 2020), these rates are much higher in some of the Southern governorates, such as Assiut, Sohag, and Luxor, with poverty rates reported as 66.7%, 59.6%, and 55.3% respectively (BBC Arabic, 30 July 2019). Additionally, many women in Upper Egypt are deprived of their inheritance rights and fall behind men in access to educational services (Khodary, 2018).

Case Study: ENID's Intersectionality Approach to Community Development

The following section of the paper presents a case study of the nonprofit organization, Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID). ENID was chosen as a case study because of the intra-categorical intersectional approach adopted in targeting its beneficiaries who suffer from multiple overlapping sources of oppression (rural women who are unemployed and mostly illiterate), and because of the integrated development approach utilized by the organization in development of the Qena community. Using Crenshaw's (1991) categorization for intersectionality, the targeted group ENID is trying to reach is women who suffer mostly from structural intersectionality, with a deficiency in social and economic services, work opportunities, education, and discrimination based on gender. A main source of discrimination against Upper Egyptian rural women has to do with the prevalent cultural norms in their community. The aim is to investigate how ENID used the intersectional targeting and the integrated development approach and to what extent it was effective in getting the targeted multi-oppressed groups of women out of poverty.

ENID is a NPO that was established in 2012. Its long-term objective is: "to contribute to the socio-economic empowerment of disadvantaged women and youth in rural Upper Egypt through skills formation for employability and jobs creation" (UNDP Egypt, 2015). The strategy adopted by ENID opts for an integration between economic development, social development, and environmental protection with the belief that improvements in one sector will be reflected in the other two. Four different programs were implemented: to upgrade basic services, to promote small and micro enterprises, to promote sustainable agricultural

development, and to disseminate knowledge and provide policy advocacy (UNDP Egypt, 2015; ENID, 2012). The drive of the initiative has been to address major challenges to development, with concentration on poverty reduction and employment generation in Upper Egypt. The intention is to increase the possibility of success and the likelihood that pilot interventions could be duplicated in other provinces.

The empowerment of women is mainstreamed into all ENID domains. ENID seeks to empower women through several ways: employment, access to an independent source of income, education, and general awareness-raising. The programs of ENID focus mainly on one economically marginalized governorate in Upper Egypt, namely Qena, with around 3 million inhabitants and with a poverty level of 52% in 2018, as well as on the neighboring Upper Egypt governorates of Sohag and Luxor. The region of Upper Egypt includes 923 of Egypt's poorest 1000 villages. Qena governorate includes 59 of the poorest villages, and ENID is active in 35 of these villages (Guenana, 2015).

The Intersectional Targeting of Beneficiaries: Before ENID started its operations, it conducted a needs assessment study to determine the priority needs in the targeted community which revealed a high unemployment rate, deteriorating health and educational services, absence of women from the public sphere, and a degraded environment. It also undertook the development of an Investment Map to identify the comparative advantages of Qena governorate. The Map revealed the heavy dependence on agricultural activities, the presence of two industrial zones, several tourist attractions, and proximity to the city of Luxor, a major touristic site (Guenana, 2015). This represented the preparatory work for the implementation of the intersectional targeting approach by ENID and influenced the choice of integrated development interventions.

ENID is one of the organizations that uses the intersectionality approach in targeting its beneficiaries and works creatively to make sure they remain visible to policymakers. It directs integrated socio-economic interventions to the aid of its targeted beneficiaries and puts them under the spotlight through advocacy and public communication tools and efforts. In 2012 when ENID started, some of the figures used to justify the focus on women and youth in rural Upper Egypt included the following: Egypt ranking 120/128 on gender gap measurement; young women aged 18-29 representing only 18.5% of the Egyptian workforce, compared to 50% for men of the same age; 70% of the poor and very poor in Egypt living in rural areas; and 66% of the population in Upper Egypt being extremely poor (ENID Project Document, 2012).

ENID's Main Reported Achievements

An integrated development approach using various interventions was utilized. Amongst ENID's creative accomplishments in applying intersectional targeting and implementing the integrated development interventions are those listed below:

- *Promoting Entrepreneurship:* ENID adopted the Japanese inspired One-Village-One-Product model and implemented it in 27 villages in Qena governorate; boosted the handicraft industry; and introduced sustainable agricultural practices including crop residue recycling, community milk processing, roof gardening, and backyard poultry raising.
- *Establishing Medium-Sized Enterprises:* ENID was responsible for including the first ready-made garments factory and the first furniture factory in Qena.
- *Implementing Creative Marketing Activities:* ENID started an online shop with home delivery for the traditional arts and crafts, acquired Fair Trade certification, and participated in several international exhibitions.
- *Upgrading Basic Services:* ENID provided thousands of women with literacy classes.

