

The El Bayad Human Development Project

An update from Patrick Crump (9/82-8/89) and Soumaia Amin (9/83-11/89)
Ike Powell sent questions for an update; their response on experiences while living in Bayad
and observations visiting ten years later follows. June 2019

1. How would you summarize the focus of the HDP during the period you were there?

ICA Egypt was the only ICA project in the Middle East, and during my time we struggled to find a way to be relevant beyond Bayad and to disseminate a human development methodology in our region. After the false start of attempting the Kenya approach in Egypt, our village partners, in a “tough love” fashion, helped us develop a locally relevant approach that we began to introduce to other development organizations in Egypt, Jordan and Sudan by the late 1980s, and to roll out to new villages and their CBOs in Beni Suef and other governorates in Upper Egypt by the 1990s (after our time there, though I was brought in to evaluate one of these efforts in the late-1990s). So, I’d like to highlight three areas of focus during our time in Bayad (1982-89):

- 1) *Testing the ICA Kenya “Harambee” approach* (1983-84): the approach developed in Kenya, combining the self-help spirit promoted by newly independent Kenya with ICA’s process facilitation, became a core part of ICA’s global strategy in the early to mid-1980s, and several families were transferred from Kenya to Egypt to introduce this approach. Our response to Question 3 below describes our experience with this approach in Egypt;
- 2) *Development of a package of locally relevant program models* (1982-89): while village and local council leaders began insisting that ICA return to addressing basic needs in the Bayad villages rather than pursue the Kenya strategy with new villages, the set of replicable program models was already under development from the early 1980s with the Health caretaker project. During much of the 1980s ICA was focused on developing a set of low-cost, low-tech

programs that were locally responsive and could be managed by local CBOs. This became ICA Egypt’s alternative to the Harambee approach;

- 3) *Dissemination of a human development approach beyond Bayad* (1987-90s): the set of locally relevant program models, introduced through a community-based, participatory methodology, became the human development approach that ICA disseminated to development actors, both governmental and non-governmental, across Egypt, Jordan and Sudan.

2. What key HDP accomplishments were realized while you were there?

Related to the points above, some of the key accomplishments include:

- 1) Locally relevant program models:
 - *Water systems*: these were the start of the Bayad HDP, based on drilling wells near the Nile River and then pumping it up to a network of pipes and water points in the villages. Villagers provided the land and labor for these systems. By the time we arrived four such village systems were in place, while a further three were completed in the early 1980s. Eventually these networks were connected to a new government water tower, rendering the wells redundant;
 - *Health caretaker program*: based on the philosophy of David Warner’s *Where There is No Doctor*, this program trained local women from the seven villages to provide primary healthcare services and treatments, particularly for diarrhea, eye and respiratory infections, reproductive health, cuts and bruises, etc. While the health caretakers treated

thousands of cases, and the program was an inspiration for many other development organizations, it was management-intensive. Furthermore, the village leaders never really embraced the concept, preferring clinic-based services provided by doctors, so this program did not fare well under local management;

- *Montessori methods introduced into preschools:* ICA established 5-6 preschools, including building or repairing classrooms. The Montessori methods, where teachers stimulate children's own self-directed learning focused on using their senses, was a challenge to the traditional teacher role of directing the class, usually with stick in hand. Parents insisted on some traditional elements in the curriculum, so memorization of numbers and letters was added back into the curriculum. The children, however, seemed to love the new approach;
- *Village loan funds:* as described in Question 4, ICA established seven village loan funds to help the poorest families start productive projects;
- *Introduction of improved breeds of livestock and livestock feed:* ICA experimented with several exotic breeds of rabbits and goats before settling on improved breeds that were better adapted to the village environment. These were provided to families via loans, which were eventually folded into the village loan funds. Eventually ICA also introduced improved feed, including sugar beets.

