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LIVING ON THE MARGINS: THE ANALYSIS OF THE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF SUDANESE REFUGEES WITH CLOSED FILES IN EGYPT

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Introduction

Throughout history Cairo has enjoyed the status of a cosmopolitan city attracting diverse populations from across the globe. Although refugees have not constituted a significant share of its foreign residents, Egypt has also been seen as a place of exile by sizeable refugee populations, including Armenians who fled the 1915 massacre under the Ottomans, Palestinians after 1948, and Sudanese after 1983. Palestinians are said to constitute the largest share of exiled residents, numbering between 50,000 and 70,000 (El Abed 2003). In the 1950s and 1960s Cairo was host to exiles from liberation movements across Africa and the Middle East, representing nonetheless small numbers of political activists. However, an influx of refugees started arriving in Egypt in the 1990s as a result of wars in the Horn of Africa, especially Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea and Somalia. Most of them headed for Cairo.

As a legacy of the British colonial presence in the 19th century, Egypt has long been a host to Sudanese migrants. The 1983 civil war in southern Sudan resulted in a mass flight of people not only to the neighboring countries of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, but also towards Khartoum and onwards to Egypt. An important element that makes Egypt an attractive destination is the existence of one of the largest resettlement programs in the world, both through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office (UNHCR) and the private sponsorship programs to Canada, Australia, the USA and Finland.[1] With the Sudanese diaspora existing in many of these western states, resettlement programs constitute an incentive for bettering one's life in the West — escaping war, insecurity, and a harsh and oppressive political regime, as well as the poverty that results from the lack of economic possibilities.

At the same time, the number of Sudanese who remain in Egypt, especially those who were unsuccessful in being granted refugee status, is quite significant. Without legal status and protection in Egypt and often unable to return to Sudan, these people live on the margins of society, struggling to secure their livelihoods as illegal 'aliens' within the socioeconomic and policy context of contemporary Egypt. The vast majority choose to live in the city of Cairo, where they negotiate space, their identity, and reconcile cultural and religious differences on a daily basis.

This research aims to shed some light on the coping strategies of the most marginalized refugee populations and increase knowledge of conditions for refugees in urban centers of developing countries. In particular, this research examines the living conditions and coping strategies adopted by Sudanese refugees whose claims for asylum were rejected and who have often remained illegally in Egypt. It is hoped it will also influence policy In order to get a better perspective on their circumstances, it was necessary to compare their situation to Sudanese refugees who have been granted asylum. In addition, to remedy the shortcomings of other livelihood studies among urban refugees, which failed to take into account the conditions of the host society, this study included some of Egyptians who live in similar economic conditions. It will be argued that, although socially, economically, culturally and politically living on the margins of the host society, refugees participate and contribute to the globalization processes and transformation of

[1] A few refugees have also been resettled to the UK, the Netherlands, and elsewhere.

urban spaces in the developing world. Their contributions, both economic and social, should be recognized and encouraged by host governments, international and local organizations, and donor agencies.

Chapter 1 will provide the background and the rationale of the study and place it in the context of the ongoing debate on urban refugees. The context of Sudan as well as the host country will be discussed in Chapter 2. Methodological constraints and the research design will be explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the research and discuss its significance. Issues of marginality as a condition of refugees in urban settings as well as their coping strategies will be considered in Chapter 5. Finally, some conclusions and recommendation will be offered in the final section.

Chapter 1
Background and Terminology

Research Background

This study of the livelihood strategies of Sudanese refugees with closed files[2] has been carried out under the auspices of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies program at the American University in Cairo (AUC), with funding provided by the Mellon Foundation. It was conceived of as part of a larger livelihood studies project,[3] which includes Palestinians (El Abed 2003) and Somalis (Al Sharmani 2003).[4] The rationale behind the study was to focus on what was perceived to be the most marginalized of the refugee groups, those whose claims to asylum had been rejected, by examining their livelihood strategies. The research questions the prevailing view of refugees as a burden to the host society and attempts to study them as active agents. In this way, it examines the ways refugees contribute to the economy of the host society. By choosing the most marginalized group of refugees the study shows that refugees can be economically productive and a dynamic social force for the host society even in the most acute situations.

Hypotheses:

1. *Failed asylum seekers, or refugees with closed files, belong to the most marginalized group of refugee populations due to their legal vulnerability. As a result of being on the legal and economic margins of the host society, their livelihood strategies differ from those adopted by recognized refugees.*
2. *Although suffering from economic and social marginalization refugees are not simply a financial liability to the host society but also make positive contributions.*
3. *Policies adopted by international and national bodies influence the type of strategies refugees choose in pursuit of their livelihoods. Particularly, they determine the willingness of refugees to use self-marginalization as a coping strategy.*

The following were the principal questions guiding this study:

1) How does the situation between those remaining illegally in Egypt, i.e. closed files, and those enjoying legal status differ in terms of their living conditions? Are there specific livelihood strategies typical of Sudanese refugees with closed files?

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[2] The term 'refugees with closed files' refers to asylum seekers whose applications have been denied by UNHCR both at first instance interview and on appeal. Consequently, their files with UNHCR have been closed and they are considered as of 'no concern' to the office.

[3] The first research study to address livelihood of refugees in Cairo was prepared by Dr. Tom Kuhlman in 2001 under the title *'Survival in Transit: The Livelihood of Refugees in Cairo.'*

[4] The idea of researching Sudanese refugees with closed files was initially proposed by Professor Barbara Harrell-Bond. The research proposal for this study was written in fall 2002 by FMRS research affiliates, Richard Grindell, Channe Lindstrom, and Annabel Masquefa.

2) What type of strategies, both productive and reproductive, do they adopt in securing their daily income? What standard of living do they achieve as a result? And what are the factors which influence their survival?
3) How, if at all, do refugees contribute to the host society?
4) How does the situation of the most marginalized and vulnerable Sudanese refugees in the context of an urban setting differ from those of the urban poor in general?
5) What type of integration or adaptation process takes place during the daily survival strategies adopted by both refugees and their hosts?

The Urban Context

Most studies of urban refugees focus on their situation in developed countries. Studies exploring refugee problems in the context of developing countries concentrate on the issues of encampment, repatriation and resettlement. They tend to ignore the fact that urban areas in the developing world and Africa in particular, have become the main hosts to refugee populations. Recently, the UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) revised its policy on urban refugees and undertook a global review of protracted refugee situations, including a series of case studies, reviews of the existing literature, and a synthesis paper on protracted refugee situations in Africa (Crisp 2003). Building on these initiatives, a new project directed towards promoting refugee livelihoods in situations of long-term exile was started in May 2003.[5] A number of research projects were carried out, which provide some insight into the livelihoods of refugees. However, most of these studies focus on camps and the role of UNHCR in assisting refugees to become self-reliant. In addition, the Forced Migration Review dedicated its May 2004 edition to the issue of sustainable livelihoods (FMR Issue 20/2004). Again, most have concentrated on the livelihood strategies of refugees in camps (Phillips 2004; Travis 2004), and the dilemma of self-sufficiency and local integration of refugees in protracted refugee-like situations, and the issue of food assistance in emergencies (Guarnieri 2004).

Despite recent attempts to broaden what has been a limited discussion on urban refugees in developing countries, there is still a dearth of literature. Several studies, however, deserve to be mentioned: the research by Kibreab (1995, 1996) on the situation of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan, the study by Macchiavello (2003) of young refugees in Kampala, a project carried out by the University of Witwatersrand on the situation of refugees in Johannesburg (Landau 2004), and the study of urban refugees in Nairobi (Campbell 2004). In addition, FMRS at the American University in Cairo organized a workshop in April 2003 which examined methodological and ethical dilemmas in urban refugee research (FMRS website, Workshop 2003).

Among the studies examining urban refugees and their livelihoods in Egypt, a study on the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Egypt by El-Abed (2003) and of Somali refugees and their identity construction in Cairo by Al Sharmani (2003) are notable. In addition, several other studies carried out in Cairo focus on different nationalities, including Ethiopians (Cooper 1992, 1993; Brown et al. 2004) and Liberians (Refugee

[5] UNHCR Livelihoods Project – http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/research/+SwwFqzvhsW9+6XsxFqzvhsW9+6XshFqhT0NuItFqoGn5nwGqrzFqmRbZAFqwDzmwwww5Fqw1FqmRbZ, last accessed May 12, 2005.

Legal Aid Project 2002). The majority of the existing research on Sudanese refugees in Cairo concentrates either on a distinct group of Sudanese, for example northern Sudanese (Fabos 1999), or on specific aspects of the refugee experience, such as changing gender roles (Lejukole 2000), domestic work as a form of economic survival (Ahmed 2003), health and education issues (Dingemans 2002), nutrition and diet patterns (Ainsworth 2004), and the dependence on a crude brew of distilled alcohol called Aragi as a strategy of coping with displacement (Curley 2004).

Although the research of urban refugees in developing countries is growing, it still tends to be invisible to other social scientists. Hence, it has contributed little to the understanding of 'societies' and 'communities' and the dynamics of cities in these countries. Furthermore, the bulk of research on refugees has been conducted in a restrictive manner, with researchers focusing on a specific dilemma existing in a particular refugee community without taking into account the large sociopolitical context of Cairo as a modern city for refugee communities (Le Houerou 2004). While addressing the issues of local integration as one of the durable solutions suggested for refugees, one needs to understand fully the relations and dynamics between the host and the guest populations. Only by considering the local conditions of the asylum country can policies towards urban refugees and the dilemmas of local integration in developing urban centers be adequately addressed. Although limited in scope, this research sought to compare the livelihood strategies of refugees and low-income Egyptians in the same neighborhoods.

The studies by Tom Kuhlman (1990, 1991, 1994) examining the impact of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan as well as his paper analyzing the economic integration of refugees in developing counties serve as an important backdrop for the discussion on refugees as a burden on or an asset for the host society.

Concepts

Before analyzing the research findings, it is important to define the key concepts that will be used throughout the study, such as 'livelihood,' 'marginality,' 'refugees,' and 'local integration.'

Livelihood

Chambers and Conway (1992) define livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required to live. In studying refugee livelihood one must take account of the diverse capital, including legal, economic, educational, cultural, and social, that refugees strive to secure in their daily existence in the host society (Sharmani 2003). *Capabilities* are dependent on such factors as age, gender, education, skills, health, and availability for labor. Livelihood is best perceived within the structure of the household as it represents the primary site of the exchange and distribution of common resources. While *assets* of the household include physical capital (house, land, livestock), financial capital, human capital (health, education, labor), and social capital (e.g. obligations and norms), *activities* on the other hand refer to non-material reproductive strategies (Chambers and Conway 1992). Kuhlman (2001) argues, livelihood should be examined both in terms of remunerative

income (productive aspects) as well as non-monetary aspects such as access to childcare, education, health facilities, and standards of housing conditions (reproductive aspects).

While such a livelihood perspective adds to the understanding of the concept, as a static concept it remains limited in its applicability to the study of populations in flux, such as refugees. The overemphasis on the micro-economic aspects of coping strategies undermines the analysis of the dynamic context in which livelihoods take place, including planning for the future. It is maintained that the strategies adopted by Sudanese refugees in securing their livelihoods are a dynamic process that takes place within a host society where refugees come to interact, co-exist, and adapt. By using concepts of both productive and reproductive strategies, this analysis allows us to look at broader dynamics of refugee livelihoods.

Productive strategies denote any kind of income-generating activities, including work in the informal sector, savings from the country of origin, remittances from relatives abroad, assistance from aid organizations, local residents, and funds from mutual assistance among the refugee community itself. On the other hand, *reproductive livelihood strategies*, such as the social and cultural strategies of refugees, play an important role in sustaining livelihood not only in a monetary manner but also in maintaining a sense of 'cultural self' in a foreign environment, the host society. In this context, the concept of *social capital* as an asset to the household developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) can serve as a useful tool for analysis. Social capital is most adequately described as the household's ability to increase its entitlements without working longer hours or increasing physical capacity (ibid.), and relates to the formal and informal social relations (or social resources) from which various opportunities and benefits people can draw on in the pursuit of livelihoods.[6] Such capital is mostly found in informal networks, which is used both as a way of securing cultural cohesiveness by replicating certain traditional patterns common among the population before the flight as well as allowing the household members to advance their livelihood in exile.

To broaden the definition of livelihood, this study proposes adding another dynamic: people's vision for their future and their sense of identity. The conventional perception of livelihood is derived from our understanding of the materialistic need to secure daily existence. However, apart from productive and reproductive factors of livelihood, a more value-driven perspective plays a role. This includes striving for values and rights and their own identity, which people pursue on a daily basis. In other words, as argued by Sen, development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen 1999). Such values might include the idea of freedom from oppression, being able to talk and move freely, having access to democratic and representative institutions, the importance of cultural identity and the freedom to exercise it. These constitute the parameters within which individuals, households, communities, and societies at large operate and reshape their existence. Although at first sight this might not be seen as of immediate concern to refugees who, according to the general perception, are mainly preoccupied with their daily struggle to make ends meet, this dimension of livelihood in terms of rights and the ability to claim these rights should not be ignored.

[6] This definition has been provided by DFID, The SL Distance Learning Guide Glossary on Livelihoods, www.livelihoods.org/info/dlg/GLOSS/Glossary.htlm

Marginality

The concept of *marginality* is relative, as it depends on the perception of those who define it and construct it, not to mention the reference point from which it is assessed. Marginality refers to economic, cultural, legal, political, and social inequality and exclusion, a state of 'being underprivileged and excluded' in terms of access to physical security, social, economic, and legal needs as well as education vis-à-vis the majority. In the context of marginality, the power relations between those who are 'causing' marginality (either Egyptians or other refugees) and those who are subjected to it stand out. Interestingly, the term 'refugee,' as it is used by Sudanese in exile in Egypt, tends to create a sense of community, which is distinctive from other Sudanese residing in Egypt. At the same time, within this 'refugee population' some are more 'marginalized' than others, either in terms of their legal status (recognized as opposed to not recognized) or in terms of their resettlement opportunities (non-eligible for resettlement versus those who are granted resettlement). As a result, the definition of self and identity are intrinsically linked to the concept of 'refugee' or 'closed file'. In this context, the analysis of marginalized populations includes discussion of social relations and the negotiation of subjectivity.

The process of *marginalization* can be seen as a two-way dynamic: being marginalized by the host society as well as *self-exclusion* from the host society. Marginalization has been associated with poor positive adaptation where individuals who are *marginalized* tend to be shut off or cut out of both traditions, having few or no connections to develop positive social support and recognition (Berry 1997; Sam & Berry 1996). Many scholars, including Berry, Kim, Power, Young and Bujaki (1989) point out that *marginalization* is not easily defined, "possibly because it is accompanied by a good deal of collective and individual confusion and anxiety. It is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed "acculturative stress" (Berry ed. 1989:4). Most refugees go through the process of marginalization, which, in many cases, may become a permanent situation.

Refugees

To adopt exclusively the legal definition of refugees as provided in the 1951 Convention or the 1969 OAU Convention[7] would be to narrow the categories of persons of concern to this study. As mentioned previously, the main subjects of the study are mostly Sudanese refugees who have fled to Egypt and applied for refugee status through the UNHCR office only to have their claims for asylum denied and their files consequently closed following an unsuccessful appeal process. For a variety of reasons, these individuals are either unwilling or unable to return to Sudan and, hence, remain in Egypt in precarious conditions, as illegal aliens, very often without any documentation or legal permission to reside in the country. As a result, they face constant fear of arrest or, in extreme cases, deportation.

[7] 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa provide two complementary definitions of refugees.

Thus, in defining the concept of *refugees* the approach initially developed by Malkki (1995) and consequently adopted by Al Sharmani (2003) is followed . It conceptualizes the term as a complex and dynamic "process of becoming.… A gradual transformation, not an automatic result of crossing of a national border."[8] The term *refugee* should not be seen exclusively in the context of the country-of-origin experiences which led an individual or a group to flee leaving him or her with *a sense of loss* (in terms of protection, social networks, and material property). Rather, viewing the refugee experience reveals the dynamic aspect of the concept whereby one becomes a refugee not only by escaping violence and persecution and crossing an international border, but also by going through the process of asylum-seeking, as part of evolving relationships, networks, and personal developments (Al Sharmani 2003). Such an approach allows for a better understanding of the dynamics and livelihoods of populations in flux, in transit, and whose livelihoods themselves are defined by the experience. As argued by Christopher McDowell and Arjan de Haan, population movements, whether haphazard or ordered, are regarded as an established pattern and migration is both a strategy of survival and livelihood, and inseparable from identity (McDowell and de Haan 1997).