- *Building Community Awareness:* ENID organized community awareness workshops on issues of health and nutrition, citizenship, and how to prepare a small business feasibility study.
- *Providing Healthcare Services:* Two healthcare units were renovated to serve more than 35,000 inhabitants; training was provided to the medical staff.
- *Partnering with Established Nonprofits in Upper Egypt:* ENID managed to partner with over 40 local nongovernmental organizations and community development associations.
- *Acting as a Knowledge Hub for Development in Upper Egypt:* ENID contracted out the production of policy briefs and case studies to encourage policymakers and MSMEs to scale up development activities in rural Upper Egypt (UNDP, 2020; ENID website, 2020).

Challenges Encountered by ENID

The path to implementing the intersectional targeting approach and getting women out of poverty was not always smooth. Numerous hurdles were faced, whether related to the government's bureaucracy, the prevailing cultural norms, or lately, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rigid governmental bureaucratic procedures and centralization were amongst the main challenges faced by ENID. As explained by the ENID Founder, "Unfortunately, all the challenges were because of the government administration in Cairo.... all the challenges.... To be able to rent land from the governorate, three and a half feddans, we had to receive the prime minister's approval!" (Handoussa, 2020, Interview).

Other hurdles were related to the villages' prevalent mindset and cultural norms that prevented married women from continuing their work at ENID. The girls would receive training, but once they got married, they moved to live with their in-laws, and both the mother-in-law and father-in-law became the ones in control. This led to a very high turnover rate among the women working with ENID. As some workers reported:

My dad and my husband were completely against this job, and they advised me to look for a better job vacancy. My neighbors bullied me because I will work in the copper department. ... Now, I proved to everyone that I am a successful woman. I can generate income and support my husband financially (Sara, a 32-year-old worker with three children, November 2020).

My husband was against the idea of my being an employed woman. Especially when they knew that I would work with heavy iron instruments like a hammer and iron pen (Lamia Ali, a 33-year-old worker in the copper crafts department with three children, November 2020).

My brother thinks that women shouldn't work outside the home (Fatma Ahmed, a 33-year-old engaged worker in the copper crafts department, November 2020).

Family opposition against women working was one of the main hurdles. With the extended family setup being dominant, all men in the family have a say about women's work. Even when the woman is married, the father or brother can still prevent her from working outside the home. ENID Founder explained how they had to meet with the village men to convince them to send their daughters and wives to work:

You have to work on the men and the women and the different generations to change the mindset... By year 3 or 4, the change started to happen. Men from other

villages in Upper Egypt started knocking on our doors and asking us to start operating in their villages (Handoussa, 2020, Interview).

Finally, the latest challenge encountered by ENID was related to the COVID-19 pandemic. All activities were suspended when some of the villages in Qena were placed under lockdown. However, nine months afterwards, things went back to normal. ENID exhibited flexibility by shifting the production in the ready-made garments factory to focus on surgical masks. The challenge was turned into an opportunity.

Findings: Effectiveness of ENID's Intersectional Targeting and Integrated Developmental Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

A mid-term evaluation study that investigated the detailed monitoring and evaluation plan for ENID was conducted by an independent consultant in 2015 (Guenena, 2015). The midterm evaluation pointed to several areas of potential improvement: the need for more effective outreach with policymakers, more meetings with the Ministry of Industry to support the crafts sector, and improved safety measures in some training locations. However, ENID was found to be on track in realizing most of its outputs and outcomes (Guenana, 2015). More importantly, as stated in the midterm report: "The standard of living of communities is being improved through the development of agricultural practices and products as well as through the upgrading of basic services such as health, pre-school education and literacy classes for women" (p.19).

According to CAPMAS Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES, 2018), poverty has increased in all regions in Egypt, except in rural areas in Upper Egypt (Samir, 29 July 2019). This of course cannot be attributed directly to ENID's work, but still is a positive indicator that progress is being realized in Upper Egypt. Attention to Upper Egypt development has escalated over the past years. One manifestation is the World Bank's \$500 million loan directed mainly to the development of Upper Egyptian governorates under the title of "Local Development Program for Results for Egypt" which started in 2016. The aim of the five-year project is to strengthen local government capacity and promote private sector investments in select governorates in Upper Egypt (World Bank, 2020b). Additionally, the government of Egypt declared that government investments in Upper Egypt in 2020/2021 has amounted to EGP 47 billion, recording a 50% increase from the 2019/2020 investments and constituting 25% of the total distributed government investments (Enterprise press, June 2020).