2) Homegrown human development approach:

- *CDA establishment, and transfer of programs to local management:* during the late 1980s ICA encouraged local leaders to register community development associations (CDA), which could then receive programs and

program assets. Egypt's NGO Law (Law 32/1960) required a minimum distance between each CDA, so that not all of the Bayad villages could establish their own CDA; in all I think five were established, which eventually took on management of the water systems, the preschools and the loan funds;

- *Articulation of the Bayad approach:* ICA eventually packaged its approach into a nine-step process, from assessing needs and introducing pilots, to transferring them to local management and disseminating them through exchange events;
- *Fieldworker training, with participants from Sudan, Jordan:* during the 1987-89 period ICA held several week-long residential training events for field staff from Jordan's Ministry of Social Development, the Sudan Council of Churches and other national and international development organizations. These trainings combined classroom sessions with field visits to join in ongoing program activities such as conducting health awareness sessions or issuing loans.

3. What about the project did not work so well and why?

From mid-1983 to end-1984 the Bayad HDP tried to replicate the approach developed by ICA in Kenya based on the "Harambee" or self-help approach, where ICA's main role was to organize communities, facilitate their strategic planning, and motivate them through regular monitoring and troubleshooting. This approach contrasted sharply with development culture in Egypt, shaped by the original Camp David Accord and the massive aid package that Anwar Sadat negotiated with the US, which involved resource transfers.

Until this time, ICA's work had been based in the village of Bayad, at the invitation of Bishop Samuel of the Coptic Church, and later in the seven villages

of the Bayad el Arab Local Unit (LU), under the sponsorship of the LU's People's Council. ICA was the first international organization to use a new provision under Sadat's Open Door policy that allowed governorates (rather than simply central ministries) to negotiate agreements with international organizations. The Beni Suef Governorate relied on the Bayad People's Council to agree on an annual plan with ICA, based on which ICA's registration was extended; this meant that ICA was highly accountable to the Bayad council, whose priorities were capital projects such as water systems, school and preschool construction, community centers, community industries, etc. The Council accepted ICA's human development projects, such as the Health caretaker system and the Montessori early learning approach, if enough capital projects were included in each year's plan.

The Kenya approach was the first sustained effort to move beyond the Bayad villages. ICA's "West Bank Expansion", sponsored by the Beni Suef Governorate's Office for the Reconstruction and Development of the Egyptian Village (ORDEV) and supported by the Beni Suef Department of Social Affairs, was to introduce its human development approach to the other six local units in Beni Suef District, all located on the other, busier side of the Nile River. The East Bank villages of Bayad local unit were by far the poorest and most isolated of the district; ICA's human development approach there had required a lot of hand-holding, equipment and funding, but had generated a lot of community involvement and enthusiasm. The more developed villages of the West Bank, it was assumed, would be much more capable of self-help development.

ICA hosted a "Human Development Training Institute" in late 1983, a two month-long residential course at its newly built training center in Bayad, to which each local unit was invited to send several government employees. At the suggestion of the Social Affairs director, Sultan Taha, ICA also offered places for national service

volunteers, college graduates who were required to do a year of public service as an alternative to military service. The local council chiefs saw the course as an opportunity to get rid of their newest or most troublesome employees; the national service volunteers, on the other hand, were eager, idealistic youths eager for the adventure of living in a village amongst a group of crazy foreigners. It was these national service volunteers who were selected to stay on as new ICA staffers, including to launch the West Bank Expansion.

Throughout 1984 our expansion team, myself included, trekked to government offices in Beni Suef, paid introductory visits to the thirty-some villages in the district, and eventually facilitated ICA's five-stage LENS planning process in each village. Our initial contacts tended to be the village councils, who would rustle up a meager showing of men to join in the planning exercises. We invariably got stuck in the Contradictions session with "lack of resources" as the root cause of a village's underdevelopment. Although we emphasized from the start in each village that the plans were theirs to develop and implement, they always looked stunned at the end, as if they'd been hoodwinked, when they finally realized that ICA was not prepared to fund their plans. In one village, Tizment, we were nearly run out of town.

