



From Tal Al-Aqarib to Rawdat Al-Sayeda

Realizing the Right to Adequate Housing through
Urban Redevelopment and Resettlement



DIWAN ALOMRAN 2026

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Diwan Alomran works on developing policies and strategies that strengthen urban resilience, promote the right to the city, and include promoting the right to adequate housing, adequate services, and access to public spaces. It also supports practices that contribute to reducing physical exclusion or spatial segregation, as well as preserving natural resources, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing resilience to face climate change.

Through this approach, Diwan Alomran aspires to build balanced, socially just, inclusive cities that enable everyone to enjoy decent life in sustainable communities and preserve resources for future generations.

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which the right to adequate housing has been realized in the "Rawdat Al-Sayedat" project. This project was developed to replace the former "Tal Al-Aqarib" area in the Al-Sayedat Zainab district in Cairo.

Physical and urban redevelopment alone do not fulfill the right to adequate housing, especially its social, economic, and cultural dimensions defined by international human rights law.

The study uses a human rights-based framework, relying on General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing. This comment, issued by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, interprets Article (1\11) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The framework outlines seven elements: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.

The study uses a qualitative approach, including (15) in-depth resident interviews conducted from May to July 2022, and analyzes relevant literature and reports.

The findings reveal that the "Rawdat Al-Sayedat" project led to significant improvements in infrastructure and services. Access to water, electricity, sanitation, and gas has improved, and residents now experience greater safety and clear upgrades to the built environment.

Despite these advances, key issues remain. Security of tenure is insufficient; residents lack ownership rights and inheritance mechanisms, creating uncertainty. Many residents struggle to afford housing costs, as rent and prepaid services impose a heavy financial burden, leading to rent arrears and occasional eviction notices for low-income households.

Additionally, the study finds that community participation in the project was weak, and no social or economic impact assessments were performed before or during implementation. Cultural adequacy issues and disruption of social networks are also notable challenges hindering the full realization of adequate housing.

The "Rawdat Al-Sayedat" project redeveloped unsafe areas but did not fulfill the right to adequate housing. A full solution requires more than physical upgrades; it must address social, economic, and cultural housing needs.

The study recommends reviewing the prepaid service system, improving security, and establishing services such as childcare and social support centers. It also suggests supporting local economic activities. At the policy level, it calls for applying housing standards in urban planning, conducting impact assessments, and enhancing community participation for sustainable urban development.

Introduction

Informal settlements and poor urban areas pose significant challenges for developing countries, especially in the Global South. They block sustainable and inclusive development by harming society, the economy, health, and cities. These places often lack formal planning and essential services like clean water, sanitation, electricity, roads, healthcare, education, recreation, and security.

These areas face complex living conditions, driven by factors such as poverty, marginalization, high population density, overcrowding, and insecure tenure.

After a deadly rockslide in Al-Duweiqia in 2008, the Egyptian government intensified efforts to address unsafe areas. Presidential Decree No. 305 of 2008 created the Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF) to plan, upgrade, and provide basic services for these areas.¹

The "Tal Al-Aqarib" area, redeveloped and renamed "Rawdat Al-Sayeda," is considered one of the most prominent national examples of informal settlement upgrading.

This area faced serious urban, health, and social challenges. As a result, it was classified as a second-degree unsafe area.

Now, the area is the "Rawdat Al-Sayeda" project. Authorities present it as a model of adequate housing and a success for the "Egypt Without Informal Settlements" policy.

Research Problem and Objective

The government turned "Tal Al-Aqarib" into the "Rawdat Al-Sayeda" project with clear urban improvements, but no one has measured whether it meets adequate housing standards.

This assessment must determine if the project meets adequate housing criteria in infrastructure, design, resident satisfaction, stability, daily services, affordability, and safety.

Urban transformation alone, as in "Rawdat Al-Sayeda," does not provide all features of adequate housing. International frameworks and UN programs define adequate housing as more than buildings or services; it covers tenure security, affordability, cultural fit, and access to jobs, education, and healthcare.

This study's main aim is to assess whether the "Rawdat Al-Sayeda" project meets the social, economic, and cultural principles of adequate housing.

¹ Official Gazette, Issue No. (42) Supplement, dated 18 October 2008, Presidential Decree No. (305) of 2008.

Methodology

This study takes a human rights–based framework. It uses the adequate housing standards set out in General Comment No. 4 issued by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This document explains Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The framework serves as the primary reference for verifying compliance with housing standards.²

The study reviews and analyzes relevant literature, including both published and unpublished reports about the area, to provide context and data support.

The study uses a qualitative method: 15 in-depth interviews with residents, field observations, and informal conversations during site visits from May to July 2022.