As part of the broader definition of refugees, the term *Sudanese refugees* employed in this study refers to all who have fled Sudan as a result of one of the civil wars (though the majority arrived in Egypt after the regime change in 1989) due to personal persecution, insecurity, or general violence. The main subjects of the research were those Sudanese refugees who were not successful in gaining international protection in Egypt and whose illegal status renders them most vulnerable and marginalized. By comparison, a number of Sudanese refugees who have been granted asylum but are not eligible for resettlement (NER according to the UNHCR terminology) were interviewed. A common denominator for these legally diverse groups is their location in an urban setting of a developing country which is compounded by poverty and racism.

The Process of Integration

Integration is a dynamic two-way process affecting both refugees and hosts; over time both populations undergo a process of change in response to the interaction they have with each other (Harrell-Bond 2002:4). Integration is directly linked to time with long-term residents experiencing adaptation and at least some integration. *De facto* integration refers to a situation where the refugees are not in a physical danger, enjoy freedom of movement, have the right to sustainable livelihoods (through the unrestricted right to work), have access to education or vocational training, health facilities, housing, and are socially networked into the host community (where intermarriages are common) with little distinction in the standard of living between the hosts and refugees (Jacobsen 2001:10). As a process affecting both communities, integration can be considered successful when it is beneficial to both populations.

[8] As quoted in Al Sharmani (2003), concept developed by Malkki Liisa, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1995.

While studying refugee livelihoods, reference to the host society and the interaction between the hosts and their 'guests' becomes inevitable, particularly when examining the situation of self-settled refugees existing among the local host community, who share the same frustrations of urban life in a developing country. Some scholars have recently addressed the idea of local integration, referring to it as the forgotten solution in developing countries (e.g. Jacobsen 2001). However, conceptualization of the term *integration* has been quite a challenging endeavor, with different meanings proposed by different scholars, often imprecise and even contradictory. As set out in the 1951 Convention, local integration, defined as assimilation and naturalization, refers to the granting of asylum and residency, and eventually citizenship by the host government (Jacobsen 2001).[9] UNHCR itself defines integration as "the process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social and economic life of a new national community" (UNHCR, undated: 5, as quoted by Kuhlman 1991). The refugee problem should be solved naturally by granting status, as Kibreab puts it (Kibreab 1989:469). Such integration takes place through a process of legal, economic, social, and cultural incorporation of refugees, resulting in naturalization and acquisition of citizenship.[10]

Both in Africa and in the Middle East the possibility of local integration has not been accepted by most host governments. The presence of refugees is seen as temporary, leading to two possible solutions: either repatriation or resettlement (to a third country). In Egypt, although refugees are tolerated and have been allowed to settle among the local host community, resettlement has been the preferred solution, both from the point of view of the host government[11] and refugees themselves. With little chance for full integration, (especially since the refugees as well as the host government view their presence as transitory), the majority of refugees tend to live on the margins of the host society, yet constantly interact and come into contact with its members.

Although local integration is neither supported by the government and conditions are inadequate to support such a process in Egypt, I would argue that by pursuing similar livelihood strategies and facing the same hardships, Sudanese and Egyptians come into contact with each other and, hence, build foundations for interaction, co-existence, and at least adaptation.[12] As Barbara Harrell-Bond (1986) points out, integration refers to "a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resource – both economic and social – with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community" (Harrell-Bond 1986:7).[13]

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[9]The 1951 Convention, article 34, points out that the state of asylum 'shall facilitate the naturalization of refugees' (UN Convention, 1951

[10] However, assimilation is an old-fashioned term and it is presumptuous to assume that all diacritical marks can be lost. It also creates a resistance from both the host society and refugees themselves by promoting the absorption of the refugee community into the country of asylum (Harrell-Bond 1986:7).

[11] Interview with Ambassador Menha Bakhoum, Department of Refugee Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, March 13, 2005.

[12] Different conceptualizations of integration are presented by Tom Kuhlman in "The economic Integration of Refugee in Developing Countries: A Research Model," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.4 No. 1, 1991.

[13] Barbara Harrell-Bond makes a couple of reservations to this definition, however. As she emphasizes, "such a definition will not stand up to detailed analysis. For a start, the level of conflict may well have increased within the host country as a result of pressure of greater numbers. Moreover, co-existence does not necessarily imply equality of access to resources, and even the absence of measurable conflict would not necessarily preclude the exploitation of one group, or segments of it, by another"' (Harrell-Bond 1986:7).

Thus, local integration is a process influenced by host government's policies, host community reactions and ability to accept changes, the policies of UNHCR and NGOs, donors' interests, and most importantly, the attitudes of refugees themselves.

The process of integration can result in four different outcomes: assimilation, adaptation, separation, or marginalization. Here, the dilemmas of integration, understood as adaptation versus resettlement and/or repatriation, will be examined by applying and expanding on Kunz's (1981) theory concerning the factors that influence refugee behavior while in exile. He distinguishes between three sets of factors: home-related, displacement-related, and host-related factors. Under 'host-related' Kunz identifies the following variables: *cultural compatibility* between refugees and the host community, *population policies* of the host government towards immigrants and refugees, and *social attitudes* of the host society, i.e. whether it expects assimilation or tolerates diversity (Kunz 1981).

By employing the wider concept of interactions and co-existence, eventually leading to limited adaptation between the hosts and guests, the livelihoods of refugees can be analyzed more profoundly, as a process not only of securing material survival, but also as a creative dynamic in which refugees (and hosts) reshape their relations, identities, and form visions regarding their future when searching for a home while in transit.

Chapter 2
Research Context

Country of Origin Context — Sudan

The civil war in Sudan is considered Africa's longest civil war and including the effects of the recent rebellion in Darfur (January 2003), claiming over two million lives and displacing another five million. Several factors propel these wars: disputes over religion, resources, governance, land, water, and desire self-determination.[14] Conflict and war have consumed Sudan for over 37 years of its 48 years of independence. Sudan produced a large number of refugees from 1955 to1972, when disorder erupted in the south shortly before independence, and again since 1983, when the Nimeri regime divided the south into three regions and Shari'ah was imposed in the north. At that time, some Sudanese dissidents from the Nimeiri regime (1969-1985) sought refuge in Egypt.

The 1989 overthrow of the Sadiq Al-Mahdi's government in a bloodless coup led by Brigadier (later Lt-General) Umar Hasan Al-Bashir produced large numbers of both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. In 1993, the fighting intensified in the south involving government forces and the newly formed Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), led by John Garang. Over the last decade, the war has evolved from a largely north-south conflict into a contest for power that involves groups from across the nation and political spectrum (ICG 2002). Since the coup that brought the National Islamic Front to power, political and military organizations from all parts of Sudan — north, east, and west — have joined southern groups in armed opposition to the government.

In 1995 the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiated a peace process and established a Declaration of Principles. There was little progress made in reaching a peace agreement between the south under John Garang's leadership and the government in Khartoum, until 2004. After years of fighting and continued population displacement the government and the SPLM/A signed a landmark cease-fire agreement in January 2002 providing for a six-month renewable cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains region of the south-central Sudan. The government and the SPLM/A signed the Machakos protocol in July 2002, which resolved the issues of self-determination for the south, and the nature of the state and religion, including the decision to end the 19-year long civil war. Under the agreement, south Sudan will hold a referendum on independence after a six-and-a-half-year power-sharing transition period, while the north is allowed to keep Shari'ah law.

After a series of broken negotiations, three protocols of the comprehensive peace agreement between the government in Khartoum and SPLM/A were signed in Navaisha, Kenya on May 26, 2004. In August 2004, the last of four protocols were agreed upon concluding one and a half years of peace negotiations and providing for a referendum on

[14] More detailed description of the Sudanese conflict is provided, among other sources, in the International Crisis Group report, *God, Oil and Country, Changing the Logic of War in Sudan,* International Crisis Group Press, Brussels, 2002.

independence for the south after six years. In January 2005, the Sudan Peace Agreement was finally signed.

The new outbreak of fighting in the western Sudan, Darfur region in January 2003 has disrupted the fragile peace between the north and south, especially with the increased fighting and human displacement since January 2004. As a result of ethnic cleansing, continuous human rights abuses, and population displacement induced by the government-supported *Janjaweed*, or Arab militias — in response to the armed uprising led by the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) — the recent conflict is said to have led to over one million internally displaced peoples and sent more than 200,000 fleeing to Chad. The number of reported deaths, meanwhile, ranges from 70,000 to 350,000 (ICRC 2005). The issue of Darfur was excluded from the peace talks between the government in Khartoum and SPLM/A. Separate peace negotiations regarding Darfur are taking place in Nigeria.

The scale of human rights abuses in Sudan has been pervasive — including slavery, purposeful bombing of civilian sites, rape, torture, and detention (ICG 2002), to name just a few — that many international human rights advocates have been debating whether certain practices in Sudan should be characterized as genocide or more conventional human rights abuses.[15] As a result, during the two-decades long war, close to five million people have been internally displaced and over half a million Sudanese fled to neighboring Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Kenya, and Egypt (HRW 2004). In addition to the displacement of the population in the south, substantial numbers of dissidents from the north claimed asylum in Egypt and elsewhere.

The comprehensive peace agreement will have significant consequences for Sudanese refugees, including the possibility they could repatriate home. However, until now, Sudanese exiles are very suspicious of the stability of peace and safety of return.

Sudanese Refugees in Egypt

Egypt's International Commitments

As a founding signatory to both the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol in addition to the 1969 OAU Convention, Egypt has undertaken international obligations with regards to providing asylum, protection, and guaranteeing rights for refugees on its territory. However, with the lack of implementing legislation and with the number of reservations entered to the 1951 Convention, the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are significantly constrained.[16]

[15] The US administration claimed the situation in Darfur amounted to genocide.

[16] The five reservations made to the Convention concern personal status (art. 12 (1)), rationing (art. 20), access to primary education (art. 22 (1)), access to public relief and assistance (art. 22), and labor legislation and social security (art. 24). As a result, refugee children are restricted in their rights to state-funded education, and the right to work is regulated by Egypt's domestic legislation concerning the employment of foreigners, law no. 137 of 1981, whereby refugees are required to obtain a work permit as any other foreigner.

UNHCR in Egypt has assumed the responsibility for refugee status determination (RSD) in light of the current unwillingness of the Egyptian government to carry out RSD. It also provides protection and assistance to refugees. Among the main organizations providing relief to refugees are UNHCR's implementing partners, such as Caritas and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in addition to faith-based institutions (mainly churches) and some refugee-based NGOs. However, with the expanding refugee population, depleting funds available to UNHCR, and financial constraints of NGOs and churches providing assistance to refugees, the majority of recognized refugees are left with very limited support. In addition, those who have been rejected and are residing in Egypt illegally are completely excluded from any formal assistance, relying on help from some of the faith-based institutions and community organizations that serve both recognized and rejected refugees.[17]

Sudanese Refugees and Their Status in Egypt

Egypt and Sudan have a strong historical link dating from the 19th century British rule, when Sudan was considered part of Egypt and was ruled by a British governor supported by Egyptian troops. [18] Traditionally, northern Sudanese in particular used to come to Egypt for education, business, and medical treatment as well as for holidays. Large numbers of Sudanese resided for extensive periods of time in Egypt, going back and forth between the two countries, as well as living as expatriates in Egyptian society. The study by Fábos (1999) of the Muslim Arab 'expatriate' community in Ain Shams, which dates back to the 1940s, shows that this group is investing in a future in Cairo while Sudanese *'exiles'* who were forcibly displaced from Sudan see their stay in Egypt as temporary (Fábos 1999). During the different periods of displacement within Sudan between 1955 and 1972, and again since 1983, Egypt was not the prime destination of flight. Some dissidents from the Nimeri regime (1969-1985) sought refuge in Egypt, including the former dictator himself; however, they were hardly noticed among the much larger number of Sudanese already resident in Egypt who did not consider themselves refugees.

In particular, the 1983 civil war in southern Sudan resulted in a mass flight of people not only to the neighboring countries of Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia but also to Khartoum. Those internally displaced persons (IDPs) were forced to settle around the periphery of the city and live in acute poverty under dire conditions (Assal 2004). The most recent war, which started with the overthrow of the Sadiq Al-Mahdi's government produced large numbers of both IDPs as well as refugees (ICG 2002). With the hard-line Islamist government coming to power, many of the southerners who were predominantly of the Christian religion and a non-Arabic ethnic background felt insecure due to the imposition of Shari'ah in the north and the government's policy of *Arabazation* and *Islamisation* of the south as well as persecution (ICG 2002). Subsequently demolitions of IDP camps around Khartoum carried out by the government and dire conditions of the southern Sudanese IDPs forced them to flee to Egypt as the only accessible location. In addition, continuous human rights abuses and lack of freedom of expression in Sudan have

[17] A detailed discussion about service providers for refugees in Egypt and the constraints of the UNHCR office are presented in the UNHCR Survey, *Refugee self-reliance in Cairo: obstacles and prospects,* UNHCR Cairo, 2003.

[18] During the British rule and the 'Condominium' period Egypt and Sudan were considered as one. Hence, Egyptians often refer to Sudanese as their (poor) brothers.

produced an increasing number of political dissidents who also fled from the north (ICG 2002). The relatively easy connection between the two countries as well as the presence of a large Sudanese expatriate community served as an incentive for those in search of protection. Although it is difficult to estimate how many Sudanese live in Egypt, the numbers predominantly quoted by various sources range from 2.2 to 4 million, with only a very small portion of them having an official refugee status.[19]

The influx began after the signing of the 1976 Wadi El Nil Treaty, which granted Sudanese people the right to live in Egypt without a residence visa. In addition, Sudanese had unrestricted access to employment, education, health services and ownership of property, which equated to a status similar to citizenship. During this time, there was no need for those fleeing the war and violence in Sudan to apply for refugee status through UNHCR. Yet, new waves of Sudanese continued to come to Egypt and, unable to return home, they started to crowd the doors of UNHCR in search of asylum and protection. Since the 1989 coup, UNHCR started receiving an increasing number of asylum requests from the Sudanese community. However, due to the privileged status that Sudanese enjoyed in Egypt, and with some opposition members given *de facto* asylum by the Egyptian government, UNHCR's involvement was not significant. With the deteriorating security conditions in Egypt and Sudanese facing increased security checks as well as due to the strained relations between the Sudanese and Egyptian governments, more and more Sudanese came to the UNHCR office for help. As Stefan Sperl (2001) points out, in March 1994, however, the Egyptian government requested the UNHCR office to undertake the task of screening Sudanese asylum seekers with a view to assisting the neediest among them lest they "engage in activities incompatible with law and order or get mobilized by organizations advocating violence." With the assassination attempt on President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 during his visit to Addis Ababa, allegedly carried out by Sudanese Islamists, the treaty between Sudan and Egypt was revoked. This marked a change not only in the situation of Sudanese residing in Egypt, but also in the asylum procedures for UNHCR. Since to be able to reside legally in Egypt, Sudanese needed a visa to enter Egypt and a residence permit, and with the limited education and work opportunities as a result of the change of legislation, their status was made equal to that of any foreigner. This regulation has been applied (allegedly) only to new arrivals after July 8, 1995.

As the research shows, the majority of Sudanese refugees who have registered with UNHCR arrived between 1999 and 2001, constituting over half (62.7 percent) of all interviewed, with rejected refugees representing the same trend (*Table No. 1*).