There are many reasons why the Kenya approach did not succeed in Egypt. In the first place, although we tried to sell it as "the ICA approach", it did not in fact represent ICA's experience in Egypt, which involved extensive community mobilization and engagement prior to planning, and significant resource and management support from ICA for village projects; the Kenyan approach tried to short-cut this process. While villages in recently independent Kenya had always had to rely on themselves, having rare encounters with their government, Egypt's villages had thousands of years of interaction with their government's bureaucracy, starting with irrigation control in Pharaonic times. Rather than self-reliance, Egyptians' interactions with outsiders operated on

negotiations, bargaining and rent-seeking. On top of this, our expansion team consisted of an eager but inexperienced team of city boys or foreigners, led by a frankly lackluster ICA transfer from Kenya. As the expansion strategy ground to a halt, the Bayad council members meanwhile had been complaining that ICA was ignoring the original set of villages. To the newly arrived co-directors, Robert and Ann Yallop, the message was clear; focus on the unmet needs of the Bayad villages if you want your registration renewed.

4. What about the project worked well and why?

As part of the refocus on the villages of Bayad, Soumaia and Patrick were tasked with developing a set of economic projects. Until this time, ICA had launched a series of cottage industries, nearly all of which ended in comic or humiliating failure; the fish farm whose stock was stolen by villagers and finally wiped out by pesticides draining into the fish pond; the roof tile factory whose tiles broke when hoisted up onto a roof; the marmalade factory whose inventory didn't meet Egyptian food standards and had to be destroyed, under government supervision, in the desert. Two industries limped along; the carpentry shop that didn't turn a profit until it was rented out to a skilled carpenter, and the desert reclamation project, which the local council insisted ICA start up since the council had set aside the 10-acre plot years earlier. We eventually got fruit trees growing there, but by the 1990s the government had taken back the plot and built low-income housing blocks on it.

Early in 1985, as our little economic team conducted discussions with village families and visited economic projects implemented by other NGOs in Egypt, it became clear to us that ICA's projects failed precisely because they were ICA's projects; we hired villagers, but ICA was the investor and risk-taker. Rather than provide jobs, we concluded, ICA should provide capital so that poor families could start their own businesses. The idea of small loans was floated, but we couldn't

figure out how a poor family with no assets could guarantee a loan, a key incentive to repay it. During a visit to CEOSS's small loans program in Minya we learned that personal guarantors, from outside the borrower's immediate family, ensured good repayment rates. The next day we issued our first loan, 100 Egyptian pounds (about US\$30 at the time) to a poor elderly man from El Alelma for a couple goats. I still remember sitting in the man's adobe home in the gathering evening gloom, talking through the loan terms as his wife fried a couple peppers for dinner. Soon after that we issued another loan to Dawlat, a poor widow in El Hamaraya to stock her fava bean sandwich stand. Village leaders took us to the poorest families, often widows, and then we asked them how they might use a loan. Goats were the most common activity; a family member who worked as a daily laborer could collect enough grass to feed them. Vegetable trading was a popular activity for women, as were small stores, or "kiosks".

The program proved immensely popular, and very quickly we established seven separate loan funds, one per village, with funding from Africa Now, a British charity. We printed out simple loan contracts and repayment vouchers, standardized the selection criteria—no regular source of income, no assets, a dirt floor or thatched roof—and formalized the feasibility study questions we asked prospective borrowers to ensure they'd thought through all the aspects of managing their income-generating activities. We charged a flat five percent fee, to preserve the value of the capital. Eventually, as ICA encouraged the villages to establish community development associations, we turned the loan funds over to these associations, who continued to run them according to the procedures we'd set (though they increased the interest rate to 10+ percent, having quickly realized that five percent was not sustainable). In 1989 an evaluator, Linda Oldham, conducted a participatory wealth ranking exercise in a couple of the villages and concluded that the loans were indeed reaching the poorest families.