Analysis Based on Adequate Housing Criteria

Legal Security of Tenure (Security of Tenure)

Every person should enjoy a degree of security of tenure that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment, or other threats.

Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Essential facilities must be available for health, security, comfort, and nutrition. These include continuous access to safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating, and lighting, as well as sanitation, washing facilities, food storage, waste disposal, and emergency services.

Affordability

The financial costs associated with housing should be at a level that does not threaten or compromise the satisfaction of other basic needs. In general, the proportion of housing costs should be commensurate with income levels.

Habitability

Adequate housing must be habitable, providing sufficient space for its residents and protecting them from cold, dampness, heat, rain, wind, and other factors that may threaten their health.

Accessibility

Adequate housing must be accessible to all groups. The needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups must be considered. Groups include the elderly, children, persons with disabilities,

² United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, available at this link ([click here](#)). Accessed on 1 January 2026.

people with chronic or serious illnesses, those with immune deficiencies, people with ongoing health or mental issues, and victims of disasters or displacement.

Location (Ease of Access to Location)

Adequate housing must be located in a place that provides access to jobs, healthcare, schools, childcare, and social facilities. It should not be in polluted areas or near sources of pollution that pose a health threat.

Cultural Adequacy

Housing design, building materials, and housing policies should enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity. Modernization or development should not harm the cultural aspects of housing.

Third: From Tal Al-Aqarib to Rawdat Al-Sayeda: The Historical, Social, and Urban Context

Sayeda Zeinab

Sayeda Zeinab district is one of Cairo's historic neighborhoods with a high population density. It has a large population and overlapping uses. Economic and service activities are diverse. The area's social role is tied to the Sayeda Zeinab Mosque.³

These social and urban traits create an important context for planning interventions. The area's history and density also bring planning and service challenges.

Within this urban context, Tal Al-Aqarib became a site of significant intervention. The area covers around 6 feddans in the Sayeda Zeinab district. It sits on a limestone hill, bordered by Al-Sad Street, Al-Saliba Street, and the slaughterhouse area.

The site also formed part of the informal urban fabric for decades before it was reclassified within urban development programs.

³ Sayyida Zeinab District, Cairo Governorate Portal. [Available here](#).



Figure 1 Location of Sayeda Zeinab in relation to Cairo Governorate

Source: Google Earth (2026))

Tal Al-Aqarib

The Tal Al-Aqarib area, in its previous residential form, was part of Rawdat Al-Sayeda within the Sayeda Zeinab district, and since the early decades of the twentieth century, it has attracted rural migrants, many of whom settled there. The buildings were constructed using simple materials such as mud bricks, wood, and sheet metal. Over time, the area developed into a dense, unplanned urban fabric, characterized by a clear overlap of residential units, workshops, and small commercial activities, and it was home to about 860 households.⁴

⁴ State Information Service. "Egypt Without Slums, Housing for All Egyptians," [available here](#). Accessed on 19 January 2026.