With the growing Sudanese refugee population and with limited possibilities for securing adequate living conditions in Egypt, resettlement to a third country became a preferred durable solution for Sudanese, with increasing numbers being resettled to Australia, Canada, USA, and Finland since 1997. According to UNHCR statistics, between 1997 and March 2004, over 67,000 Sudanese approached UNHCR and claimed asylum. Among those, over 28,700 were recognized with another 7,300 pending a decision. From the rough calculations, there are over 20,000 cases that have been rejected, of which

[19] The Egyptian government sources quote usually a number raging between 3 and 4 million, with the Sudanese opposition groups indicating 2.2 million. At the same time, at the end of 2004 there were over 18,000 Sudanese granted refugee status, according to UNHCR statistics.

some 15,000 files have subsequently been closed.[20] Of those recognized, over 14,300 people have been resettled through UNHCR. However, it is believed that equally high numbers have been resettled through the private sponsorship and family reunification programs administered directly by the Australian and Canadian embassies. Sudanese refugees constitute 75 percent of the recognized refugee population in Cairo (UNHCR Statistics 2003).

Table 1

The year of arrival in Egypt

	Frequency	Percent
1982	1	.4
1985	2	.7
1987	1	.4
1988	3	1.1
1990	3	1.1
1991	4	1.5
1992	9	3.3
1993	2	.7
1994	14	5.2
1995	4	1.5
1996	6	2.2
1997	6	2.2
1998	17	6.3
1999	78	29.0
2000	52	19.3
2001	37	13.8
2002	12	4.5
2003	15	5.6
No answer	3	1.1
Total	269	100.0

Between 1999 and 2003, refugee recognition rates by UNHCR averaged 33 percent, while the percentage of those recognized has increased dramatically since the beginning of 2004, reaching at times around 60-63 percent. This increase has been due to the application by UNHCR of the extended interpretation of the refugee definition included in the OAU Convention. However, with those refugees recognized under the 1969 OAU Convention and not being accepted for resettlement (most of the resettlement countries are not parties to the OAU Convention and do not accept for resettlement refugees recognized according to its definition), the numbers of recognized Sudanese refugees remaining in Egypt have increased dramatically.

Two important events took place since the end of the fieldwork (March 2004) that are directly related to the situation of Sudanese refugees in Egypt: first, a new agreement was

[20] The numbers of 'closed files' among Sudanese in Egypt vary between 12,000 and 15,000, as indicated in the UNHCR Self-Reliance Survey (UNHCR 2004).

signed between the governments of Egypt and Sudan governing the rights of nationals; and second, the peace talks in Navaisha resulted in the signing of a peace agreement in January 2005 between the government in Khartoum and the SPLM. With regards to the first development, the agreement, referred to as the "Four Freedoms Agreement" signed on May 3, 2004 and ratified in September 2004, grants reciprocal benefits to the Sudanese residing in Egypt, ostensibly guaranteeing freedom of movement, residence, work, and property. In theory, once the agreement is implemented, Sudanese will be able to enter Egypt without a visa and will be able to reside without any special permits. Also, their right to work will be equal to nationals as well as the right to own property and land and to establish companies and partnerships. Such regulations should ensure protection and legal residence for Sudanese citizens. Whether this agreement will be applicable to the Sudanese already residing in Egypt as refugees or those without valid passports is still not clear.

The second development poses further challenges for the Sudanese refugees residing in Egypt. With the peace talks between the Khartoum government and SPLM/A, the policies of protection and durable solutions relating to Sudanese refugees in Egypt will be altered. Already, since June 1, 2004, asylum seekers approaching UNHCR's office in Cairo are given temporary protection for six months instead of a RSD interview date. At the same time, the resettlement policies of western countries are also likely to change in due time, most probably maintaining the process until the situation in Sudan becomes safe enough for Sudanese refugees to return. In this new political context, the most preferred durable solution for the refugees will become voluntary repatriation. These policies will have an impact on the livelihoods and vision for the future of all Sudanese refugees, whether recognized, asylum seekers, rejected, or closed files.

The changes in the protection policies of UNHCR will, however, differ for southern Sudanese who might feel safe to go back to their homes. In comparison, northern dissidents might still face persecution back home and, at the moment, those originating from Darfur are not able to return due to the war.

For the purpose of this research, we will consider the circumstances of and policies towards the Sudanese refugees in Cairo that existed during the time of the study. The recent developments affecting both the socio-political context of displacement in the asylum country as well as the political conditions in the country of origin will be taken into account while analyzing the future prospects and plans of refugee livelihoods. As can be seen, policies and international dynamics contribute to the transitory nature of refugee lives and their abilities and approaches in securing livelihoods.

Chapter 3
Methodology and Research Design

Choice of Methodology

The decision to study Sudanese refugees with closed files required a methodology that ensured the safety and security of both respondents and researchers. The rejected refugees usually live in legal limbo, often with no valid documents or residence permits and, hence, in constant fear of arrest and potential deportation. Their precarious security conditions made it difficult for foreigners to access the households of those refugees. There was a possibility that western foreigners walking into the houses of Sudanese would raise the attention of the authorities, which could further undermine their insecure legal situation. Moreover, access for foreigners to poor Egyptian households is also problematic and often Egyptians would refuse to talk to western foreigners fearing forced conversion (at the time of the research, any association with an American institution was seen as suspicious by the locals, as they heard from mosques that western foreigners, especially Americans, were trying to convert Egyptians to Judaism). These issues made it necessary to employ a research method that would not expose refugees to the authorities and further undermine their unstable security situation. Hence, the project used a 'culturalist' or 'insider' ethnographic approach to the study of the population in question (Bartunek ed. 1996).

The research was carried out during the timeframe of one year by eight research assistants who were members of the Sudanese refugee community and myself as the research coordinator.[21] My involvement in some of the research work also allowed for an 'outsider' perspective to bring a different view into the analysis. As the refugee community is quite diverse and there are certain levels of mistrust and tensions between different tribes and ethnic groups, research assistants were selected from a variety of backgrounds, including representatives from the south, north, west, and east of Sudan. Among the eight researchers, there were six men and two women. For the purpose of studying the Egyptian households, a research assistant of Egyptian-Sudanese descent was hired in order to gain trust of and access to both populations. In this way, Sudanese research assistants had much easier access to the Sudanese community at large as well as to the households of the rejected refugees in particular. Their visits to the community did not raise suspicions of the local authorities.

The 'culturalist' approach meant that research assistants carried out the majority of the interviews with respondents and I conducted regular group and individual de-briefings. Also, I regularly checked and monitored the questionnaires filled out by the research

[21] During the first phase of the research, between March 2003 and end of August 2003, there were four assistants. By that time 120 households of Sudanese refugees with closed files were interviewed. One of the assistants left for resettlement in the beginning of September 2003, and with the additional grant received from the Mellon Foundation I was able to broaden the scope of the research by adding 160 more households of both closed files and those non-eligible for resettlement as well as a small sample of Egyptian households. As a result, four more people were hired to conduct the fieldwork between October 2003 and end of February 2004.

assistants. In addition, I conducted several field visits together with the research assistants and carried out interviews with service providers and UNHCR.

The chosen method addressed the security context in which the research operated. It also satisfied the 'culturalist' paradigm in that data (or knowledge) is 'emic,' i.e. "accounts, description, analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the members of the culture under study" (Lett 1996), rather than being meaningful and appropriate to an external observant with a different cultural background.

A major unanticipated shortcoming of the 'insider' or 'culturalist' approach should be noted. Although the approach allows for better access to the vulnerable refugee population, employing refugees as research assistants to conduct sometimes very painful interviews with respondents is problematic. Like the interviewees, the assistants have also fled their country for a variety of reasons and have gone through traumatic experiences. Some of the research assistants suffered depression and psychological exhaustion as a result of the stories heard from other refugees. In short, the cultural and personal closeness to many of the respondents posed major challenges for the interviewers, who found themselves either reliving their own traumatic experiences or sharing the suffering and dire conditions that the most marginalized refugees experience in Egypt. As a recommendation for future research using an insider method, research assistants chosen to conduct the fieldwork needs a clear explanation as to what kind of stress such work may pose. Those candidates who themselves have gone through torture and other especially traumatic experiences might not be suitable to participate in such work.

At the same time, using research assistants who come directly from the community might sometimes result in biased data and interpretation of the information. Often, it is difficult for such research assistants to disassociate themselves from the information they receive and gain an appropriate analytical distance. At the same time, due to the familiarity of the issues discussed, research assistants sometimes failed to fully listen to their respondents and tended to assume the answers. In some cases, problems emerged from the different conceptions and understandings held by the research assistants and myself. These issues were continuously discussed and reinterpreted in group and individual de-briefings. Another problem with employing the insider approach was the lack of consistency of data Ironically, however, discrepancies led to a better understanding of the strategies and ways in which refugees present their own cases and their livelihoods. In some cases, however, the data received had to be questioned in terms of its validity and, as a result, some had to be discarded. Lastly, since I was not present at all interviews I had to rely on the truthfulness and honesty of the research assistants to carrying out their work properly. In one case, it was necessary to dismiss an assistant who was not fulfilling his assignments as instructed.[22]

[22] In some cases, the experience of conducting research and participating in data gathering helped the assistants further develop themselves. One of the assistants who had previous experience working with refugees and conducting research decided to pursue a PhD on refugees in Australia upon his resettlement. Another received a grant to pursue her studies and decided to focus on psychology as she wants to continue working with Sudanese back in Sudan.

Selection of Interviewees and Field Sites

Initially, the research was to focus exclusively on the livelihoods of Sudanese refugees with closed files. Individuals from 120 such households in Cairo were interviewed between March 2003 and August 2003. However, it became obvious that it was necessary to compare their situation to refugees with status to better understand the particular livelihood strategies adopted by the refugees with closed files. In addition, in order to contextualize the study, a small sample of poor Egyptians who shared the same living space and resources with refugees were interviewed. Thus, in the second phase of the fieldwork, the sample was expanded to include some 77 recognized and nine 'on appeal' refugee households and 10 households of Egyptians living with the majority of the rejected refugees in one of the slum areas in Cairo called Arba W Nuss. In addition, in order to gain a wider understanding of the living situation of refugees in Egypt in general, it was decided that interviews should also be carried out in Alexandria. A total of 42 households including 25 of refugees with closed files were interviewed in Alexandria, which is the second major settlement place for Sudanese refugees in Egypt. This was the first time that a research project was undertaken with the refugee population there.

In total, 269 households of Sudanese refugees in Cairo and Alexandria and 10 of Egyptians living in Arba W Nuss were visited several times and interviewed; three-fourth of the households were headed by men and one-fourth by women (details regarding the Sudanese refugees are provided in Table 2). Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in data collection, including questionnaires, observation, and in-depth interviews.

Table 2[23]

Status of Sudanese refugees

		Status	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	CLOSED	183	68.0
	NER	66	24.5
	APPEAL	9	3.3
	DURSOL	11	4.1
	Total	269	100.0

The interviewees were chosen from both cities, with researchers having identified the major residence areas of Sudanese refugees. In Cairo, Sudanese refugees live throughout the city, with the biggest groups located in the neighborhoods of Ain Shams, Arba W Nuss (4½), Maadi, Nasr City, and Sitta (6) October. They tend to settle in places where there is already a network of family or kin connections. Closeness to relatives and friends of the same ethnic background creates a more familiar environment that enables refugees to support each other economically, psychologically, culturally, and socially. It also provides the perception of security and feeling of safety, especially for those who reside illegally in Egypt. The proximity of service providers, especially churches, as well as the

[23] The abbreviations refer to the status of the refugees: CLOSED – rejected with closed files; NER – recognized but non-eligible for resettlement; APPEAL – rejected in the first instance waiting for an appeal interview; DURSOL - recognized waiting for a durable solutions interview.

availability of cheap accommodation play an important role in the choice of residence. Table 3 presents the main residential areas of Sudanese refugees.

Table 3

Residential area of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Abbassiyya	7	2.6
Ain Shams	38	14.1
Arba w Nus	18	6.7
Mohandessin	6	2.2
Heliopolis	9	3.3
Imbaba	3	1.1
Maadi	44	16.4
Nasr City	27	10.0
Sitta Oktober	12	4.5
Alexandria	42	15.6
Al-Kobba	4	1.5
Al-Zeiton	3	1.1
Dokki Giza	4	1.5
El-Haram Giza	5	1.9
Dir Malak	4	1.5
Aguza	6	2.2
Other	36	13.4
No answer	1	.4
Total	269	100.0

Table 4

Respondents' residential area versus refugee status

		Status				
		CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	Total
Respondent address	Abbassiyya	7				7
	Ain Shams	27	10	1		38
	Arba w Nuss	10	4	3	1	18
	Mohandessin	5	1			6
	Heliopolis	8	1			9
	Imbaba	2	1			3
	Maadi	27	15	1	1	44
	Nasr City	22	3		2	27
	Sitta Oktober	4	7		1	12
	Alexandria	25	11	4	2	42
	Al-Kobba	3	1			4
	Al-Zeiton	3				3
	Dokki Giza	4				4
	El-Haram Giza	3	2			5
	Dir Malak	4				4
	Aguza	4	2			6
	Other	24	8		4	36
Total		182	66	9	11	268

According to the data gathered (Table 4), the respondent's refugee status does not seem to have an effect on the choice of residence. Very often, those who do not have

UNHCR's yellow (asylum seekers) or blue (recognized refugees) cards tend to live with those who have refugee status.[24]

The Arba W Nuss area, from which the Egyptian households were chosen, was selected for several reasons. First, Arba W Nuss represents a territory of common experience for two seemingly different yet very similar groups. For both groups, Egyptians and Sudanese, Arba W Nuss is not a home by design but default, constituting a shared territory of displacement. Second, this irregular settlement area on the margins of Cairo is a typical slum with the two populations facing similar economic hardships and living conditions. The two groups, Sudanese and Egyptian migrants, represent 'aliens' in the context of Cairo and its 'native population,' both facing the issue of survival and adaptation in a 'foreign' or unfamiliar urban setting. Arba W Nuss also represents a place where the two groups live next to each other, coming into contact at different levels and in different manners in their daily pursuit of livelihoods.

Unit of Analysis

For the purpose of our study, the unit of analysis was a household, as 'survival strategies' are based decisions affecting the household. As Kuhlman argues, "The economic behavior of an individual is explained in terms of the interests of the household to which he or she belongs" (Kuhlman 1991). This statement is appropriate in the context of Sudanese refugees and Egyptian urban poor, where the survival of an individual is seen in a context of a wider household, and even a community (Singerman 1996). Thus, the interviews were conducted with the heads of households as well as other members, keeping in mind gender, age, and ethnic background. In the selection process, the composition of the household was also taken into account: single persons, single families, multiple families, extended family, and groups of friends (details provided in Table 5).

Table 5

Type of households

		Frequency	Percent
	Multiple Family Household	19	7.1
	Single Family Household	95	35.3
	Extended Family Household	46	17.1
	Single Person Household	16	5.9
	Group of Friends Living Together	90	33.5
	No answer	3	1.1
Total		269	100.0

[24] These findings are consistent with results of previous studies of Sudanese refugee population carried out by the Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA) and the self-reliance survey among refugees non-eligible for resettlement conducted by UNHCR Cairo (SUDIA 2003; UNHCR 2003).

The respondents were both Muslims and Christians, with a slight majority of Muslims (Table 6). They represented a wide range of ethnic groups as well as a variety of regions in Sudan, with 46 percent coming from the south, 25 percent from western Sudan, 16 percent from the north, and the rest from eastern and central Sudan (see Appendix 1). Respondents came from over 70 tribes and ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group interviewed, both among the closed files as well as the Sudanese refugees in general, was Dinka, followed by Bari, Galleen, Fur, Muru, Nuba, and Zande.[25] The majority of interviewees were young, between the age of 26 and 35 years (53 percent) with only 3.4 percent over 50 years old (Table 7). Among interviewees, 41.2 percent were married, 45.5 percent were single. The rest were separated, widowed or had a missing spouse (Table 8). Among the closed files the number of single respondents was slightly higher (47 percent). The predominant number of Sudanese refugees, both with closed files and recognized, are young single men (26-35 years old), living with a group of friends in Egypt, who had arrived in Cairo between 1999 and 2001.