Ten years later, in the late-1990s, I visited Bayad and learned that the loan funds were still in operation. These simple schemes, developed before microfinance became the rage, must have helped thousands of poor families increase their assets and income; we would often notice that a former borrower had added a room to her simple home, or learned that another had been able to send her children to school.

5. What from the project are the most important “lessons learned” you’d like to share with others?

Thirty years later, many of the lessons we learned in Bayad have become common development practice. Nevertheless, perhaps the Bayad HDP contributed to building this development experience through the following “lessons learned”;

- ✚ NGOs are much better suited to supporting their beneficiaries’ businesses than running their own;
- ✚ Many of the poorest families do have the potential to manage income-generating activities that can increase their income and assets, and are willing to take and repay loans—with interest—to do so;
- ✚ Without strong, supportive relationships with communities or a community partner, planning techniques add little to a community’s development;
- ✚ Facilitation of community planning by a known and trusted external party can mobilize significant community effort, but sustained engagement, eg to manage a community project, requires a formal community counterpart;
- ✚ Registered community structures can effectively and efficiently manage community-based services, greatly enhancing their sustainability;
- ✚ ICA’s presence in Bayad helped initially to establish trust and build relationships, but eventually hampered community autonomy.

6. How would you describe long-term results, or “residue”, of the project? What can be seen today?

Its been at least 20 years since we’ve spent any time in Bayad, so we can only report on what we saw ten years after our time there. As mentioned, the loan funds were still working, and presumably poor people were still benefitting from them. The CDAs from Bayad had become amongst the most visible in Egypt; they were accessing funding from international donors, and I often met leaders from those CDAs at development events in Cairo. A number of the Egyptian staff who joined as National Service volunteers went on to pursue careers in development.

7. What relevance does project work in Bayad have for challenges being faced in the world today?

The small income-generating projects funded by our small village loan funds have become the central ingredient in what is known as the “Graduation approach” pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh, to provide the extreme poor (living on less than \$1.90/day per capita) with a pathway toward sustainable livelihoods. This approach, which has now been successfully implemented across more than a dozen countries, consists of an integrated package of asset transfers (rather than loans) with consumption support, technical training and coaching, access to financial services (usually savings schemes), and often healthcare services. The impact of this “big push” approach, in terms of increased assets, savings and consumption, has been found to continue at least several years beyond the program, suggesting that beneficiaries are indeed on a pathway out of poverty. ICA’s small loans program bore many similarities to the graduation approach, from locally determined selection criteria for poor families, to coaching on their income-generating activities, to the activities themselves—small livestock or petty trading activities. Given the integrated nature of the Bayad programs, many of our loan recipients also benefitted from the health

caretaker program. So, ICA's community-based approach to poverty alleviation was prescient.

Another program with relevance today is the Health Caretaker program. While neither of us was heavily involved in this, it was one of the most interesting and innovative of the Bayad program models. It was highly relevant and effective in the East Bank villages, which were isolated and served by one government clinic, but was far too complex to be managed by local CBOs. Some attempts were made to link up to the national health system, but the Ministry of Health was more interested in the role of the *daya* (midwives) being aggressively promoted by UNICEF. The Bayad health caretaker approach, nevertheless, was a precursor to an approach that has gained traction in the global health community, that of "community case management", which extends health services to communities outside the catchment areas of local clinics via community health workers, or paramedics. Well-documented impact studies have found that community health workers, trained and often certified by their local Ministries of Health, can effectively treat some of the leading causes of infant death such as diarrhea and acute respiratory infections. The Bayad health caretaker approach was a pioneer in this last-mile healthcare.

8. Please share newspaper clippings or other public items that you might still have about the project and favorite photos you have from the project. ("jpg" files if possible)