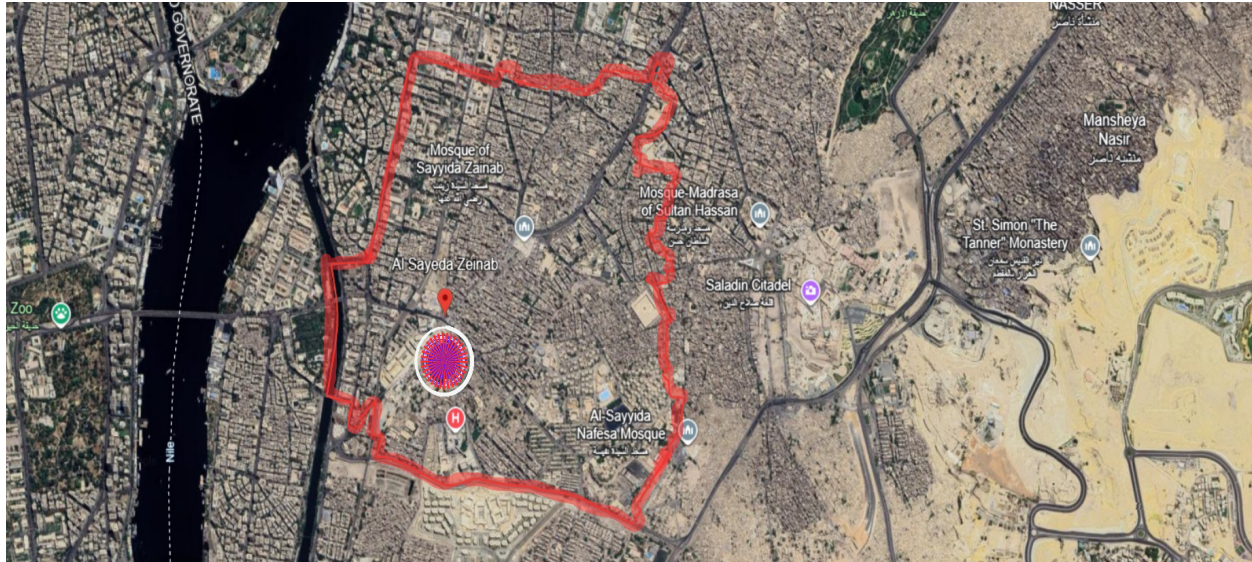


Figure 2 Location of Tal Al-Aqarib in relation to Sayeda Zeinab

Source: Google Earth (2026))

The area suffered from a severe shortage of basic facilities and services, including sanitation, drinking water, and electricity, which led to its classification by the Informal Settlements Development Fund as a second-degree unsafe area. In 2011, the Sayeda Zeinab district included three areas classified as second-degree unsafe, including Tal Al-Aqarib, which covered 9.5 feddans and had a population density of about 445 persons per feddan. The area of Al-Mawardi measured 3.3 feddans with a density of 271 persons per feddan, and the Qalaat Al-Kabsh area measured 1.7 feddans with a density of 267 persons per feddan.⁵

The Informal Settlements Development Fund indicated in the survey that all these lands are state-owned properties, and this classification served as the institutional basis for urban intervention in this area.

In December 2015, the residents of Tal Al-Aqarib were suddenly evicted from their homes, without prior notice or an expropriation decision. Tal Al-Aqarib is considered one of the first sites to witness early eviction processes, within the framework of reorganizing and replanning the site.⁶

⁵ Informal Settlements Development Fund (former name of the Urban Development Fund), Cabinet of Ministers. (2011). *Survey and Classification of Unsafe Areas in Cairo Governorate*. Unpublished official document, copy retained by the researcher.

⁶ Tarek, Mohamed. (2021, March 7). "Fares of Tal Al-Aqarib: The Story of Leaving and Returning to One of Cairo's Oldest Alleys After the Elimination of Its 'Slum' Status." *Mada Masr*. [Available here](#). Accessed on 8 January 2026.

This was followed by the implementation of a new housing project on the same land, “Rawdat Al-Sayeda 1,” while maintaining the site's original residential use after development.



Figure 3 The overlapping urban fabric of Tal Al-Aqarib, 2015Tal Al-Aqarib, 2015

Source: Prepared by the researcher using Google Earth maps (2015–2026)

Rawdat Al-Sayeda

The “Rawdat Al-Sayeda 1” project is an important case study for analyzing the dynamics of urban intervention in existing residential areas within historic cities, particularly with regard to eviction mechanisms, the resettlement of residents, changes in land use, and the impact of replanning on the social and economic environment of the local community, without assuming positive or negative outcomes in advance.

In January 2013, Cairo Governorate, in partnership with the Informal Settlements Development Fund, prepared an action plan to develop the Tal Al-Aqarib area. The project was based on complete removal, as it relied on reshaping the built mass through a unified architectural pattern for the buildings, more regular street networks, and open internal spaces, representing a clear break with the previous urban formation of the site.⁷

⁷ State Information Service. “Egypt Without Slums, Housing for All Egyptians,” *op. cit.* “Inauguration of the Alternative Housing Project ‘Rawdat Al-Sayeda’ in Cairo Governorate,” Presidency of the Republic website, October 2021, [available here](#). Last accessed January 2026.

Table 1 Rawdat Al-Sayeda Project

Start	Completion	Number of buildings	Residential units	Commercial units	Unit area	Number of households	Cost
2017	2019	16	816	198	65–90 m ²	4080	330 million EGP