Table 6

Respondents' religious belief

	Frequency	Percent
Christian	130	48.3
Muslim	137	50.9
Traditional	2	.7
Total	269	100.0

Table 7

Age of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
16-25	24	8.9
26-35	142	52.8
36-50	93	34.6
51-60	9	3.3
No answer	1	.4
Total	269	100.0

Table 8

Marital status after arrival in Cairo

	Frequency	Percent
Married	106	39.4
Single	117	43.5
Divorced	6	2.2
Separated	12	4.5
Widowed	9	3.3
Spouse missing	5	1.9
Single parent	2	.7
No answer	12	4.5
Total	269	100.0

[25] The full list of ethnic groups and their places of origin is provided in Appendix 1.

Data Gathering

A few qualifications should be made here with regards to the sampling methods used in this study. First, a major limitation of such an approach is best described by the visibility/invisibility dilemma, referred to by Kibreab (1996) as "what the eye refuses to see." The fact that urban refugees, especially those residing in a host country illegally, are scattered across the city — making themselves invisible in order to protect their own security —complicates the efforts to identify respondents. Secondly, the numbers of those with closed files could only be estimated as no precise statistics exist for either the number of closed files or the total number of Sudanese nationals residing in Egypt. The only statistics which were possible to obtain where of those refugees registered with UNHCR. Thirdly, the refugees represent a relatively small fraction of the total population of Cairo and Alexandria. In addition, due to their insecure and vulnerable position in the host society, they are marginalized and, hence, less accessible. Lastly, refugees, even those with closed files status, are a very mobile population and tend to look for alternative ways of migrating outside of Egypt.[26] Thus, although the estimate of 15,000 closed files of Sudanese in Egypt might be a helpful guide, it in no way constitutes a reliable sample frame.

Being aware of these limits on sampling methods, we attempted to choose the most informative ways of gathering information. Since the sample was not representative, results cannot be generalized. Although the validity and 'representativeness' of the data could be at times questionable — based on the existing knowledge of the Sudanese refugee community in Egypt as well as on the data analysis — certain general trends can be spotted and observations made which give an in-depth, if not complete, picture of the community.

As noted, the creation, maintenance, and dynamic redefinition of mutual support networks was presumed to be a significant reproductive livelihood strategy. In order to fully understand this dynamism, an adapted version of the snowball and purposive sampling method was employed. Researchers initially selected a few households in a designated area of Cairo or Alexandria as a point of entry. From there, data was collected on households connected to the initial point of access in order to perform a social network analysis of support systems in place.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

Assistants visited the households several times, conducting interviews with the main respondent, in whose name the application for refugee status has been submitted to UNHCR, as well as with other members of the household. The questionnaire was not used in the interview but filled out after each visit. In addition, the assistants would keep track of changes in the household in their field notes used in the qualitative data analysis. Weekly de-briefing sessions were held allowing the research assistants to share their findings and observations, discuss issues, and developments in the refugee community. In

[26] Sudanese refugees explore all possible ways of migration, including using the private sponsorship resettlement scheme through the Australian embassy, the family reunion program through the Canadian embassy, as well as using smugglers to reach Israel or Libya and from there further to Italy.

addition, regular individual de-briefing sessions were held with each of the assistants, during which the questionnaires were checked and problems discussed. The SPSS system was used for the analysis of the quantitative data. Two separate databases, one with the results relating to the Sudanese refugees and the Egyptian households, were created to compare the data.

In addition, I made numerous visits to the households in order to observe the situations, conduct background interviews, and record conditions of the households on video. Interviews with the organizations and institutions providing assistance to Sudanese refugees were undertaken, including UNHCR, churches, and local NGOs to collect information on policies of protection and assistance. The variety of the data collected were analyzed in order to develop the most accurate and complete picture of the situation of Sudanese refugees in Egypt.

Chapter 4
Results of the Study

Refugee Status and the Impact of Policies

Rejected refugees represent the majority of the Sudanese refugee population in Egypt.[27] Since 1994, when applications of Sudanese started being screened for asylum, the percentage of those who were rejected, especially between the period 1999 and 2002 reached 67 percent. It is worth noting that the majority of those who have been granted asylum through the UNHCR office arrived between 2002 and 2003. The problem can be directly linked to the changes in the UNHCR refugee status determination procedures (RSD) that took place in the late 2003. In the past, as discussed by Mike Kagan (2002), UNHCR's office in Cairo used the limited interpretation of the refugee definition of 1951 as the basis for granting refugee status (Kagan 2002). In addition, less-than-satisfactory appeal procedures carried out, also by UNHCR, left the process open to abuse. As the majority of the people who arrived in Egypt fled Sudan due to war, general violence and discrimination, without necessarily being able to prove a direct personal "well-founded fear of persecution," they did not fall within 1951 Convention's strict criteria of who is a refugee. Hence, from 1997 to 2002 the average recognition rate was 33 percent. The RSD procedures changed in 2003 with the broader refugee definition of the 1969 OAU Convention being applied.[28] While recognition rates went up to 63 percent in 2003, with a slight decline in the first six months of 2004 (52 percent), the number submitted for resettlement stayed constant at around 3,000 people per year (UNHCR Statistics June 2004). As a result, although the number of recognized refugees increased drastically, many more were declared non-eligible for resettlement. Thus, very often it is simply a question of timing and not the quality of the refugee's claim that determines if a refugee is able to pass the recognition hurdle, according to one UNHCR official (personal communication).

Refugees themselves do not necessarily understand these changes in the procedures. During the research, many were interested to learn from the research assistants about the UNHCR's procedures and why, during some points in 2003, so many more people were being recognized and yet many more were being 'resettled' in Egypt. One of the respondents asked: *"The people who came with me from the same village and with the same story have been resettled and I was given a letter and told to stay in Egypt. What is wrong with me?"*

While the objective of this study is not to provide legal arguments for those Sudanese asylum seekers who were rejected and had their files closed, it is necessary to demonstrate how policy changes can have a direct impact on people's lives. The need for consistency and clarity of procedures that provide coherent and reliable standards for refugee status determination has to be addressed in order to avoid unjustified and ad hoc treatment of refugee claims.

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[27] The refugee status is declaratory in its nature and refugees can only be internationally protected if they prove their claim is credible.

[28] Under the OAU definition, those fleeing civil wars and strife in Africa fall under the criteria of international protection of refugees.

The analysis of the livelihoods of the rejected refugees set in the comparative framework might provide some insights into the dire conditions in which this particular group of refugees survive. The findings will be analyzed according to themes, which were uncovered by the quantitative data analysis.

Who Are We And Why We Are Here?

Reasons behind Seeking Asylum in Egypt

Generalizing about the Sudanese refugees present in Egypt can be challenging due to distinct differences existing not only among groups but individuals as well. However, some trends can be detected according to people's places of origin and experiences in Sudan. These characteristics are common across the legally different refugee groups, i.e. 'closed files' or recognized refugees. It is impossible to isolate one reason as the single cause of displacement and flight to Egypt for all Sudanese. Nonetheless, there are some recurrent factors, usually intertwined with each other, that forced people to leave Sudan, including political (ongoing war and civil unrest in the south, political discrimination and harassment, especially common among students and politically active respondents), economic (deteriorating economic and social conditions, lack of access to education, jobs, and financial security), and military.

Over three-fourth of our respondents (208) claimed to have a political reason that forced them to leave Sudan. Southerners usually refer to issues relating to general security and war conditions in the south, forced conscription, and religious persecution. Others point to their political activities in Sudan, especially common among the northerners from Khartoum, as a cause of their lack of security and persecution. The lack of educational opportunities and discriminatory access to jobs were quoted as other reasons behind the decision to seek asylum in Egypt. This was particularly common among young Sudanese men.

> *A-01 came to Egypt in July 1999 and applied to the UNHCR's office for asylum in the same year. He was denied and his file was closed in 2001. When he was in Sudan he heard about UNHCR and the possibility of being resettled to the West within two months. However, his main aim of coming to Egypt was not to seek resettlement but educational opportunities. When he discovered that there are no scholarships for studying abroad, he decided to apply to Cairo University Khartoum Branch (free of charge for Sudanese) and graduated last year.*

The majority of our respondents who originate from the south of Sudan tend to come to Egypt from their temporary or long-term residence in the north, usually Khartoum, where they lived in displaced camps. The deteriorating situation in these camps caused by the closure of church and school facilities in 1998 and frequent demolitions of housing, heightened fear of security controls, army recruitment drives, and worsening economic conditions had influenced the decision of southern Sudanese to leave for Egypt.

> *B is a single mother, of the Dinka tribe, who came to Egypt in 2000. Her application for asylum was denied and her file was consequently closed in*

> *2001. She left Sudan because of the war. The Arab militias frequently raided her village in Bahr el Ghazal, killing people and taking others as slaves. She was forced to move to Khartoum where she lived in a shanty area near the city. Her shelter was made out of old tin, cartons, and sacks. The government demolished her shelter and she and her children were left in the cold. There was neither water nor medical supplies. They were left in the open air without any infrastructure to shelter or protect them. She said she heard rumors that the government was planning to return all southerners to the areas where they came from. She commented, "Of course I didn't want to be returned to my area where the Arab militias would kill my children and me. I decided to come to Egypt to seek protection, which I did not find."*

The relatively cheap and suitable transport links between Egypt and Sudan through Wadi Halfa and an easy access to Sudanese passports, exit visas and Egyptian entry visas provided an alternative for Sudanese to seek refuge in Egypt (Sperl 2001). The long-standing relationships between the two countries and the relatively large Sudanese residing in Egypt facilitate the flow of Sudanese into Egypt in search of asylum. In fact, many of our respondents in the past used to come here to pursue their studies, for medical treatment, or simply for holidays. Some had even bought flats in Egypt, which they used during their occasional stays here or offer to friends and relatives who come for visits. This is especially common among northerners. In addition, the presence of Sudanese opposition groups and their well-established position in Cairo play an important role in the choice of destination for refugees, especially for the politically active.

One of the main factors pulling people to Egypt as opposed to other places to seek asylum was the existence of the resettlement program in Cairo. Over 65 percent of our respondents (177) had relatives and friends living abroad, almost all of whom had been resettled, mainly in Canada, Australia, and the USA. Over half of the refugee households interviewed (165) admitted that they knew about UNHCR before coming, and were aware of the possibilities of migrating to the West. It was logical that those Sudanese who already had relatives and friends resettled to western countries through Cairo would have high expectations for the possibilities of resettlement. The message passed by relatives and friends in Cairo and those resettled to other countries about the easiness of migrating to the West through UNHCR to escape the political and economic hardship flourishes in Sudan. 'Successful' stories of migrating to the West are nurtured both by those already resettled and those waiting for their turn in Cairo. For the most part, the hard conditions in Cairo, lengthy procedures, limited protection and lack of assistance are not mentioned. Many rejected refugees do not convey to their families and friends back in Sudan stories of 'failure' and living in legal limbo in Egypt. Many feel ashamed that they have not succeeded in moving to the West and, as a matter of pride, do not tell these stories.

> *J-05 is a young single woman from the south of Sudan. She knew about UNHCR and its resettlement program in Cairo from her sister who came to Egypt a year earlier and told her to join her and apply. Her sister said that it would take her only a few weeks before she would be on her way to the West. The UNHCR would give her money to support herself while in Cairo. During the visit of the research assistant, J-05 expressed her frustration, "They [the relatives] never told me that the situation is so very*

difficult here and they did not mention the possibility of being rejected." She has a closed file.

Z is from the Alkarko tribe in Aldalang (Gibal-ElNuba, South Kordofan state). He decided to come to Egypt because of "the racial segregation" in his area. He came to Egypt in 1999 by boat. He chose Egypt because he had a lot of friends and relatives living here who told him about the UNHCR's office. His cousin who was resettled to the US and his uncle who was resettled to Canada as well as other friends who were resettled to Australia told him that he could get protection and resettlement here.

X is a single Sudanese from Al-Mahas tribe who has been declared as non-eligible for resettlement by the UNHCR Cairo office. After graduating from a secondary school, X worked for a police department as a policeman instead of doing military service. After three years, he got a job with his neighbor and worked for a mining company near Port Sudan. Consequently, he got a job as a security guard in one of the security agencies where he worked for three years. His economic situation was very hard and he could barely repay his loan to the bank. He was thinking of going to Saudi Arabia where his older brother planned to look for jobs. However, his brother did not like this idea. X tried to get a visa from one of the European embassies in Khartoum in order to join his cousin in Holland and seek asylum there, however, he did not succeed. At the end, he thought about the UNHCR office in Egypt. He collected preliminary information about migration possibilities through the office; one of his friends told him that he would migrate within the first year after arrival in Egypt, so he could apply to UNHCR and then go back to Sudan to wait for his decision.

Y is a young Dinka man from Rombek, where he was born and spent most of his life. He is a recognized refugee with an NER [not eligible for resettlement] *status in Cairo. When his father died in 1988, his family moved to Khartoum to live with his uncle. After Y finished his secondary school, he stayed at home for three years without work. Then, he decided to come to Egypt and try to migrate through the UNHCR's office to improve his financial situation.*

However, even if possibilities of resettlement are among the determinant factors expressed by many Sudanese coming to Cairo, the other reasons behind seeking a 'better' life should not be overlooked. In many cases, these people might have legitimate asylum claims in addition that should be considered on its merits.

Pattern of Flight

The pattern of flight to Egypt differs among Sudanese refugees. The majority of southerners arrived directly from Sudan, with the exception of a group of Southern Sudanese Students (known as the SOSSA group) who studied in Egypt at the beginning of the 1990s on government scholarships and were unable to return due to renewed fighting in the south of Sudan and fear of persecution. In fact, the government cancelled

their scholarships and many were not able to complete their studies. In comparison, it was more common for those from the west and north of Sudan to travel to Egypt through a third country. Several refugees went to the Gulf or to Libya in search of jobs. When the Khadafi regime decided to expel all foreign workers, Sudanese either returned to their country or went directly to Egypt. Moreover, among our informants, a couple of highly educated northern Sudanese pursued their studies in Russia or Ukraine in the beginning of the 1990s and, unable to claim protection in those countries after the political situation deteriorated in Sudan, came to Egypt to seek asylum. In the case of two politically active Sudanese belonging to the SPLA, their flight led them first to Eritrea and from there they came to Egypt with the help of a Sudanese opposition party.

Entry to Egypt

The entry of Sudanese to Egypt does not require large sums of money. Among our respondents, all entered Egypt legally, either securing a visa directly at the Egyptian Consulate in Khartoum or by arranging it through a middle man, e.g. a family member. Those who entered before 1995 did not require a visa and were allowed to move freely between the two countries. Among our informants, 37 benefited from these arrangements (Table 1). After 1995, when the political situation between Egypt and Sudan worsened, obtaining an Egyptian entry visa and Sudanese exit permit became more difficult. Many had to use political connections and pay substantial amounts of money for them. Most respondents came to Egypt from Khartoum by train first to Wadi Halfa and then continued by steamer to Aswan. From there they took either a bus or a train to Cairo. Others entered Egypt directly by plane from Khartoum or from third countries.

Educational and Professional Background

Among our Sudanese respondents, the majority was relatively well educated, with nearly half having finished secondary school, one fifth having graduated from university, and only 10 percent being illiterate. Most of the illiterate refugees came from the south of Sudan, whereas the best educated ones came from the north. These findings confirm the unequal educational situation in Sudan and also explain the search for educational opportunities claimed by young Sudanese coming to Egypt, as mentioned by 25 of our respondents. In terms of educational level, on average, men were better educated than women. Men respondents with spouses tended to be married to women who were often illiterate or had only primary education. The best-educated women also came from the north.

Among the respondents, 63 percent were previously employed in Sudan either in the formal sector, running private business or (predominantly) working in agriculture, while the rest were either unemployed or students. The majority of women were housewives in Sudan. On the other hand, almost all men were economically active prior to their arrival in Egypt.

One example of previous professional engagement was of particular interest. A young man was involved in human trafficking while he lived in Romania. He went to Germany

from Sudan to join his brother, but was expelled and ended up in Romania. There he was pursuing his studies and needed to earn his living. Together with his brother in Germany, he got involved in a business run by local 'mafia' that smuggled girls and migrants from the Balkans and Asia to the West. This lucrative business ended when the police raided the 'mafia' base and arrested all the members. Our respondent escaped and returned back to Sudan from where he came to Egypt to claim asylum and to look for a way to migrate to the West.

