

The Bayad HDP

Muhammad Yasin Ahmad (who participated in El Bayad 1984-2003)
Answers Questions About His Experience

1. How would you summarize the focus of the HDP during the period you were there? As much as I could capture during the period of my involvement with ICA MENA, the main focus was to bring all levels of community members, community leaders and relevant actors through participatory facilitation processes to engage them to see their situation for particular geographical area or villages, to envision the desirable change that they want to see happen, analyzing the challenges and to allow them to think through possible solutions and practical actions/projects to improve the people's well-being in *their* community. I also would like to summarize that the focus was about engaging the people in the "process" from the thinking to action towards bringing social change and this process included building a community based institution for the purpose of long term sustainability. As an immediate outcome we have witnessed the dynamic of community-action groups working together. The process continued to enable the groups to reflect their experience, to see the learning elements by using our unique approach of focus group reflection. The planning-action-learning and reflection was intended to nurture their natural growth of development and ultimately to transfer the power to community organizations. Note: There is a document that was prepared by Robert Yallop that he presented at the ICA Mexico conference.
2. What key HDP accomplishments were realized while you were there? I was there when the Powells and the Yallops were there; then Hala El Kholi transformed the organization. One of the early accomplishments was to bring young new university graduate/ national volunteers to the project to participate annually in a Human Development Training School. In fact I attended part of the 1984 training after I arrived from Chicago. Some of the participants stayed to work with ICA as interns and some decided to take their government job. Both dimensions are considered as an accomplishment of human development.

Other key accomplishments in the late 90s, the ICA was able to establish a legal framework with the Ministry of Social Affairs for an International NGO in Egypt. This was an important profile and recognition achieved to allow the ICA to work on the ground without feeling worry and also opened up the opportunity for expansion. Legitimacy and legalities were ensured toward more solid legal framework from agreement with Excellency governor of Beni Suef and with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This allowed the ICA to have an office in Cairo and expansion to other governorates.

During the 90s the approach was shifted from direct involvement with beneficiaries and informal leaders to a working partnership with registered Community Development Associations in six villages of Bayad El Arab. Six CDAs were established, reactivating some of the dormant LCDs. Six CDAs centers were built and equipped. This was followed with a series of capacity building training for board members related to Local NGO management and leadership. In parallel, the ICA started to transfer some of the programs such as small loans, primary health care, and preschool education to the management of CDAs. While these programs continued, other multi-year funded projects were also taking place, such as the environmental program, women in development, reproductive health, etc. ICA also helped the community to build a primary school in Bayad El Arab and Beni Sulaiman village in collaboration with the local council and village leaders. Short term projects were seen as a mechanism to allow the board members in enhancing their human element of capacities.

One of the greatest accomplishments during the early in the 70s was the installation of clean drinking water projects. During the 90s, the government replaced the project by establishing compact units for clean drinking water; and the ICA supported some of the pipe installations to ensure all houses have access to clean drinking water. Since then, the entire management of the

water project is managed by the government. The role of ICA perhaps was hidden here, but through its catalyst role and capacity building training facilitation for local leaders and CDA board members had allowed them to bring the service providers to respond to the situation quicker through their local government processes.

The training momentum continued in different approaches, from Human Development Training School to the internship program. In the 90s to early 2000s the ICA facilitated a series of annual regional exchange programs for practitioners in development (a similar approach to the IERD in New Delhi). This was considered a great achievement since the ICA program reached several countries in the Region such as Jordan, Sudan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, Yamen and Tunis. The 10-days program was based on participants-based funding; later the program had the opportunity for funding a partial scholarship. This period ICA was experiencing a great move for regional coverage in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). A unique gift of the HDP was hosting participants using Bayad Human Development Training Center as focal entry of sharing approaches that work. Site visits to other organizations in Egypt were part of the program. The program also opened up a new opportunity for consultancy in the countries in Jordan, Sudan and Yemen.

What about the project worked well and why? There were some funded projects which I considered worked well such as:

A 3 – year project of Capacity Building Program for Local CDAs in Bayad El Arab villages carried out in early 90s funded by Near East Foundation for three years. This worked well because it led toward building strong local organizations and local managed projects/programs sustainability. A similar project was funded by NCNW-USAID with the objectives to transfer the programs that were initiated by ICA to Local CDA's management. From here the idea of a Capacity Building program was expanded to the six districts in West Bank of Beni Suef funded by DANIDA then to other governorates supported by Miserior, ICCO and others. Capacity building projects did not stand alone, but were integrated with other social economic development interventions.