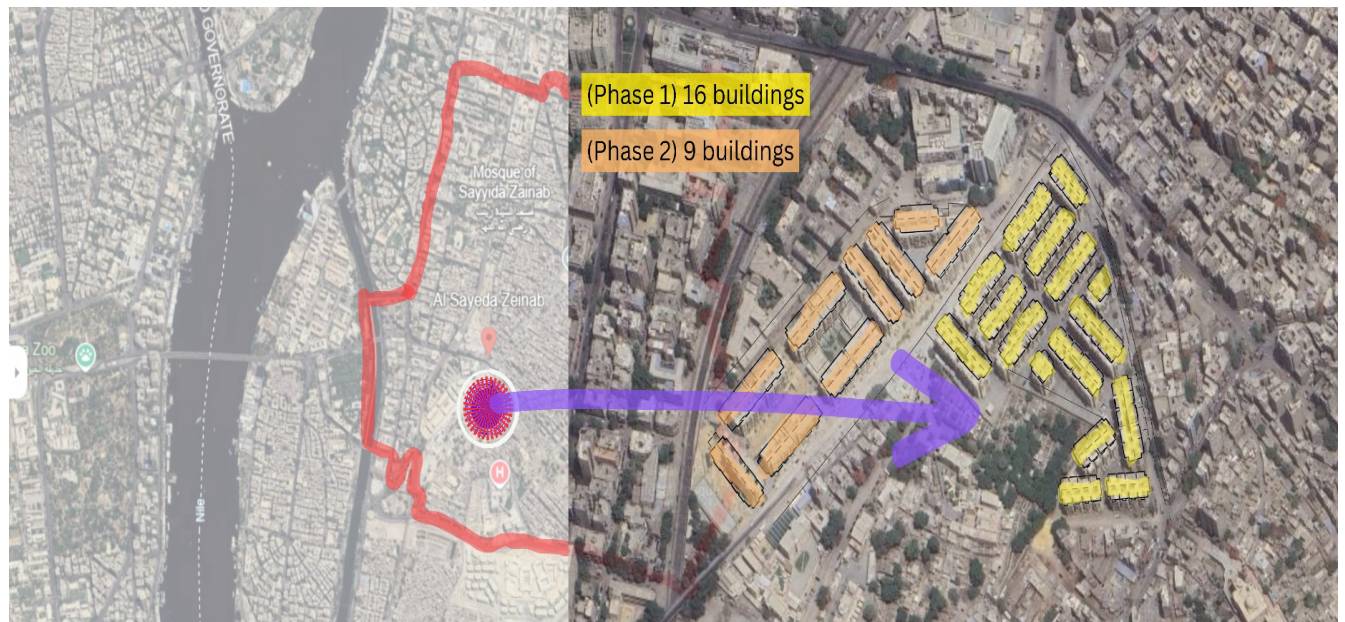


Figure 4 Layout of the Rawdat Al-Sayeda project – Phase One

Source: Prepared by the researcher using Google Earth maps (2026)

Fourth: Rawdat Al-Sayeda in Light of Adequate Housing Standards

This section seeks to analyze the Rawdat Al-Sayeda project in light of the seven adequate housing standards set out in General Comment No. (4) of Article (11/1), through comparing the current reality of the project with what is available from field studies and official and unofficial reports (published and unpublished) on the area.

The analysis in this section also relies on the results of the qualitative field study conducted by the researcher with residents of Rawdat Al-Sayeda during 2022. This analysis highlights the improvements the project achieved, identifies the aspects that still prevent the realization of adequate housing in its comprehensive sense, and provides a critical reading of urban policies in Egypt.

Legal Security of Tenure (Security of Tenure)

This indicator refers to the necessity for every person to enjoy a degree of security in occupying housing that guarantees legal protection from eviction, harassment, or any threat of eviction or displacement without a legitimate basis.⁸

Rental System and Contract Status

When examining this indicator, it becomes clear that most residents in Tal Al-Aqarib did not possess official ownership documents for their housing units, and in the Rawdat Al-Sayeda project, residents were granted usufruct contracts (long-term rental), which provided them with a certain level of legal stability. However, this does not provide full tenure security because it adopts a rental model rather than ownership, leaving the state as the primary owner of the units.⁹

On the other hand, residents have reported recurring complaints about the inability to inherit the housing unit, as well as individual cases in which the initial inventory did not include all original residents, so not all residents obtained units. This is compounded by residents' lack of legal awareness regarding contract provisions. This situation reflects a relative improvement in legal tenure security compared to the previous situation in Tal Al-Aqarib, but it remains incomplete and does not ensure full legal stability for residents and their legal heirs.

Some residents who had commercial shops before the removal are experiencing problems, as they were given shops in a mall. However, these shops have not been registered or contracted in any official manner, and they have not been delivered to them, even though they are required to pay a monthly rent for them; this has created problems for certain families regarding their legal status.

There are also problems with some women in which the housing unit is allocated in the name of both the husband and the wife. However, when the husband divorces the wife without documenting the divorce, the housing unit is not divided between them, which has created problems for some families.¹⁰

Eviction and Threat of Eviction

Compared to the situation before resettlement in Tal Al-Aqarib, eviction risks have decreased in the Rawdat Al-Sayeda project, as residents now enjoy greater tenure security. However, residents remain

⁸ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

⁹ Ahmed Tarek El-Dahoul, and Amr Essam El-Qousi. "The Feasibility of Market Value as a Standard for Fair Compensation for Expropriation in Historic Cairo: A Proposed Framework for Assessing the Risks and Losses of Expropriation," United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2022, p. 38.