Poverty levels decreased in some of Upper Egypt's governorates where the organization works, and especially in Qena:

The latest HIES [Household Income and Expenditure Survey] produced in 2018 shows that compared to the HIES produced in 2015 ...among the villages that improved the most were the ones in Qena, where poverty had declined in absolute terms by 14.5 percent in three years. That was miraculous...we must have done something right. (Heba Handoussa, Founder and managing director of ENID, 2020, as quoted by Wahish, 2020).

Intersectional targeting of poor illiterate women in rural Upper Egypt has multiplier effects. To quote ENID's Founder: "We realized that the women were the reason for getting families out of poverty because the women started working and having an income. The international literature is exact. All her savings are spent on the children. You are saving their lives" (Handoussa, 2020, interview). The targeting of women and enabling them to earn an income was not only empowering for themselves but had positive effects on the children. This is in sync with the findings of the development literature that shows that women, more than men,

are more likely to cater to their children's health and educational needs and use any additional income more responsibly to improve the quality of life for their families (Ladhani & Sitter, 2020; Bradshaw, 2008).

The positive impact of ENID Foundation on the quality of life of its beneficiaries can be captured from the interviews. The perceived positive impact covered the financial gains and women's empowerment, knowledge acquisition, and a gradual shift in traditional societal norms to the benefit of women. Many talked about the financial rewards accrued and how helpful the additional income was in supporting their families:

Through working in ENID, I can support my parents and my husband financially, and I can buy everything I want. My father is now 63 years old. Now he can rest at home because he has a daughter worth more than 100 boys. (Sara, a 32-year-old worker with three children, November 2020).

I became the best aunt. I always bring my nieces' new dresses, and they feel happy and thankful. I am also preparing myself for marriage through buying for my needs. So happy that I am now independent. (Fatma Ahmed, a 33-year-old engaged worker in the copper crafts department, November 2020).

I am a single mother. I have a little boy studying in KG2. I pay the school fee for him, and I purchase for him all his needs. (Sameeha Saleh, a 25-year-old divorced worker in the weaving department with one child, November 2020).

Earning an income is a much-appreciated achievement for the women working in the crafts and weaving departments operated by ENID. Many of the interviewees were very proud of their ability to help their nuclear and extended family members. Other interviewees talked about the impact of their working at ENID on changing traditional societal values and on their gaining knowledge and confidence:

The miracle has happened. Women in Upper Egypt are now strong, independent and can go out of their homes to generate income. (Mrs. Sara Shawkat, Director of Development Department at the Ministry of Social Solidarity, November 2020).

I learned many different skills, such as melting of lead, stitching, and making copper dishes. On a personal level, I learned how to talk to people. (Fatma Ahmed, a 33-year-old engaged worker in the copper crafts department, November 2020).

The quotations show how offering job opportunities to young women in Upper Egypt was starting to have an impact on their self-confidence, independence, empowerment, and freedom, to the extent that a director from the Ministry of Social Solidarity working in Qena, referred to the change as a "miracle." A couple of interviewees used simple but very expressive words to show how appreciative they were of the opportunity to work at ENID:

I know many other illiterate women here in the same village who are dreaming of joining us. Can you help them be with us here in ENID? (Aya Yasser, a 37-year-old illiterate worker in the leather crafts department with five children, November 2020).

We don't want to leave our job. We need to be here forever... we need to work more. (Amira Ali, a 26-year-old illiterate worker in the leather crafts department with three children, November 2020).

Working at ENID, or simply having a job opportunity as a woman in rural Upper Egypt, is greatly appreciated. The women are very committed because they have realized the multiple benefits these jobs afford them.

Lessons Learned

There are several lessons that can be derived from ENID's experience:

Capitalizing on Different Community Development Approaches: The integrated community development approach pursued by ENID is holistic and capitalizes on the needs-based approach, the asset-based approach, and the rights-based approaches in community development. ENID did not adopt a traditional development approach focusing on a single aspect of deprivation but chose to implement a multi-dimensional, integrated model covering basic services, entrepreneurship development, agricultural development, and knowledge dissemination.