Being and Not Being – Coping with Illegality

> *"I have a closed file, but look at me, I am not dead. I am still alive, my family is alive, we need to eat, pay rent, and my children need to go to school. I am still a human being." J10, Bari, closed file.*

This section will examine the situation of rejected and recognized refugees in terms of their access to rights in the host society. It will be argued that although there are some limited rights guaranteed for recognized refugees in Egypt, in reality, both groups are subject to varying degrees of insecurity and lack the means to claim their basic rights.

The Meaning of Illegality and Legality

Lack of Refugee Status

Refugee status should offer the assurance that the person will not be returned to his/her country of origin (*non-refoulment*). Such protection is a fundamental right of all refugees. Being denied refugee status leaves them vulnerable with no official source of protection or support. This particularly affects those who do not have access to alternative ways of securing a residence permit, which is the case for the majority of the closed files in Egypt. Only 35 out of 181 respondents with closed files managed to legalize their residence in Egypt (see Table 9). Those who arrived prior to 1995, have valid passports and renew their residence permit every year, enjoy legal status in Egypt and have access to some of the rights previously granted to Sudanese nationals. The rest do not have documents proving their legal status in the country. With expired passports, invalid visas and no residence permits, these individuals are at constant risk of being arrested, detained and, in extreme cases, are deported back to Sudan. At the same time, the Egyptian government does not purposefully carry out deportation campaigns against them and usually they are allowed to stay in the country, occupying a legal limbo (Peterson 2001). While deportation happens rarely, random arrests and police harassment are common especially among the 'black foreign population,' which usually coincides with the government's policy of crackdowns on illegal migrants. However, even during occasional 'surprise' round-ups conducted by police and security forces, most of the people are released after paying a sum of money (Lindsey 2003).

The lack of legal status has significant consequences on all aspects of refugees' lives. Illegality and lack of refugee status means limited and disadvantaged access to jobs,[29] lack of access to education for children, [30] lack of access to health services, and not being able to claim their other rights in the host society,[31] including freedom of movement.[32] In the context of the host society, this group of refugees and asylum seekers can be considered the most vulnerable, experiencing a higher degree of exclusion than those with refugee status and limited rights.

Illegality results in the inability to claim justice. A number of respondents with illegal status complained about the daily harassment and their constant fear of being arrested. They feel that they are unable to respond to mistreatment and claim their rights. Endurance of bad treatment, abuse, discrimination, harassment, exploitation at work is the main coping strategy adopted by the illegal aliens.

> *J56, lives in Alexandria and is a rejected refugee. He commented that due to his legal status he is in a weak position at work because he has no work permit so anything can happen to him. His weak position at work makes him accept any type of abuse because he has to survive and look after his children and cannot return to Sudan where his life would be in danger.*

> *A12 is from the Bejah tribe. His application for asylum was rejected and his file with UNHCR was closed. When the researcher visited him last time, he was stressed because the Egyptian police arrested his oldest son, who was accused of stealing car parts with two of his Egyptian friends. His son has no residence permit and his passport is not valid. A12 was very worried; only his daughters were allowed to go and see his son and bring him some food. They had to pay LE 50 [to the guards in the prison] every time they went. The father himself never visited the son because he fears to be arrested as he has no valid passport and no residence permit.*

The lack of protection and security in people's lives leads to severe depression. Often, in order to protect themselves and avoid arrest, rejected refugees resort to keeping a low profile in society by attempting to make themselves 'invisible' both to the local population as well as to the authorities.

Impact of Illegality on Children and Freedom of Movement

The illegal status of parents has immediate consequences on the legality of their children. This condition especially affects those children who were born in Egypt. With expired passports, parents are unable to have their children added to their documents or register

[29]The 1951 Convention lists a number of rights which should be guaranteed for refugees by the host government. The following articles refer to the right to work in the country of asylum: Art. 17 re: wage-earning employment, Art. 18 re: self-employment, Art. 19 re: liberal professions, Art. 13 re: moveable and immovable property, and Art. 14 re: artistic rights and industrial property.

[30] Art. 22 guarantees access to public education for refugee children and Art.23 deals with the access to public relief.

[31] Art. 3 addresses the issue of non-discrimination and Art. 16 talks about the access to courts.

[32] Two articles mentioned in the Convention address the issue of freedom of movement, including Art. 26 directly talking about freedom of movement and Art. 28 dealing with travel documents.

their births. The children are left without any papers to prove their existence. As a result, they have no possibility of claiming their rights, including education.

Illegality also has a direct impact on the freedom of movement within the country for both parents and children. Without valid documents, rejected asylum seekers fear moving around the city or even traveling outside of their area of residence to find work. As one of the parents recounted, she cannot travel outside of Alexandria with her children because they have no documents and she cannot prove that she is in fact their mother. At the same time, she is afraid of traveling by herself and leaving children at home because if stopped by the police she might be arrested and returned back to Sudan. Her children would be left by themselves.

Legality through Refugee Status

As a recognized refugee, one enjoys the international protection guaranteed by the host government as well as UNHCR and, hence, protection against expulsion (except on grounds of international security or public order). Being able to acquire a residence permit and being immune from the risk of deportation and arrest are considered to be the core benefits of the blue card.[33] Those refugees who have been granted refugee status enjoy some limited rights in the host society. One of the rights fully implemented by the Egyptian government is the right to reside in Egypt and the right to move around the country. Recognized refugees receive a residence permit for every six months, which is renewable at the Mugamma (administrative office of the Ministry of Interior) office. As of the beginning of 2003, asylum seekers were also officially granted a temporary residence permit which can be renewed every six months up to three times (for a total of 18 months).

Recognized refugees enjoy freedom of movement, which allows them to look for job opportunities outside of their area of residence. For some, this includes profitable work in the tourist industry in Sinai.

Table 5

Residence in Egypt

		Does respondent have residence in Egypt		
		Yes	No	Total
Status	CLOSED	36	145	181
	NER	37	27	64
	APPEAL	2	7	9
	DURSOL	5	6	11
Total		80	185	265

Effective Protection

Detention and Deportation

[33] The UNHCR recognized refugees receive a blue card, which is a document stating their refugee status in Egypt in which the residence permit is usually stamped.

J16, Southern Sudanese, closed file, is very worried about living in Egypt without a residence permit and with an expired passport. In 2003, he was detained along his wife and son during one of the round-ups for two days and was only released when All Saints Cathedral and the Maadi Community Church jointly intervened on behalf of refugees with closed files at the police station.

The main concern expressed by our respondents with closed files was the lack of security and the fear of arrest and deportation. Several of our respondents were arrested and, due to the lack of residence permit or valid passport, were going to be deported back to Sudan. Some were taken as far as Aswan, but than managed to return to Cairo. Two of our respondents were in fact deported to Sudan and returned on a different passport and with new identities. However, even refugee status does not provide full protection and immunity from arrest. Out of the total of 269 respondents, 22 were arrested and detained at least once (Table 10). Among them were both recognized and rejected refugees, residing in Alexandria (10) and in Cairo (12). The main reason behind the arrests was the type of work the respondents were involved in. Street vendors and merchants are the most prone to arrest as they conduct their business without the necessary permits. Some have been detained up to six times. They reported that usually they are released after a few days or weeks once they pay a bribe (about LE 100). Most of the arrests happen among the darker-skinned Sudanese as they are more visible and more easily identified as 'foreigners.' Often the opposition leaders, members of the National Democratic Alliance in Cairo, use their connections with the Egyptian police to secure the release of refugees. News about round-ups is passed along to refugees by telephoning friends and relatives and warning them about going out on the street. In many cases, the Egyptian police and security are not adequately trained and are not aware of the meaning of refugee status, failing to recognize these documents as valid. Only when UNHCR is informed about the detention of a recognized refugee or an asylum seeker does the protection officer intervene to secure his or her release. With the amount of 'surprise' round-ups many of recognized refugees end up in detention, which is followed by lengthy procedures to have them released. In our study, nine out of 22 refugees who were arrested and detained had refugee status (Table 10).

Table 6

Arrest and detention among different refugee groups

		Has respondent been arrested		
		Yes	No	Total
Status	CLOSED	13	48	61
	NER	8	38	46
	APPEAL		2	2
	DURSOL	1	7	8
Total		22	95	117

Access to Courts and Justice

As noted above, the condition of illegality affects the ability of refugees to claim justice and access the legal process. Many times when refugees are arrested and detained, in some cases tortured and mistreated in detention (Grindell 2003), their families and they themselves do not have any access to legal assistance due to the lack of official residence or valid documents. They cannot address their claims to UNHCR and have to rely on the 'good-offices' of those institutions, which do not take their legal status as a determinant (usually churches – see the quote above). There is, however, no legal assistance provided to those who are illegal in Egypt, even though many are victims of criminal acts or mistreatment. In most cases, rejected asylum seekers do not even report to the police out of fear of having to present a residence permit. An extreme example involved a husband of one of our respondents who was denied refugee status by UNHCR and was arrested for the lack of residence permit. The next day his wife went to the police station where she was told that her husband had died. The reason of his death was not revealed to her and the body was not examined. Until now she does not know what caused his death and whether he had been tortured in detention. He had no health problems prior to the arrest.

On the other hand, the refugee status guarantees, in theory, access to courts and justice. Although this possibility has not been widely practiced in Egypt, it should be mentioned that refugees can use the legal system if required.

Coping with Illegality

Whether recognized or rejected, Sudanese refugees suffer varying levels of insecurity. This is also the case for other groups, as reported by the Somalis (Al Sharmani 2003), Liberians (Maxwell 2001) and Ethiopians (Brown ed. 2004). This insecurity affects not only daily livelihood strategies but it also has a serious impact on their psycho-social well-being. Both groups, legal and illegal, encounter security problems and have limited access to rights. However, despite it all, refugees are survivors. They find creative ways through alternative solutions, some more 'legal' than others, to cope with their dire situation in exile. Although it is not possible to discuss all the different coping mechanisms adopted by Sudanese with closed files in Cairo, this section will draw a broad picture of those most commonly used in securing legal status in Egypt.

In our study, among the asylum seekers and recognized refugees (84 respondents), 44 have acquired residency in Egypt (Table 9). As already mentioned, the procedures for obtaining a residence permit for asylum seekers and recognized refugees are very lengthy. Recognized refugees and those seeking asylum complain about the bureaucratic process through the Mugamma and its sixth-month renewal requirements. Many do not even apply for the residence permit as they see it hampering their resettlement options through embassies.[34] Instead, they continue to pursue their resettlement options with the Australian and Canadian embassies.

[34] The residence permit is usually stamped on the UNHCR card and cancels the entry visa to Egypt in their passports. The majority of refugees believe this means their passports have been cancelled.

Rejected refugees resort to other methods of obtaining legal status, either through middlemen or through enrolling at universities (35 out of 181 respondents with closed files had their status legalized in Egypt – see Table 9). Some of those with closed files pursued their studies at the Sitta October University, Cairo University, or in Alexandria and received residence permit through the universities.[35] There are also other ways of getting residence in Egypt, either by keeping their documents valid: through the office of the opposition party, the National Democratic Alliance; buying new passports, which is a relatively easy alternative for those who can afford to pay the fees ranging between LE 350 and LE 500; or by being a member of an association or opposition party, which provide an ID (SPLA, Nuba Association, Fur Association, etc).

One way of 'being legal' in the eyes of the Egyptian authorities is the possession of a valid driving license. Driving licenses are issued only to those with legal residency and are valid for 10 years; some Sudanese buy them from Egyptian middlemen.

> *In Sudan, M9, a Dinka man, closed file, worked as a driver in Khartoum. When he came to Egypt, it was difficult for him to find a job as a driver because he needed an Egyptian driving license. He bought it for LE 500 and now he can feel secure because it is as if he has both a work and a residence permit.*

In the case of having been previously arrested for lack of residency and having had an exit visa stamped into their passports, refugees either try to secure some other document or get rid of their passports, although the main strategy for dealing with illegality is to keep low profile:

> *"My passport has expired since 2001 and I cannot renew it. What I usually do to avoid arrest, I do not go to place where there is a visible police presence, I don't move at night, I avoid going to government places where police might want to ask about my documents or ID card. I usually dress well and appear decent not to make the police suspicious of me." J21, man, Fur tribe, western Darfur, closed file.*

Although abused and harassed on the street and at work, refugees endure it without reacting to racist comments. Many informants reported that when they receive bad treatment at work or are hit with stones and rotten food on the street, they just keep quiet because *"we are in their country and we are illegal. If we respond, we will be deported back to Sudan."* The courtyards of churches are perceived as a safe place for those without legal status, by providing them with an opportunity to gather, talk, carry out educational and cultural activities and some small income-generating projects.

One of the other ways of minimizing insecurity is through sharing housing with refugees with legal status. Rejected refugees also live in areas where their countrymen are visibly present, especially Ain Shams, Maadi, Nasr City, Sitta October, or Zeitoun. However, this strategy sometimes works against refugees since during 'surprise round-ups' these neighborhoods become the prime targets for the arrest of illegal Africans. One of the

[35] A few of our research team members were refugees with closed files without any official papers. They were happy to receive the AUC ID card as it served as their main protection guarantee.

strategies is to move to areas on the outskirts of Cairo where there are few police such as the Arba W Nuss.

Keeping a low profile and 'blending' into the Egyptian society is a method used by those with lighter complexion who are often taken for Upper Egyptians. Making themselves 'invisible' allows some Sudanese to access services available to the local community, such as health services and local assistance. Learning Egyptian Arabic, socializing with Egyptians, and adopting a local dress code (for women the *hijab*, or head covering and tying it the Egyptian way) serve as complementary strategies. Most of these options are limited to a small number of refugees present in Egypt.[36]

Access to Rights

The Right to Work

Illegality obviously determines people's ability to work. Working without a permit requires refugees to accept jobs in informal sector, where they are often under-paid and exploited. The lack of a residence permit and legal documents constrains the freedom of movement and, hence, hampers the ability of refugees to search for better jobs outside the main cities. For example, well-paid jobs available in Sinai in tourist villages are not accessible for those without legal papers. Also, the choice of employment is usually determined by its relative safety, whereby there is little exposure to or contact with the police. As a result, refugees tend to work on the margins of the society, with no protection.

Due to high unemployment in Egypt (officially 20 percent — see EHDR 2004 — and unofficially double that figure), the government places restrictions on foreigners' right to work in order to protect its domestic labor force. Recognized refugees are subject to the same labor regulations governing access to work as any foreigner, meaning that they must acquire a work permit.[37] Until the beginning of 2004, "Not permitted to work" was stamped into refugee cards. The government removed the stamp from refugee cards after bending to considerable pressure by UNHCR. However, even with this improvement, obtaining a work permit for refugees is subject to strict criteria, including presentation of documents and possession of qualifications unique in Egypt as well as fees reaching as high as LE 1,000 — although Sudanese can be exempted from some of them. As a result, very few employers are willing to apply for one. In this situation, almost all recognized refugees work informally and are exposed to the same exploitation as rejected asylum seekers. Most of the time they are paid much lower salaries than Egyptians, and often are denied payment at the end of their work. The illegality of their work affects both the employees and the employers, as the latter may be subjected to fines for hiring without work permits.

> *J49, a Dinka man living with his wife in Alexandria, both with closed files. He works as a day laborer in construction. He works in fear of arrest as*

[36] See Kibreab 1991 for a discussion of similar strategies used by Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Sudan.
[37] Reservations made by the Egyptian government appear in Article 24 of the 1951 Convention. See section *Sudanese Refugees in Egypt*.

> *he does not have a work permit and his employer hires him at the risk of having to pay a fine if caught.*

As noted, the right to work for refugees and the actual access to jobs in Egypt have to be seen in the context of the local economy. With a high level of unemployment and the annual increase of some 500,000-700,000 new entries into the job market, the Egyptian economy is struggling to provide work for its own labor force. Although Egyptians have the right to work, access to the formal job market is limited. In our pilot study in Arba W Nuss, a home to domestic migrants that came mostly from Upper Egypt and the Delta region in search of employment in Cairo, all respondents worked in the informal sector, performing mainly low-skilled jobs.

The Right to Education

The second major concern mentioned by refugees with closed files was the access to education for their children.