¹⁰ Based on field interviews conducted with residents of the area.

subject to contractual obligations, particularly the commitment to paying rent and service fees on a regular basis.

In cases of payment delay, legal procedures may be pursued that could ultimately lead to eviction, meaning the possibility of eviction remains, especially in cases of failure to pay the required rent.

Provision of Basic Services and Facilities

This section indicates that adequate housing should not be limited to the physical structure of the dwelling, but must include access to essential facilities necessary for health, security, comfort, and well-being. This includes continuous access to natural resources, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating, and lighting, as well as sanitation facilities, food storage, waste disposal systems, and emergency services.¹¹

Infrastructure

Available data suggest that most infrastructure services are available in Rawdat Al-Sayyida, including access to clean, potable water; electricity; sanitation systems; natural gas; and a relatively well-developed road network. Waste collection services are also available, with garbage containers distributed across the area and regular cleaning operations ensuring consistent waste removal.

Additionally, infrastructure networks (water, sanitation, gas, and electricity) appear to function efficiently, with no significant complaints reported regarding major system failures.

However, the current utility system relies on a prepaid (meter recharge) model, rather than the traditional billing system. This model is not always suitable for residents' economic conditions, as it requires immediate payment. In contrast, conventional systems allow for delayed payments, which can better accommodate residents facing financial instability.

As for the prepaid system, it requires immediate payment, which creates challenges for residents with limited financial capacity. Additionally, some residents complain about the lack of a reliable telecommunications and internet network, which negatively affects their ability to access the internet, an essential need, particularly for children and youth in the education stage.

Some residents also reported that they were denied permits to activate electricity and water services on the grounds that they were not physically present in their housing units.¹²

¹¹ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

¹² Khaled Abdel Fattah. "Urban Quality of Life in Alternative Housing for Informal Settlements: A Case Study of the Residents of Rawdat Al-Sayyida," *Arab Journal of Sociology*, Issue No. (36), July 2025, Center for Social Research and Studies, Cairo, 2025, p. 54.

Security

Regarding safety and security in the area, street widths range from 8 to 12 meters, and street lighting is available at night. These factors have contributed to an overall improvement in security compared to conditions prior to redevelopment, with most residents reporting a general sense of safety in the area.

However, some residents expressed ongoing concerns about security due to recurring disputes and youth altercations. In addition, the role of security personnel stationed at the area's entrances remains limited, as their primary focus is on preventing the entry of informal vendors and tuk-tuks, without direct involvement in managing security situations. This increases residents' concerns, particularly during evening hours.¹³

Furthermore, several residents pointed to a noticeable increase in theft incidents, coupled with weak deterrent measures. There are also suspicions of some individuals being involved in illegal activities. Although legal action was reportedly taken against them in the past, it did not have a sustained deterrent effect, raising concerns about public safety and residents' well-being.

Educational Services

Rawdat Al-Sayyida suffers from a shortage of certain educational services, such as nurseries and literacy classes. According to a study conducted by Maha El-Sayed, 30 respondents from the sample highlighted the community's need for a nursery within the area.

Affordability (Ability to Bear Costs)

This criterion refers to a household's ability to afford housing-related costs. Such costs should be at a level that does not threaten or compromise the satisfaction of other basic needs. In general, the proportion of housing-related expenses should be commensurate with income levels.¹⁴

Monthly Rent

In the study area, residents pay 300 EGP per month for a unit with two rooms and a hall, and 400 EGP for a unit with three rooms and a hall. Despite the relatively low, symbolic rental value, the economic conditions of residents in Rawdat Al-Sayyida prevent many from affording it. As a result, some residents have accumulated rent arrears for up to a year due to low income.

The issue of rent is further complicated by the fact that the land was originally owned by the residents, who previously paid no monetary or rental costs. They are now required to pay rent, which represents a

¹³ Maha Mohamed Ezz El-Din Hanafy El-Sayed, and Keriman Ahmed Shawky. "Indicators for Evaluating the Sustainability of Unsafe Areas Resettlement Projects: A Case Study of the Rawdat Al-Sayyida Zeinab Area," *Urban Research Journal*, Issue No. (43), January 2022, Faculty of Regional and Urban Planning, Cairo University, Cairo, 2022, pp. 34–36.

¹⁴ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

significant shift in their financial obligations. There are also complaints about an annual rent increase of 10% for residential units.¹⁵

Additional financial burdens include the obligation to use prepaid card systems for electricity and water consumption.