Implementing State-of-the-Art Development Methods: ENID tried to implement state-of-the-art methods in organic sustainable agriculture. Backed by expert knowledge, a pilot organic farm was developed in Qena to showcase the latest developments in sustainable farming and agricultural practices. In developing the arts and crafts sector, ENID reached out to Indian and Chinese craftsmen guilds and organized study tours for Egyptian crafts persons to allow them international exposure.

Leadership Dedication: The establishing main founder of ENID foundation, Heba Handoussa, is one of the reasons behind the success of the foundation (El Baradei, 2018). A scholar with a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of London, she worked for decades on the theoretical level and was the lead author for Egypt Human Development Report for four years in a row from 2007-2011. She then decided to make a shift to practice development on the ground and contribute to the creation of real public value through helping people affected by multiple dimensions of poverty.

Creativity: ENID Foundation programs are marked with a high level of creativity, enabling them to stand out compared to others. Creativity was evident in several of ENID's activities and operations, particularly the arts and crafts development program and the unique designs and marketing techniques for the products developed. Top designers were recruited to help with developing modern, up-to-date, and functional designs for the traditional products. ENID branded handicrafts were sold in the British Museum gift shop.

Employing Effective Advocacy Tools: Advocacy tools for the cause of directing attention to the targeted population included annual conferences held in Upper Egypt to which ministers and media persons were invited, with parallel site visits planned for all conference participants to the projects under implementation. Furthermore, through the Knowledge Hub program, policy papers related to the ENID Foundation activities were outsourced to be written by Egyptian experts to bring attention to the multi-oppressed women in rural Upper Egypt.

Beginning Where Others Ended: ENID depended on and partnered with existing nonprofit organizations in Upper Egypt, rather than starting from scratch and establishing its own network of community development organizations. This saved a lot of time and effort, and beneficiaries quickly trusted ENID.

Strategic Action and Learning: Through strategic action and learning, the organization proved that it could adapt to the changes and overcome many of the hurdles met. In 2012, following the political turbulence in Egypt and the many changes in ministerial positions, work

slowed down for a while until they managed, mainly through the lead founder's negotiation and networking skills, to shift the Foundation's affiliation from the Ministry of Local Development to the Ministry of Social Solidarity where there were more cooperative staff in place. In 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic striking globally, there was a need to make quick shifts in operations to be able to survive. One example of a quick strategic shift implemented was that related to the ready-made-garments factory, which changed its production lines to focus on producing surgical masks, highly in demand during the pandemic, and at the same time guaranteeing the continuation of jobs for the women working in the factory.

Conclusion

Intersectional targeting can help both researchers and policymakers understand the compounded features of multiple overlapping sources of oppression and help counter vulnerable individuals' invisibility. When this is coupled with an integrated development approach, positive results are achieved. The research analyzed the case study of ENID Foundation in rural Upper Egypt that utilized intersectional targeting to reach one of the most vulnerable groups, namely, unemployed, illiterate women in rural Upper Egypt. The Foundation adopted an integrated community development modality that capitalized on needs, assets, and rights-based approaches. This was implemented with a high degree of commitment, strategic savviness, and creativity, and pointed to several positive indicators for effectiveness, including positive tangible outputs and appreciation by beneficiaries. Additionally, the NPO succeeded in increasing policy visibility of the targeted multiply oppressed groups of women, whereby the Government of Egypt started directing more resources to the region. The case study was mostly a success story in implementing the intersectional lens in targeting beneficiaries and utilizing an integrated approach to development. Although the case study is not generalizable, ENID's story can be used to derive lessons for informing poverty alleviation, community development and gender-based policies in Egypt and other developing countries. It informs public policies aiming at achieving gender equity, since the main lesson learned is that we should not deal with gender inequities in isolation from other oppressing factors. The intersectional approach we used helps to identify the most-needy groups deserving a helping hand to get them out of the poverty trap, makes them visible to policy makers, empowers them by providing education and health services, and teaches them skills to enable income generation. Development organizations focused on helping women need to adopt similar multi-dimensional integrated development approaches for best results.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The main challenge of this study was conducting interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. This required wearing N95 masks, using hand sanitizers regularly and keeping a safe distance as much as possible. However, rapport was established with all women interviewees who participated in the study and the participants were keen on sharing their reflections. Interviewees were eager to demonstrate how the ENID Foundation made a difference in their lives and helped deal with the multifaceted sources of oppression that they faced.

More research is needed, both quantitative and qualitative studies, to explore the impact of the various intersectional approaches on poverty reduction, and to document how an integrated development approach may or may not work to improve livelihoods of marginalized groups suffering from multiple sources of oppression.

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