> *J37 is a southern Sudanese mother with a closed file. Her main concern is the fact that her son has no access to education and is staying at home without doing anything in his life. She said "I am very worried that my son would be like me, uneducated and illiterate."*

The majority of rejected refugees do not have the right to attend public schools, with a few benefiting from the limited educational possibilities for refugee children provided by the churches (Sacred Heart, African Hope School, St. Bakhita, and St. Andrew's). However, these opportunities are limited to unaccredited primary education, and some church-schools only admit Christian students.

> *J2 is a married man from Bari tribe. As a rejected refugee, he is living without residence permit and is afraid that one day he might be arrested and deported back to Sudan where his life will be at risk. "My illegality hampers me and my children from many things, especially the children cannot go to Egyptian government schools and I cannot afford to take them to private schools."*

As Peterson (2001) states, although children of rejected refugees are allowed to attend church-based schools, they will not receive a recognized diploma due to the fact that they are not be permitted to take the Egyptian government-administered exams. In addition, the parents have to cover school expenses: fees, books, and transportation. Families often cannot afford the fees even though they are usually minimal (LE 20 for registration at the primary school in Arba W Nuss. Many parents told similar stories to the one shared by a father of five children, a member of Moro tribe from the Nuba Mountains. He had to move his children to the St. Bakhita School in Arba W Nuss from the Sacred Heart School in Abbasiya (downtown). He was not able to pay the costs of transportation from their home in Al Ashar (area near Arba W Nuss) to the school. Other private schools are costly and rarely affordable for those with closed files. Some find alternative ways to cope with this situation. One of our respondents, a widow with three children, relies on the previous position of her deceased husband at the National Democratic Alliance in

Cairo. The party covers both her children's education in private schools (LE 1,500 per year) and language classes at the British Council, which her oldest son attends.

Holding refugee status allows both children and adults to pursue some limited education. Although the Egyptian government made a reservation to the right to primary education for refugee children, the 2001 Educational Decree, which reinstated and implemented the 1992 Ministerial Decree, provides some scope for the children of recognized refugees and some selected asylum seekers from Sudan to attend Egyptian government schools (Peterson 2001, Afifi 2003, Badawy 2004). The majority of children of recognized refugees benefit from educational opportunities provided by the churches as mentioned above. In addition, Catholic Relief Services administers educational grants covering school fees, transportation, and educational materials for recognized refugee children provided by UNHCR, which provides the children with access to public education.[38] As in the case of Somali refugee children, the educational grants for Sudanese refugee children were often not sufficient and did not cover all tuition, books, uniforms, and transport expenses (Al Sharmani 2003). Among our respondents, some of the children of the recognized refugees had to stop going to school due to the inability of their parents to pay the additional expenses. Most of the families of recognized refugees cannot afford to send all their children to school either as a result of limited funding or because of the lack of educational opportunities beyond the primary school level. Currently, there is only one secondary school for refugees administered by the Sakakini church in Cairo.

Moreover, university education is very expensive and refugees are expected to pay foreign fees. There are only a couple of scholarships presently available for refugees at the Sitta October University (administered through UNHCR). Other universities, including the American University in Cairo, do not have any special scholarships for refugees. The exception is the African Fellowship, administered through the AUC Office of African Studies, which allows students from Africa wishing to pursue a graduate degree to apply. A few Sudanese refugees have benefited from this opportunity. For some Sudanese students there is also the possibility of pursuing studies at the Cairo University Khartoum branch, where they pay minimal fees. However, the instruction level of the university is very low, with overcrowded classrooms and limited choice of degrees. A few of our respondents, including closed files as well as recognized refugees, pursue studies at the Khartoum branch while covering the related expenses with remittances received from their parents from Sudan.

In comparison to Cairo, the situation is better in Alexandria, where all Sudanese children, regardless of their status, have access to Egyptian public education. The educational authorities in Alexandria cooperate well with the Sudanese community. As one of the respondents mentioned, *"It is because we are very well organized here. The parents do not approach the authorities individually. We have a committee which deals with these issues. Also the Sacred Heart Church and the Southern Sudanese Students Association in Alexandria help us solve these problems."* The relatively small southern Sudanese community living in Alexandria (around 400 families according to estimates from one of the churches) is not perceived as the same burden by the Egyptian authorities there. As a result, the authorities do not insist on residence permits for the school registration. Also,

[38] As of 2004, for the first time, Catholic Relief Services assisted children of asylum seekers with the educational grants received from UNHCR as well as its own money.

the fact that the refugees have organized themselves and are able to claim their rights as a community makes it more difficult for the authorities to disregard them. They are also resourceful and imaginative, successfully finding ways to exercise their rights:

> *"We are fortunate that once President Hosni Mubarak visited Alexandria and in his address to the inhabitants of the city he stated that the governmental schools in Alexandria treat the Egyptian and Sudanese children equally. All Sudanese were there. It was covered widely in newspapers and we often use it when we approach the educational authorities in Alexandria and it works well." Sudanese Committee member in Alexandria.*

Recently, a new school for Sudanese children in Manshiya in Alexandria was opened by a Presbyterian church. It runs classes according to Egyptian and southern Sudanese curricula with English-language instruction. The Sacred Heart Church also offers additional classes for children taught by Egyptian and Sudanese volunteer teachers. In Alexandria, children of recognized refugees receive UNHCR educational grants through the Caritas office and attend Egyptian public schools.

It should be noted that until 1995 Sudanese children enjoyed free access to public education in Egypt. This provision still applies to those Sudanese, whether recognized or rejected, who arrived prior to 1995. However, they only have access to primary education. Several of our respondents' children benefited from these provisions..

Another dilemma in terms of access to education for children is linked to refugees' expectations to be resettled. Parents prefer to send their children to English-speaking schools since they want them to be able to continue education once they are resettled to the West. They often refuse to send children to schools with Arabic, arguing that *"There is no need for them to study in Arabic, because we will be going to America where Arabic will not be important"* (Dinka mother of a 8-year-old daughter). Some, especially the southern Sudanese, prefer their children to study in English because of their past experiences in Sudan and their rejection of the Arabization of instruction that took place after 1989 (Peterson 2001). In addition, refugees complain about the low standard of education available. Often, in the hope that they will be resettled soon, they decide not to send their children to school since they consider it "a waste of time." Unfortunately, the procedures for going through the refugee status determination and the resettlement processes, either through UNHCR or one of the embassies, are lengthy. Sometimes they last over three to four years without any guarantees that the asylum seeker will succeed in being granted resettlement. In the meantime, the education of Sudanese children is put on hold. Dingemans (2002) estimated that between 3,000 and 4,000 Sudanese children in Cairo did not receive any schooling.

Nevertheless, refugees recognize the value of education for themselves as well as for their children. In fact, very often the lack of such education was one of the factors behind leaving Sudan. *"Education is important because it teaches people where the resources come from and how to develop themselves. If we are educated we could solve our problems,"* said a father whose children do not receive any education and instead play school at home (Dingemans 2002).

Restricted access to education has a direct impact on the well-being and development of refugee children. Those children who do not attend school are deprived of contacts with peers and friends of their age, spending most of the time in front of a television. Harassment on the streets by Egyptian children leads Sudanese children to withdraw from contacts with others. They become quiet and subdued, afraid of and unable to trust strangers. Some children who attend public school complain of beatings and abuse from their classmates.

Although, in theory, Egyptian children have a right to public education in Egypt, in practice, the access to education is restricted due to population pressure on the educational system in the country. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2004, the official literacy rate for Egypt was estimated at 69 percent in 2002 while adult illiteracy was around 44 percent. The basic and secondary enrollment ratio was estimated at 85 percent (EHDR 2004). Among the Egyptian respondents in Arba W Nuss, none of their children attended schools due to the lack of money, according to their parents. A couple of the older children took literacy classes at a local mosque. Among the adults, only two received secondary education. The rest were illiterate.

Access to Health Services

The experience of exile and constant worrying about the future has direct consequences on the psychological state and health of refugees. According to the results of our study, the most common health problems among all refugee groups include anemia, chronic headaches, insomnia, common colds, and stomach disorders. In addition, the informants complained about stress-related ailments (depression, ulcers, and high blood pressure) often developed as a result of their experiences in Sudan, the process of refugee status determination and the hardship of life in exile (Coker 2003). Respondents complained about the painful process of going through UNHCR's lengthy procedures, which kept them waiting for a long time, only to be rejected. Consequently, many fall into chronic depression characterized by low self-esteem, feeling of uselessness, lack of willingness to live, which in the most severe cases results in suicide, as reported by some of the respondents. A young Darfurian with a closed file recounted: *"I cannot work or study here and this affects me psychologically. When I think about my situation here I cannot sleep and I get terrible headaches. I am 29 and am supposed to help my family. But look at me, I am useless, I cannot even support myself.*"

When recognized, refugees make new plans for their life in the West. However, when told that they are not eligible for resettlement, their whole vision for the future collapses. Many react violently, by arguing with the UNHCR staff and, in some cases, making physical or suicidal threats. The level of expectations and social pressure to succeed in migrating to the West drive many into despair. One of our respondents, a single young Dinka woman, was told that she was NER. She described herself as speechless. When she left the office she fell unconscious on the street. Some people brought her to a hospital where she was given treatment. She fell sick with high blood pressure. Others lamented that when they heard the news, "their hearts and heads exploded," they developed constant headaches, and now suffer from sleeplessness.

Many women, especially those who work as domestic cleaners, complained about being exposed to verbal and physical abuse, which they blamed for their high blood pressure

and rheumatism. In addition, lack of money for food results in bad nutrition that contribute to stomach disorders, which has also been confirmed in other studies carried out among the Sudanese refugee population in Egypt (Ainsworth 2003).

Most of those who are ill and suffer psychological problems do not receive treatment. Rejected refugees are excluded from any subsidized or free medical services provided to recognized refugees by UNHCR and its partners. The most commonly used are private neighborhood clinics (also used by low-income Egyptians), clinics operating at mosques (49 respondents) or church-based clinics, where the fee is minimal (for the monthly medical expenses incurred by respondents using different medical care providers see Table 11). Often, refugees go directly to pharmacies. Refuge Egypt at All Saints Cathedral runs a clinic that includes prenatal care and HIV testing, which provides medical assistance for a minimal fee to all refugees who have registered with Refuge Egypt regardless of status. Although these services are usually for those who have been in Egypt for up to two years, many refugees who have closed files and have been here for a long time, continue to benefit from their services. Among the 191 respondents who have used health services, 48 have been going to the Refuge Egypt clinic.

Refugee status gives Sudanese refugees access to health services available both at the governmental hospitals as well as through the UNHCR's partners, including Caritas and All Saints Clinic. When a recognized refugee falls sick he or she can get subsidized treatment through the Caritas office, which covers 50 percent of the total medical expenses. Almost all recognized refugees among our respondents have used Caritas medical services with three of the respondents resorting to private clinics or the All Saints Clinic (see Table 12). However, the subsidized services do not address all the medical needs of refugees. In the case of an expensive treatment, refugees cannot afford to pay even the half of the costs, and often have to forgo medical care. As in the case of rejected asylum seekers, refugees depend on relatives and friends who have been resettled to the West, asking them for financial assistance, especially in cases of pregnancies or more complicated illnesses such as tuberculosis (TB).[39]

On the other hand, access to medical services for southern Sudanese respondents in Alexandria, regardless of their legal status, is facilitated by the generous support from the churches. Although the churches themselves do not provide medical care, they usually refer those refugees needing treatment to appropriate hospitals and cover their costs. One of the informants, a closed file, suffered from TB and has been receiving treatment at the Amal Al Kheriya hospital in Sidi Bishr in Alexandria; the Sacred Heart Church pays his medical bills. Still, Sudanese from the north or the west, living in Alexandria who do not benefit from the church services, have to resort to private clinics or clinics at mosques.

In February 2005, after lobbying by the National Council of Motherhood and Childhood as well as Sudanese-Egyptian Forum (National Council for Population and Development), the Ministry of Health issued a new regulation allowing access to public primary healthcare services for all foreigners residing in Egypt.[40] This change of policy will have a direct impact on the possibilities of accessing public hospitals and

[39] A detailed discussion of remittances will be provided in the next part of the report.
[40] Interview with Dr. Ahmed Henawy, director of the Integrated Health Unit, Ministry of Health, April 14th, 2005.

government clinics by recognized refugees as well as those with legal status in Egypt. The implementation of this ministerial decision will need to be followed closely. At the same time, however, as many of the service providers and refugees asserted, Sudanese mistrust the public medical services available in Egypt. Rumors circulating among the Sudanese community about the stealing of organs (Kroner 2004) and discriminatory treatment at the hands of Egyptian medical personnel also need to be addressed.

Although low-income Egyptians have free access to public primary and curative health care, the quality of service provided may be questionable. Among the Egyptian respondents in Arba W Nuss, the majority resorted to either Islamic clinics at local mosques or to a medical center run by the Orthodox church in the area offering services to Christians.

Table 11

Reported expenses per month in LE charged by health service providers

Service providers	Medical expenses per month in L.E.					
	0	1-50	51-100	101-200	>200	Total
Caritas Health Office	3	10	4			17
All Saints Church Clinic	20	18	2		1	41
Neighborhood Clinics run by Islamic charities		1		2		3
Neighborhood clinics run by Christian charities		3				3
Private Clinics	2	5	1	1		9
Orthodox church in Arba w Nuss	1					1
Government clinics in		1				1
Misr Gedida	1	1				2
Others	13	3	1		1	18
Others in Alexandria	7	1				8
Total	47	43	8	3	2	103

Table 12

Health care providers used by different refugee groups

Service providers	Status				Total
	CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	
Caritas Health Office	3	13		1	17
All Saints Church Clinic	38	2	1		41
Neighborhood clinics run by Islamic charities	2	1			3
Neighborhood clinics run by Christian charities	3				3
Private clinics	5	1		3	9
Orthodox church in Arba w nuss	1				1
Government clinics in		1			1
Misr Gedida	2				2
Others	12	4	1	1	18
In Alexandria	6	2			8
Total	72	24	2	5	103

'Blue Card' – Real Versus Perceived Protection

The general perception among refugees of the importance of the blue card boils down to the legal status and the protection offered. Due to reservations to the 1951 Convention entered by the Egyptian government as well as the difficult economic, social and political situation in Egypt,[41] refugee status offers only limited rights in reality, especially in the context of livelihood. Refugees view their protection not only in terms of being free from random arrests and deportation but as linked to the provision of basic human rights, such as access to education, work, housing, and health services.

> *When asked whether the fact that she posses a blue card has made any difference in her daily life, J38, a single southern Sudanese woman NER status, replied: "Not really, when I was given the blue card, I was told to go to Caritas. I was given an interview date in several months. Despite the fact that I have the card now, I can't get any assistance from Caritas until I am interviewed and if I fell ill in the meantime, no institution would offer me any treatment. I also hear that single refugees are not given any assistance. I want to study but there are no opportunities here. I really*

[41] Since the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, Egypt has been under the Emergency Law. The Emergency Law is renewed every three years, with the last renewal in 2003.

> *want to be resettled to the west because I believe that when I am resettled I will be given a chance to get a good job and to study. Here there is no work and no education so I would just remain like this. The card would only help me in case of arrest or deportation. Life here is hard and the treatment from the host society isn't friendly."*

At the same time, many of those whose claims have been rejected feel caught up in legal limbo: on the one hand, they cannot or do not want to go back to Sudan, on the other, they have limited chances of going elsewhere. As a result of the lack of legal status, they are vulnerable and marginalized without access to basic human rights. Many feel that it is the role of the UNHCR to provide them with protection and assistance; they do not see themselves as the Egyptian government's responsibility. As J14, a married young man of Bari origin, commented:

> *"The UNHCR might not have enough resources to resettle everyone, but protection would cost nothing for UNHCR. UNHCR knows our problems in Sudan but it only pretends. We [closed files] are victimized for nothing by UNHCR and as a result many Sudanese have developed psychological problems. UNHCR has abandoned them and they have nowhere to go for assistance, be it medical, financial or protection from being arrested by the Egyptian authorities.*"

Coping with Hardship — Networks of Support

One of the aims of the study was to identify livelihood strategies typical for those refugees whose claims for asylum were rejected. However, as Stefan Sperl (2001:15) argues, "As far the Sudanese and the Somalis are concerned, there is no valid distinction between recognized refugees, asylum seekers and rejected cases when it comes to issues of livelihoods". The findings of our research confirm his conclusion and, as argued in the previous section, suggest that there is little difference in the effectiveness of the protection received by recognized and unrecognized refugees.