Economic Conditions of Residents

Economic indicators point to a clear deterioration in the economic conditions of the area's residents,¹⁶ as reflected in high dependency ratios (approximately 50%), which place a significant burden on the working population. This is compounded by rising unemployment rates, which reached 17.3% of the labor force, reducing households' ability to meet their basic needs.

Although 62.7% of household heads belong to the labor force, the nature of the work they engage in is largely unstable. Most are employed in informal, low-skilled jobs that rely on manual labor, resulting in low, inconsistent income levels.

On the other hand, the proportion of household heads outside the labor force (37.3%) represents an additional challenge, particularly given the presence of 3.5% individuals unable to work at all and 14.7% who are pensioners. These groups primarily rely on fixed, limited incomes that do not keep pace with rising living costs.

These difficult economic conditions confirm what more than 60% of households in the area reported, namely, experiencing multidimensional hardship. This includes the inability to pay monthly rent, difficulties in covering electricity and water costs, and challenges in accessing medication. This reflects a state of economic and social vulnerability that requires comprehensive development interventions.

Impact Assessment

An important question arises regarding the extent to which the project's social and economic impacts on the area's residents have been properly assessed. Internationally, this is referred to as "impact assessment studies," which are typically carried out in three stages prior to project implementation to identify the full range of social and economic effects on residents, take them into account, and ensure meaningful community participation.

This is followed by studies conducted during project implementation to monitor for emerging issues and address them accordingly continuously. Finally, post-implementation studies are conducted to assess the project's actual social and economic impacts on residents and address any resulting challenges.

¹⁵ Marwa Sibawayh Hamed. "Evaluating the Experience of Alternative Housing for Informal Settlements in Egypt," *International Design Journal*, Vol. (13), Issue No. (1), January 2023, Scientific Association of Designers and the Faculty of Applied Arts, Badr University, Cairo, 2023, p. 32.

¹⁶ Khaled Abdel Fattah, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

However, in this case, the answer to this question appears to be negative. The only measure taken during the project was a survey of residents, while meaningful community participation was entirely absent throughout all stages.

Habitability (Suitability for Housing)

This criterion indicates that adequate housing must provide sufficient space for residents and ensure their protection from cold, heat, rain, wind, humidity, and other factors that may threaten health, as well as from structural hazards and disease vectors.¹⁷

Site Suitability and Planning

One of the project's positive aspects is the use of interlocking paving instead of asphalt for street surfacing, which helps reduce heat levels. In addition, priority has been given to pedestrians, particularly given the relatively low car ownership rate in the area.

Solar-powered lighting poles have also been installed, automatically switching on at sunset and off during daylight hours, thereby reducing electricity consumption.

However, the area appears to lack adequate urban open spaces. There are no sufficiently large areas designated for social interaction or community gatherings. While some informal spaces exist that residents may use for occasional activities, the overall planning appears to have prioritized residential and commercial functions over the provision of shared public spaces.¹⁸

Household Size and Housing Unit Adequacy

From another perspective, available data on Rawdat Al-Sayyida indicate that variations in household size were not adequately considered in the distribution of housing units. Some families originally received allocation documents for three-room units, but upon relocation, those documents were changed, and they were assigned two-room units instead.¹⁹

In addition, there were cases in which extended families living in a single original dwelling were allocated only two units, which were insufficient for all members. Some residents also reported that individuals paid bribes to project officials to obtain larger units, such as three-room apartments or units on the main street.

¹⁷ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

¹⁸ Nady Mostafa Abdel Karim Omari, Azza Mohamed Ahmed Gaeis, and Amr Rabie Ali Gaber. "Developing Human Behavior Patterns as an Approach to Solving the Problem of Informal Settlements: A Case Study of the Tal Al-Aqarib Area (Rawdat Al-Sayeda Zeinab)." *Journal of Engineering Sciences*, Vol. 47, No. 5, Cairo, 2029, pp. 686–705.

¹⁹ Based on field interviews conducted with residents of the area.

Green Spaces

The area also suffers from a shortage of adequate green spaces. Based on population density, green areas are expected to constitute approximately 7% of the total area. However, in Rawdat Al-Sayyida, they account for only 1.95%, a very limited proportion.

Moreover, the per capita share of green space is approximately 0.17 square meters per person, which is extremely low compared to the average per capita share in Egypt, estimated at around 1.5 square meters per person.²⁰

Accessibility to Housing

This criterion indicates that adequate housing must be accessible to everyone to whom it applies, with particular attention to ensuring that groups deprived of full and sustained access to adequate housing resources are supported. Accordingly, priority should be given within housing policies and programs to these groups, including, for example, older persons, children, persons with disabilities, individuals with chronic or terminal illnesses, persons living with HIV/AIDS, those suffering from ongoing health conditions or mental illnesses, as well as victims of natural disasters and residents of areas highly exposed to risks, and other groups requiring special housing protection and tailored responses.²¹

The Rawdat Al-Sayyida project is considered one of the urban development projects that adopted the principle of in-situ resettlement, allowing residents to return to the same area after its redevelopment. This helps preserve their social and economic networks as much as possible and mitigates the social impacts of relocating to a new environment.