Most funded projects worked well because of our commitments to donors, and we had better project design, careful implementation and monitoring. This didn't mean that we were under donor driven, but it was useful to kept us in focus and being accountable. However, the Human Development Project has seemingly no ending point and required forever a process of becoming and never arriving, the population of Bayad El Arab today is approximately five times bigger now compared to the 70s. Development is happening faster today naturally and the role of ICA is perhaps much less than before,

3. What did not work so well and why? Some of the early projects that were initiated in the early phase of the Human Development Project, such as the jam factory, roofing industry, and desert reclamation which didn't continue. In the early period of my involvement in Bayad as much as I remember we had several discussions for how to end these kinds of activities. Why? Because it wasn't clear about the ownership, ICA or individual? No clear business plan and no feasibility study. However, it was good for the purposes of training and demonstration, Even though it is yes it could be done in different approach for example to use the existing service center which less cost and long term financial commitment. The ten feddans desert reclamation for example was very inspiring to see the trees growing in the desert village of Bayad El Arab; but ICA had difficulties at the end to support the project financially and as an economic project couldn't make cost recovery. Also the project goal was not very clear whether it was for demonstration and profit making business. We tried to adjust and fix it using several external technical experts, but ended with the question of who this project belongs to, who own this land, and what does the owner want to do with it? The operational cost was much higher then the income which became a dilemma. Finally ICA handed over the program to the local government because the land belonged to

them, and in the end they decided to remove the plants and fruit trees, replacing them with apartment blocks. As I remembered at that time the recommendation was to do small scale economic projects is better, working directly with the individuals target group rather than institutional-managed projects.

4. What from the project are the most important "lessons learned"? During my time there few lessons learned were discussed. Lessons learned were evolved from both successes and struggles. Some of the projects relied on ICA to manage both financially - for example the primary health care program. The CDAs hesitated to take over due to their financial limitation because the nature of PHC program was service oriented; and ICA had given stipends to the health care takers. To solve the issue we came up with the idea establishing a trust fund mechanism where a portion of the interest was designed to support the program. It worked for a while, until the CDAs transformed it into a revolving loan program where the interest was calculated better than having a trust fund. I have heard most of the CDAs until now are still utilizing the fund, but unfortunately the PHC program is no longer continued. To conclude the lessons learned here: the situation is changing from time to time and the response is different accordingly. Some projects worked well for a period of time. Some were modified and improved, and some had to be let go. This is not only with PHC but other projects like desert reclamation. Some projects initiated by ICA are continued until today and managed by the local, like the preschool program, revolving loans, garbage collection. They are not only being continued, but are also growing and better.

Another lesson learned I would like to share is about being too close to community. ICA staff had lived at the center in the community. The staff totally immersed in the society and building relationships with community was essential. But being too close also had negative elements such as at the end the community looked at us as belonging to them and they did not want us to go to other areas. Sometimes we had great pressure from the local leaders to respond to their requests as they viewed the ICA as a resource. It is important to be close to community, but it is also important to have distance. From this lesson learned in 1991 the ICA made a major radical decision to stop communal living and gradually transformed the Bayad center into an office and training center. If we have a new chance to reestablish a new Human Development Project in the world, using the last 40 years best practice and experience, I am sure ICA will be totally different.

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

Although I have left ICA fifteen years ago, I still visit Bayad and see some of our old friends in Bayad and the cluster villages. This difficult question about results requires an depth study and discussion with the direct users, target groups and relevant actors. However, since, I still often go to Bayad and the surrounding villages. this can be considered as a base of my observation of what can be seen today. The Center for the Human Development Project is still there. The six CDAs are equipped and active with their programs such as preschools, garbage collection from house to house etc. From my observation and comparison before and now, the streets of Bayad El Arab are cleaner now, more trees. I said to myself a long time ago this program was part of our primary health care program about cleanliness. It is interestingly to see that some to the programs are naturally developed by their own path without outsider injection. The overall development in the area has been improved made by many actors in all areas such as transportation, road, communication, retails shop, industry etc. Bayad is no longer a remote village, but it is semi-urban.

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

In the area of agriculture technology as response to rapid population growth and urbanization, environment, solar energy, employability, job creation and youth development are relevant and still being faced in the world today.