The UNHCR's 1997 policy on refugees in urban areas advocates, among other goals, the self-reliance of refugees is an attempt to wean them away from dependence on UNHCR (Sperl 2001). The policy recommends that care and maintenance assistance be strictly limited to those cases where early self-reliance is not possible, and assistance should only be given once. In general, it is argued that such assistance should not be provided to irregular movers[42] and should only cover the basics, i.e. given to those unable to meet minimum needs (UNHCR 1997). However, the policy assumes that the goal of settlement in the country of asylum is attainable and that refugees enjoy access to the same rights guaranteed to nationals, including work and general governmental services. Yet, this approach is misguided in Egypt where refugees are treated differently than nationals. With restricted rights to earn a living, secure adequate housing, educate children, and access health services, Sudanese refugees with or without status fall back on informal support systems. UNHCR Cairo has been running a care-and-maintenance program for the past decade. Due to the increasing refugee population and decreasing funds (UNHCR

[42] Irregular movers refer to those asylum seekers who went through and stayed in one or more other countries before arriving in Egypt.

Cairo budget has decreased by 50 percent since 2000) it had to cut its assistance to a minimum. UNHCR's policy drives refugees into a more marginalized and impoverished position (Sperl 2001). In this context, it would be a fallacy to argue that the existing support system in Egypt has created dependency and a lack of self-sufficiency among refugees. To the contrary, it is obvious that refugees are 'self-sufficient' from the start. The minimal assistance they receive in no way constitutes the core of refugees' economic and social survival.

Assistance for whom?

According to the UNHCR's regulations, some recognized refugees in Egypt are entitled to benefit from the limited assistance available through UNHCR, including educational grants, medial assistance, and access to vocational training. On the other hand, assistance provided through churches, mosques, NGOs, and community-based organizations is open to all refugees, whether recognized or not. However, in some cases, the faith-based institutions condition assistance on the religion of the refugee. Assistance includes distribution of food and clothes, financial or medical assistance, shelter, educational and vocational training. Depending on the policies of the aid provider and the need of the aid recipients, it is provided on a one-time, irregular, or continual basis.

UNHCR Assistance

As noted, the funds available to UNHCR Cairo's care and maintenance budget have declined by more than half.[43] It includes educational grants for children (LE 600 per year per child up to ninth grade), vocational training and job placement grants, medical care (through Caritas, covering usually up to 50 percent of medical costs), and limited monthly financial assistance. In fact, only families and the most vulnerable refugees (single mothers with children, families with over five members, the elderly, and unaccompanied refugee minors) are eligible for the monthly subsistence allowance provided through UNHCR's implementing partner, Caritas. In exceptional cases, assistance may be given once a year for emergencies, such as death, accidents or any other emergency hardship (UNHCR Information Booklet 2003). Among the recognized refugees interviewed (77 respondents), just over half (41) received any form of financial assistance from UNHCR. The assistance was either given on a one-time basis or was received irregularly. The majority of refugees complained about the long process of receiving assistance, sometimes taking up to seven months to receive the first monthly allowance, and the often tense atmosphere at the Caritas office, with hundreds of refugees waiting on the street for their appointments. Refugees also expressed their frustrations about the bad treatment they received from the Caritas staff. Some refugees received as little as LE 150 every two months. In several cases, single refugees only received one-time assistance, which was later cancelled as a result of a change of policy. Refugees do not understand the motivation behind assistance policies. One respondent complained that it was not her fault that she does not have children. Although she does not have a big

[43] The budget for UNHCR's office in Cairo significantly decreased from $3.9 million from 1996-8 to $2.2 million in the last four years. Interview with UNHCR Program Assistant, April 6th, 2005. At the same time, the number of recognized refugees under the protection of UNHCR rose to over 20,000.

family, she has needs such as education and housing. Among our respondents, there were only 13 families that benefited from the educational grants offered for children.

None of the respondents has ever benefited from vocational trainings offered by UNHCR, as the majority of them did not have the money to cover transport costs or could not afford to forgo earning an income during the period of the training. In addition, even refugees who are not eligible for resettlement often understood that taking up vocational training offered through UNHCR would diminish their chances for resettlement as they could be perceived as locally integrated in Egypt. As Sudanese refugees tend to share their resources and housing, the meager assistance provided by UNHCR to those recognized refugees is usually shared with others, who are either not eligible for assistance or have closed files. Hence, to reemphasize the point, the actual impact of the UNHCR aid is minimal in securing daily existence for the majority of recognized refugees.

Faith-Based Institutions and NGOs

Assistance from faith-based institutions is accessed by all refugee groups, with the majority benefiting from some food, clothing and financial aid (Table 13 and 14). In emergency situations, churches offer loans or additional financial aid. For example, a mother (closed file) whose 9-year-old daughter is diabetic receives LE 90 a month from the Sacred Heart Church and LE 100 from Caritas in order to buy medicines for her child. Very few of our respondents (only 5) attended the educational programs (i.e. computer classes or English classes) offered by churches. In addition to faith-based institutions, there are a number of local NGOs and community-based organizations, including those run by refugees, providing services for refugees, some of which are exclusively run by and limited to Sudanese. These usually include awareness raising training, educational and vocational training activities, and counselling. Among the respondents, most were aware of these groups, however, only a fraction used their services. The main reasons mentioned were lack of time, the need to earn a living, lack of money for transport or lack of interest. A couple attended short courses and community interpreters training run by FMRS at AUC.[44]

As the gap between needs and resources has widened in the past years, and with the UNHCR not being able to adequately address it, other institutions have stepped in to assist the vulnerable populations. In this respect, church groups have played a major role, with their programs expanding over the past years. Their services benefit foremost Sudanese refugees, and in the majority of cases only Christians.[45] In isolated cases, refugees reported that in order to be eligible for assistance from some of the faith-based institutions, they would need to convert or prove that they regularly attended a given church. These comments were based on either their experiences or on rumors heard from friends and neighbors. While sometimes belief might be a deciding criterion whether someone is granted assistance by a faith-based institution, the legal status is usually not

[44] Since 2003, the Cairo Community Interpreters Project at FMRS has been running courses for refugee community interpreters. For further information visit www.aucegypt.edu/fmrs.
[45] In fact, some of the churches, e.g. the Sacred Heart Church (commonly known as Sakakini) have branches in Sudan, which sometimes support the flight of refugees.

an issue. Thus, both recognized and rejected refugees have access to the limited services available.

As noted, the main assistance provided by churches includes the distribution of food and clothes[46] as well as education (primary and secondary as well as literacy and English classes) and vocational training (mainly computers).[47] Regular monthly financial assistance is only provided by the Coptic Church in Arba W Nuss, which assists around 600 Sudanese families in addition to Egyptians Copts from the area. Some of our respondents, both Sudanese and Egyptians, reported that the church assisted them with finding housing, paying rent, and acquiring basic furniture.

Most of the churches operating in Cairo have to a certain extent coordinated their assistance and specialized in certain activities, which together make a vital contribution to the survival of Sudanese refugees (Sperl 2001). Mosques, on the other hand, do not usually provide assistance specifically targeting refugees. Refugees, however, are sometimes included as beneficiaries of the charitable mission of mosques, through food and clothes distribution, literacy classes, and low-cost Islamic clinics. The same services were used by poor Egyptian respondents. Mosques do not have such well-established programs as churches and, as a result, Sudanese Muslims are more limited in accessing aid. Only a few of the faith-based places, St. Andrew's Church being the prime example, serve all refugee groups (nationality as well as confessional groups). Muslims constitute 60 percent of its beneficiaries.

In comparison, the southern Sudanese population in Alexandria relies to a much larger extent on the assistance received from churches. Some[48] run regular food distributions (usually sugar, beans, lentils, flour, oil and rice) once or twice a month. Occasionally, they also give out clothing and other necessary utensils. In addition, each of the Sudanese families affiliated with the Sacred Heart Church is provided with a LE 20 card, which can be used in a nearby grocery shop to purchase food items. As previously discussed, churches pay some of the school fees and educational expenses.

In general, refugees manage to access a variety of assistance sources, sometimes using both churches and mosques. Among our respondents, about forty percent (103) received some kind of assistance from a faith-based institution, with all of the Sudanese respondents based in Alexandria benefiting from the assistance provided by churches (Table 13). Although some of the faith-based institutions require that the recipients are established members,[49] refugees find ways of accessing a number of places and they move around the town in order to augment their resources.

[46] Distribution of food and clothes is offered by the All Saints' Cathedral, Sakakini in Abbassiya, Arba W Nuss and in Alexandria, Margirgis church in Heliopolis, and the Coptic Church in Arba W Nuss.
[47] English classes, computers and some handicraft workshops are provided by St. Andrew's Church, All Saints' Cathedral, and Sacred Heart Church in Abbasiya.
[48] Most of the churches assisting Sudanese in Alexandria are catholic, protestant, or evangelical. The most common include Sacred Heart Church, St. Catherine's Church, St. Mark's Anglican Church, and St. Jenati Church.
[49] The Coptic Church in Arba w Nuss provides assistance to registered members and the Margirgis Church in Heliopolis only assists those who have been attending its services for several weeks.

A 35-year old Dinka mother of five children with a closed file does not work. She is busy securing assistance from a variety of institutions during the week. Every Friday evening, she goes to the Coptic Church in Hadayek Al-Zeytoun where she receives some food items (kilo of lentils, rice, sugar and oil). Every fortnight, she also gets a LE 5 donation from the church. Every Saturday morning, she receives LE 5 from a Coptic Church in Ain Shams and every two months she goes to Ambarawes Church in Abbassiya, where she gets LE 10. In addition, every month she receives clothes from the Margirgis Church in Heliopolis and food items every two weeks (lentils, white beans, rice, oil and sugar). Several of her Dinka friends use the same method. Some have even received jobs through the Margirgis Church in Heliopolis.

Table 13
Assistance received by refugees from churches/mosques

Does the respondent receive any assistance from churches/mosques	ADDRESS		Total
	Alexandria	Cairo	
Yes	24	79	103
No	18	143	161
Total	42	222	264

Table 14

Financial assistance received according to status

Count

		Did you receive money		Total
		Yes	No	
Status	CLOSED	24	58	82
	NER	35	6	41
	APPEAL	2	2	4
	DURSOL	6	1	7
Total		67	67	134

Table 15

Food received according to status

Count

		Did you receive food		Total
		Yes	No	
Status	CLOSED	45	37	82
	NER	11	29	40
	APPEAL	3	1	4
	DURSOL	2	5	7
Total		61	72	133

Family and Community Assistance

With the limited external assistance available, the main strategy for survival for Sudanese refugees is to pool resources within the family network or the wider community. Traditions and strong connections to their communities allow Sudanese to access informal assistance both on an *ad hoc* as well as a more organized basis. The majority of the respondents claimed that they borrow money from their family and relatives, sometimes friends or tribe members (a common practice among the Dinka group), in order to meet their daily needs. In addition, assistance is not only provided in material terms. Sudanese take care of each other's children, especially in families where the mothers work. While securing an adequate amount of food might be sometimes difficult, particularly for those who do not have access to income, other members of the household pool resources, divide duties of preparing meals, and share with those who cannot afford to eat. Another interesting pattern of mutual support was practiced by one of the

households of single women. A group of relatively young women living together used to prepare food for another household of single men, who did not have jobs and could not contribute to the budget. As compensation, the men provided the single women with protection and assistance. Women living by themselves do not have the trust of the community and are looked down at as immoral. The men act as their guardians, pretending to be their brothers or cousins.

In some communities, a system of rotating credit has been established, whereby each member contributes LE 5 per month to the common budget. In case of emergency, such as death, sickness, eviction from a flat, marriage, divorce, or financial difficulty, the money is given by the chiefs to those in need. Such a system exists among several groups, including the Bari community. One of our respondents was a member of the Achueng women's group, where eight women contribute LE 50 at the beginning of the month and each month the total of LE 400 is given to one of the women in the group. In case any of the women is in need of money during the month can borrow it from one of the members of the lending group.

Another example of a community-based support system is the Sudanese Association in Sitta October, which was set up by a group of Sudanese living there. It relies on the contributions of its members as well as on money sent from rich Sudanese business people. It provides assistance to all Sudanese, regardless of their status. Currently, it provides several flats to those who cannot afford to pay rent. Also, the Association offers computer and language classes and has plans to develop income-generating projects for the Sudanese community in Sitta October.

In some instances political parties provide financial or in-kind assistance to their members. Some pay for accommodation, others support families in sending children of their members to school. One of our respondents, from the Bani Ameer tribe, Khatmya Sufi group, used to work with Mohamed Osman El-Merghani (Unionist Democratic Party of Sudan and former President of Sudan) back in Sudan. Together with his family, El-Merghani fled to Egypt in the beginning of the 1990s and rented several villas, including one in Misr El-Gedida. When our respondent came to Cairo, he contacted El-Merghani and started working in his house. El-Merghani covers the educational costs of the respondent's daughter and the family's medical care. He also is said to employ a number of refugees in his houses.

Assistance as a Coping Strategy

The impact of the system of support available to recognized refugees and rejected asylum seekers should not be overestimated and it cannot be construed as creating dependency. In most cases, it is the informal, community and family support network that most influences daily existence. As can be seen from the case of Sudanese refugees in Egypt and other protracted refugee situations, the talk of refugees becoming self-reliant ignores whether they in fact have the right to do so (World Refugee Survey 2004:52). Refugee dependency is directly linked to and results from the policies of host governments limiting freedom to move or engage in economic activity. By denying or restricting refugee rights in a host society, a standard of living beyond one of subsistence cannot be achieved without external sources of support. The case of Egypt testifies to this statement. In general, however, the policy of UNHCR on urban refugees does not pay

sufficient attention to the obstructive policies of host governments, which lead to the economic and social exclusion of refugees. There is a need to revise existing UNHCR practices based on the evaluations carried out in several of the urban settings (UNHCR Working Papers series) in order to avoid further marginalization and impoverishment of urban refugees.

On the other side of the equation, the impact on the host society of the assistance provided to refugees should not be forgotten. Although, as shown above, official assistance is minimal and does not constitute the core of refugees' livelihoods, the existence of assistance programs only for refugees can be dangerous. The perception of the host society (as well as the propaganda used by the government) promotes the idea that refugees are privileged. Often, the government uses the marginalized refugee population as a scapegoat to blame the economic degradation and worsening living conditions in the country. Hence, language used in derogative articles that appear in the press (especially targeted against black foreigners), results in growing tensions between the host and the refugee communities. Aid agencies and service providers should be channeling their assistance to both local and refugee populations through implementing joint projects. Only such an approach can minimize the marginalization and social exclusion of refugee communities. Further discussion of these issues will be provided in the section on integration of refugees.

Living Conditions and Choice of Residence

> *"Suffering in your own country is even harder than suffering in a country that is not yours. When you are a foreigner you can always say I can or would like to go back to my country. But when you cannot do that there is no hope." 23-year old Northern Sudanese single woman with a closed file.*

Urban refugees often complain about the lack of housing and high rents they have to pay. At the same time, the option of putting refugees in closed settlements or camps have been criticized by many activists, policy-makers, and scholars. More than a half (7 million) of the 12 million refugees is today housed in refugee camps or in segregated settlements, in some cases having spent more than 10 years there. As Merrill Smith (2004) argues "Refugee warehousing has emerged as a de facto *fourth* and all-too-durable solution" to the refugee problem (World Refugee Survey 2004). There is no doubt that "warehousing not only wastes the economic and creative energies of refugees, but 'relief economy' that supports it also distorts local economies," states Smith (World Refugee Survey 2004:40). In addition, segregation tends to enhance tensions between the refugee and the host populations and drives the already alienated refugees into deeper seclusion. While their lives go by and they remain confined to their camps, refugees become spectators rather than active decision-makers of their own destiny (WRS 2004). Thus, self-settlement and living within the broader parameters of a host society would seem to be a good alternative, enabling refugees to maintain their dignity and creativity. However, among our respondents many often talked about the need to be put into camps, where they can be taken care of. In Egypt, there are no designated settlements but rather refugees live freely among the host population, usually in one of the main urban centers, Cairo or Alexandria. The high costs of living and limited possibilities of making money and

receiving assistance are the main reasons behind refugees' ostensible desire to be 'warehoused.'