However, some complaints have been raised, particularly regarding households that were not included in the initial enumeration and therefore did not receive housing units. Additionally, individuals who were not originally from the area were nonetheless allocated housing units in distinguished locations.

Location and Accessibility

This criterion indicates that adequate housing should be situated in a location that enables access to employment opportunities, healthcare services, schools, childcare centers, and other social facilities, without imposing excessive financial or time burdens on households, particularly low-income families. Accordingly, housing should not be built on polluted sites or in areas near sources of contamination that may threaten residents' health.

With regard to Rawdat Al-Sayyida, the area demonstrates a relatively high level of connectivity with its surrounding urban context, largely due to its location within Al-Sayyida Zainab, where most essential

²⁰ Maha Ezz El-Din Hanafy El-Sayed, *op. cit.*, p. 3 -34.

²¹ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

services are available nearby. However, in terms of commercial services within the area itself, the project provided ground-floor retail units; only a limited number are operational.²²

This is attributed to several factors, including the fact that many of these shops are owned by individuals who are not area residents, as they were sold at high prices prior to the relocation process. In addition, residents' weak economic conditions reduce the commercial viability of these shops. Some owners also expressed concerns about vandalism or theft, particularly given security-related issues.²³

Residents have also pointed to the need to open and activate these commercial units to enable daily access to goods and services, especially given restrictions on street vendors entering the area.

Regarding employment opportunities, residents indicated that the implementing authorities did not provide sufficient job opportunities for the local population. Women, in particular, reported facing restrictions from local authorities when attempting to establish small home-based or nearby income-generating activities such as renting out children's bicycles or small recreational equipment, which had previously contributed to supporting household income.²⁴

Cultural Adequacy

This criterion emphasizes that the manner in which housing is constructed, the building materials used, and the policies supporting housing provision should enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity in housing. Development and modernization efforts in the housing sector should ensure that cultural dimensions are not compromised while incorporating appropriate technological advancements.²⁵

Regarding the Rawdat Al-Sayyida project, while the housing units provided are generally adequate from a cultural perspective, some residents expressed concern that the resettlement process did not sufficiently account for existing social relations and long-standing neighborhood ties. This is a critical issue, as preserving social networks and community cohesion is essential to facilitating social adaptation, maintaining accumulated social capital, and enhancing residents' sense of belonging and psychological stability after relocation.²⁶

Additionally, there were reports of corruption and bribery during the resettlement process. Some individuals who paid money were allocated units in more desirable buildings. There are also certain buildings within the area that residents refer to as the "high-class block," where occupants are perceived to belong to higher social strata and are believed to have obtained their units through informal or non-transparent means. Although the land was not originally owned by them, housing units were nonetheless allocated to them, and the process by which this occurred remains unclear.²⁷

²² "Offering 99 Commercial Shops and Two Pharmacies Beneath the Buildings of the 'Rawdat Al-Sayeda' Project for Sale by Public Auction," New Urban Communities Authority, 20 February 2019, [available here](#). Last accessed 21 January 2026.

²³ Based on field interviews conducted with residents of the area.

²⁴ Maha Ezz El-Din Hanafy El-Sayed, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁵ United Nations. (1966). *Op. cit.*

²⁶ Based on field interviews conducted with residents of the area.

²⁷ Based on field interviews conducted with residents of the area.

Fifth: General Findings and Recommendations

1. General Findings

The Rawdat Al-Sayyida project represents one of the state's recent models reflecting its attention to the development of informal areas. The project has contributed to a qualitative improvement in housing conditions compared to the situation prior to redevelopment (Tal Al-Aqarib), particularly in terms of infrastructure, basic services, and the overall urban form.

Despite this notable progress, the study's findings indicate that meeting the criteria for adequate housing set out in General Comment No. 4 still requires further efforts to ensure the sustainability of these improvements, secure legal tenure, and strengthen residents' capacity for social and economic integration. The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

- a. The study results reveal that security of tenure has been largely achieved in Rawdat Al-Sayyida; however, it remains constrained by the rental system and the absence of ownership opportunities. The study also indicates that residents have a reduced ability to afford housing costs, despite their relatively low value, especially given that residents previously did not pay rent prior to redevelopment. Additionally, the prepaid service system imposes further financial pressure.
- b. The findings highlight the absence of comprehensive social and economic studies associated with the project. Such studies are essential for identifying the project's impacts on residents before, during, and after implementation, and for designing appropriate interventions to mitigate any potential social or economic consequences.
- c. The study also indicates a lack of meaningful community participation in the project. Residents reported that they were not consulted in decisions related to project implementation. Some original residents filed lawsuits against the governorate to claim compensation for the loss of land value. Although approximately half a million Egyptian pounds in compensation was estimated for landowners, it was not effectively disbursed. Overall, community participation appears to be a key element in shaping housing policies, yet it was largely absent in this case.
- d. The findings also reveal deficiencies in basic services, such as telecommunications and internet networks, educational services, and childcare facilities (nurseries). In addition, there is a shortage of social and commercial services, which is expected to undermine the sustainability of living conditions in the area.
- e. The results further indicate that, despite improvements in security conditions compared to the previous situation, there are still concerns among some residents due to the spread of disturbances and the absence of adequate nighttime activities. Consequently, residents' quality of life remains affected across multiple dimensions, including education, economic conditions, and overall living standards.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the project represents a positive step toward the development of informal areas in Egypt, it still requires a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond physical reconstruction to rebuild social and economic life. Adequate housing is not limited to the provision of new housing units; rather, it entails an integrated system that ensures legal protection, economic stability, social security, and access to services and opportunities.

2. Recommendations

In light of the above, a set of recommendations is proposed to enhance the implementation of adequate housing standards while accounting for the various urban, social, political, and economic dimensions.

First: At the level of the project area (Rawdat Al-Sayyida):

The state should adopt several measures to improve residents' living conditions following resettlement. The most important of these include:

1. Improving the security situation in Rawdat Al-Sayyida, through:

- Effectively responding to security reports submitted by residents.
- Strengthening security presence by establishing a permanent police point staffed with officers, rather than relying solely on guards.

2. Improving basic services in the area, through:

- Enhancing telecommunications and internet services as essential components for education and employment, and addressing network weaknesses within the project area.
- Establishing nurseries and literacy classes within the area to respond to residents' needs identified in field studies.
- Providing a community service center offering psychosocial support programs, skills development, conflict resolution, and legal awareness initiatives.

3. Improving the economic conditions of residents in the area, through:

- Establishing vocational training centers within the area and following up with residents to enhance their access to employment opportunities.
- Supporting small enterprises and providing microcredit to enable residents to establish small-scale projects that improve their economic conditions.
- Reviewing the prepaid system for services and replacing it with a more flexible alternative that allows low-income households sufficient time to manage payments, alongside providing social and economic support for vulnerable groups.

- Encouraging residents to activate and operate commercial units by offering incentives and facilitating their use at affordable rental rates, thereby improving residents' economic conditions and ensuring the availability of services within the project. This would also enhance security, as these shops are likely to operate in the evening, increasing street lighting and activity in the area.

Second: At the level of public policies

A set of additional recommendations should be considered to avoid the challenges observed in previous redevelopment projects, such as Tal Al-Aqarib and Al-Asmarat, and to ensure the achievement of adequate housing standards for citizens. The most important of these include:

1. Adopting a comprehensive framework that incorporates the criteria of the right to adequate housing as outlined in General Comment No. 4, and integrating these standards into the conditions governing all future projects.
2. Revising long-term public rental policies and establishing clear mechanisms to ensure security of tenure.
3. Establishing a comprehensive database of residents prior to relocation, linked to national identification numbers, with accurate documentation of all households and economic activities, in order to prevent future legal disputes and ensure fairness in implementation.
4. Strengthening community participation for residents across all stages of the project, giving greater consideration to individuals themselves and ensuring their meaningful involvement in all project steps. This includes conducting social and economic studies prior to and during implementation.
5. Conducting comprehensive social and economic assessments of the project before, during, and after implementation to monitor and evaluate its social and economic impacts on residents.
6. Promoting transparency and ensuring full access to information and data for researchers regarding planned and implemented projects, enabling proper evaluation and contributing to improving project quality and urban policies more broadly.
7. Adhering to international standards that prohibit forced evictions and ensuring compliance with international conventions, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. This includes refraining from evictions without necessity, ensuring effective community participation in decision-making, providing adequate alternative housing prior to eviction, and providing fair compensation for both material and moral losses.
8. Committing to sustainable planning principles and environmental studies to develop low-carbon urban communities that address climate change. This includes integrating environmental and climate considerations at all stages of urban planning, from site selection and building design to transportation accessibility, resource management, the use of environmentally friendly construction materials, the expansion of green spaces, and improvements in natural ventilation.



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