As noted, the findings show no difference in terms of living conditions between those refugees who are rejected and those with refugee statues. In fact, very often the two groups live together, sharing resources and minimizing both their insecurity and costs of living.

Housing in Egypt

Area of Residence

Depending on where they have relatives and friends refugees usually make their way to Cairo, and in some cases Alexandria, upon their arrival in Egypt . A number of southern Sudanese respondents who came to Egypt using the support of the church stay in the compound of the Sacred Heart Church in Abbasiya (Sakakini) until they find alternative housing.

While choosing appropriate accommodation, refugees take into consideration the safety of the area, presence of other Sudanese (preferably from their ethnic background or friends and relatives), services available (such as proximity of churches that provide assistance and security to refugees), and rent. Traditionally, in Cairo, the Ain Shams area has been a host to a large number of Sudanese, including those who have been residing here for generations. Many Sudanese refugees choose this area as it is easier to be 'invisible' among the larger Sudanese migrant population that has been established for a long time. Moreover, the presence of Sudanese clubs and tribal associations provide a social network of support for the community. On the other hand, areas such as Nasr City and Sitta October in the outskirts of Cairo offer work opportunities in factories and construction and, hence, attract large number of Sudanese. A spontaneous settlement on the edge of Cairo's urban zone Arba W Nuss, has in the last ten years become a major destination for Egyptian migrants as well as Sudanese refugees. The presence of the St. Bakhita center (linked to the church), its primary school and literacy program for Sudanese, the assistance offered through the Coptic Church, and affordable rent serve as pull factors mainly attracting large families or those who do not receive any financial assistance from abroad. Many families choose to go to Alexandria because of the relatively easy access to education for their children as well as lower rents. The three main areas of residence there for the Southern Sudanese are Sidi Bishr, Manshiya, and Abrahimia, which are near churches offering assistance and services to refugees. Sudanese coming from other parts of the country tend to be more scattered both across Cairo as well as Alexandria (for further details see above Tables 3 and 4).

Rent

As foreigners, Sudanese tend to pay significantly higher rents than locals. In general, many of Egyptians tenants pay much lower rents as a result of their long-residence and rent regulations Almost all of our respondents live in rented apartments, both furnished and unfurnished. The majority of the respondents (113) paid between LE 300 and 500 per month, while 15 out of our informants had to spend between LE 600 and 800 per month (Table 16). In the cheapest residential area, Arba W Nuss, most of the refugees paid

between LE 50 and 250 per month for a small unfurnished cement room, sometimes without windows, in a compound of 10 other rooms with a shared latrine and cooking space. In contrast, Egyptian respondents in the Arba W Nuss paid between LE 50 and LE 100 per month for similar accommodations.

Although it has been argued that housing is much cheaper in Alexandria, offering a better quality of life, the findings of the study show that, in fact, rents tend to fluctuate. More often, they depend on the season and on the area of residence, reaching high levels in the summer. Sudanese are often forced to move out for a few months as the landlords wish to accommodate summer vacationers from Cairo and abroad.

Table 16

Rent paid for accommodation according to the area (LE)

Rent per month in L.E.	ADDRESS		
	Alexandria	Cairo	Total
0	2	11	13
1-100	2	13	15
101-200	5	25	30
201-300	14	24	38
301-400	15	47	62
401-500	3	48	51
501-600		29	29
>600		15	15
Total	41	212	253

Despite the creative approaches to minimizing expenses relating to housing and the use of a variety of coping strategies to address housing needs within tight budgets, rent constitutes the highest share of the Sudanese refugees' overall living costs. The contribution to rent among our respondents usually ranged between LE 100 and 400 per month (144 respondents, 53.2 percent of all households; see Table 16 for details), constituting over 60 percent of the total monthly budget.

Changing Accommodation

Refugees constitute a highly mobile population. Forty-four percent (118 persons) of our respondents have moved between one and two times since their arrival (which is typical of those respondents living in Alexandria, where 64 percent have moved at least once), with another 58 percent having changed flats at least three times. Some single refugees claimed to have lived in more than 20 places (Table17).

> *A03, a young single man, closed file, from the Al Hasania tribe in White Nile State, came to Egypt in 2000. During his stay in Cairo he has lived in many different flats, most of them in Ain Shams district. He first lived in Abdeen in a two-bedroom flat with more then 10 flat mates. He stayed there one month without paying rent (total rent was LE 800) as he had no money. After that, he left to another flat in Ain Shams, where he stayed*

with eight relatives in a two-bedroom flat for four months. The rent was LE 400, however, he also did not contribute to the housing expenses. Due to bad sanitary conditions of the flat they moved to a new place in Roxy in Misr-El-Gedida. It was rented by their relative a long time ago, who had traveled to the US but continued to pay the rent. There were 23 relatives sharing two-bedroom flat. As it was too congested, AO3 left the flat after two months and moved to another place in Ain Shams, which he shared with eight relatives (the rent was LE 450, including electricity and water). A year later, some of his flat mates migrated to the West and others moved to another flat. He got a job in Abdeen and lived in his workplace for nine months for free. When he left his job, he returned to Ain Shams to live in a two-bedroom flat with nine of his relatives (rent LE 350).

High rents as well as quarrels with neighbors and landlords often cause Sudanese refugees to move. Often they are evicted from their flats for failing to pay the rent. A single mother of five children together with a friend of hers and her three children were evicted for not having paid the rent for three months. The landlord told them to move out, without giving them enough time to find alternative accommodation. The women had nowhere to go and decided to spend a night in front of UNHCR's office.

Table 17
Changing accommodation

Number of times respondent has moved	ADDRESS		Total
	Alexandria	Cairo	
Did not move once	2	32	34
1-2 times	27	91	118
2-3 times	8	50	58
4-5 times	3	32	35
More than 5 times	2	19	21
Total	42	224	266

Housing Conditions

Refugees in Egypt usually occupy poorly furnished flats located in shabby neighborhoods. Nevertheless, most of them have access to basic utilities such as running water, a telephone, and kitchen equipment, including refrigerators. Usually the flats are far too small for the number of occupants, many sharing the same beds or the floor without any bedding.

Over half of the respondents claimed that the standard of living in Egypt in comparison to their living conditions in Sudan is higher because of access to basic utilities, such as telephone and TV. Those who used to live in displaced camps around Khartoum certainly enjoy better housing in Cairo. For those coming from rural areas, an urban living experience in Cairo is at first shocking, requiring both psychological and practical adjustment. Those who previously lived in Khartoum see the living conditions in Cairo as lower. However, when asked about their first impression of their living situation in Egypt, Sudanese immediately refer to their feeling of "being detained and constrained within their own apartments" due to insecurity and the need to share small spaces with a

large number of people who are often strangers. When referring to their housing in Sudan, refugees talk about their feeling of freedom to move around and living with family members.

Coping Strategies

Sharing

In order to pay high rents, Sudanese share accommodation with other refugees. Sharing is usually based on kinship, tribal affiliation, or friendship. Sudanese tend to dispose of their revenue in accordance with customary codes of conduct (Sperl 2001). Although it is very uncommon among Sudanese refugees or refugees in general to share living space with other nationalities, in a few cases respondents shared accommodations with Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees (a single-women household) or with Upper Egyptian single men (single-men households).

> *A31, a single young man from Khartoum, shares a flat of two rooms with Sudanese and Upper Egyptians. The Upper Egyptians live in one room and eight of the Sudanese occupy a space that previously used to be a kitchen. They share a small bathroom and a toilet, with no other amenities. The narrow dirty hall is used by one of the Upper Egyptians as a 'cooking-working space,' where he prepares fuul that is later sold on the street. The relationship between the Upper Egyptians and Sudanese is friendly and they treat each other with respect. Like the Sudanese, Upper Egyptians consider themselves foreigners in Cairo.*

Sharing accommodation leads to overcrowding, with limited space being occupied by multiple families, relatives, or groups of friends (see Table 5 above). An average household consisted of 4.7 persons, with just over half of the households consisting of five to ten persons. Fourteen households were made up of 10 or more persons (Table 18) that were predominantly occupied by groups of single men, with asylum seekers, recognized and some rejected refugees living together. The density per room is usually very high, with an extreme case of seventeen persons sharing three rooms (Table 19). As Sudanese hospitality requires one to provide housing for visitors, in addition to the members of the household, there are usually a number of visitors who stay for short periods of time. One of the most extreme examples of an overcrowded household was a three-room flat which accommodated 23 people who had been evicted from their previous apartment.

Those working or receiving remittances usually contribute to the household expenses while others contribute 'in kind' by doing shopping, cooking, and taking care of the housework. As one of the respondents commented, *"Our relations in the flat are friendly because we are from the same country and see each other as brothers and sisters, and want to help each other because it could happen to everyone of us. If you do not help someone today, tomorrow you will not be able to find someone else to help you."*

As a result of overcrowded housing arrangements (Table 19) with multi-member families sharing one room, poor ventilation spreads diseases, including tuberculosis (TB). In some

cases, overcrowding leads to conflicts between members of the household, which sometimes results in one being forced to move.

Table 18

Total number of people in household

	Frequency	Percent
1	9	3.3
2	26	9.7
3	42	15.6
4	39	14.5
5	43	16.0
6	37	13.8
7	28	10.4
8	15	5.6
9	11	4.1
10	7	2.6
11	4	1.5
12	2	.7
17	1	.4
No answer	5	1.9
Total	269	100.0

Table 19

Number of rooms versus total number of people in household

Number of people in a household	Number of rooms					Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	
1	6	1	1			8
2	5	11	8	2		26
3	7	19	13	1		40
4	6	17	15			38
5	2	18	19	2	1	42
6	4	9	17	6		36
7		5	19	3		27
8	3	2	7	3		15
9	1	2	6	2		11
10		3	4			7
11			2	1	1	4
12	1					1
17			1			1
Total	35	87	112	20	2	256

Long-term 'Guests'

Another common strategy of minimizing costs of living is by 'visiting' different flats and staying there as a guest without paying any rent. Among our respondents, 39 (14.5 percent) did not pay any contribution towards the rent expenses (Table 20). An example of this strategy is the story of A14, a single young man from Managel in central Sudan.

Since his arrival in 2000 he has lived in more than 20 flats as he has had no money to rent a place by himself. The household members usually offer him food and money for transport and help him to find other temporary accommodation. In exchange, he cooks for them and does house work.

Living in the Place of Work

Another common strategy to minimize housing costs is staying in the place of work. Many single men, recognized refugees, find work in Sinai where they are hired to work in restaurants or hotels in exchange for accommodation and food in addition to small salaries. Among our respondents there were a few extreme examples of Sudanese refugees with closed files living on construction sites, with no access to sanitary facilities. They lived in unfinished spaces and slept on cement floors, without any proper shelter. They were allowed to stay there for free in exchange for work. Some were so embarrassed about their living conditions that they did not want to allow researchers to visit their places, and instead preferred to be interviewed in a *qahwa* (coffee) shop. Comparatively, women often work as *mobeet*, i.e. live-in maids, and go back home once a week.[50]

Table 20

Housing expenses per month in LE

	Frequency	Percent
0	39	14.5
1-100	46	17.1
101-200	69	25.7
201-300	44	16.4
301-400	31	11.5
401-500	15	5.6
501-600	8	3.0
601-700	4	1.5
701-800	3	1.1
>800	1	.4
No answer	9	3.3
Total	269	100.0

Church Hostels, Free Housing, and Separated Families

A few of our respondents in Alexandria stayed free of charge at the St. Catherine's Hostel, which provides housing for single southern Sudanese men. In the past, the hostel used to accommodate southern Sudanese students who came to Egypt on scholarships to pursue their education in Egyptian universities. The church covers the utility costs and residents only have to pay for food. In other cases, churches often contribute or fully pay the rent when families are not able to afford it (some of the respondents benefited from the support of the Orthodox church in Arba W Nuss or the Sacred Heart church in Alexandria).

[50] The situation of domestic workers among refugees in Egypt has been described by Amira Ahmed (2003).

Some refugees benefit from their party connections, which can assist them on emergency basis. A few of our respondents lived together with a group of Sudanese students and party members in a flat, rented and paid for by the Umma party. Often families are forced to live separately, with husbands sharing accommodation with other single men and wives living either with their parents or with other single women.

Refugees as an Economic Burden or Asset?

Refugees are often perceived as having a negative impact on the host society both in terms of draining resources as well as contributing to social instability. This view of refugees as a 'burden' overlooks the role of the host government's policies in perpetuating this image by its failure to remove obstacles to formal employment and its disregard for the contributions refugees make to the host economy. As argued by Kibreab (1996), "It is only when refugees are allowed to participate in the economic and social life of the host communities that they can make contributions to the economic and social development of the host country. It is only through such a process of mutual development that stereotypes and xenophobic sentiments can give way to knowledge and to understanding" (Kibreab 1996:170).

Although excluded and marginalized from access to the official economy, both recognized refugees and those with illegal status nevertheless contribute significantly to the local economy. They bring financial and human capital into the country, are active consumers from the moment of arrival, and provide a cheap yet productive source of labor.

Savings from Sudan

Upon arrival in Egypt, most of our interviewees brought savings to help them get started. Respondents, who had previously worked in the Gulf or in Libya, brought substantial amounts of savings. Those who could have sold their properties and valuables in order to be able to afford migration to the West. More than 60 percent (168 out of 269) of our respondents reported that they brought money with them. On average, refugees brought between $400 and $500. They used the money to support themselves upon their arrival, paying rent, food, and transportation expenses. In the majority of the cases, those who brought substantial amounts of money, at the beginning did not engage in paid-employment as they hoped that their cases would be processed quickly through UNHCR and they would shortly be on their way to a country in the West. The total savings declared by our respondents brought into Egypt amounted to over $75,000. All of it was spent on living expenses in Egypt and, thus, constituted a direct inflow of financial capital into the Egyptian economy.

The majority of the southern Sudanese who came to Egypt via displaced camps in Khartoum brought little savings, as their economic resources back home were meager. Some had to borrow money from their relatives or friends, and in a few cases received financial assistance from churches.

Work and Salaries

With the limited amount of official assistance available, Sudanese refugees are forced to engage in income-generating activities. Almost three-fourths (179 respondents) were involved in some type of work, usually in informal sector. It is interesting to observe that almost all of our rejected respondents were working, whereas fifty percent of those recognized were not economically active (Table 21). Two factors provide an explanation of this situation. First, those refugees who have been under the category of NER or DURSOL arrived relatively recently, in the last two years, and might still have some financial resources brought from Sudan or receive remittances from their resettled relatives and friends. The second reason might be the fact that their recognition heightened their hopes of being resettled in the West. Being unable to find jobs that match their qualifications and pay adequately, recognized refugees are less willing to work in low-skilled jobs in Egypt.

Table 21

Employment

Status of the respondent	Does respondent work		
	Yes	No	Total
CLOSED	135	47	182
NER	32	33	65
APPEAL	7	2	9
DURSOL	5	6	11
Total	179	88	267

It is interesting to compare the relatively high number of working Sudanese refugees to Somali refugees, who in the most cases rely on remittances and assistance. Only a relatively small number are engaged in paid-employment (Al Sharmani 2003). Additionally, while Somalis tend to work within their own community, Sudanese work mainly with Egyptians or foreigners. For Sudanese, the average salary per month reported ranged between LE 250-350 for men, and between LE 400-600 for women (Table 24 provides the breakdown of salaries per sector). As noted, the majority of the work available is in low-skilled jobs, such as domestic service, which is easier for women to access than men. Domestic work is also relatively better paying (on average between LE 450 to over LE 800). As a result, the majority of the women we interviewed were the major income earners and breadwinners. Domestic work is usually found through Sudanese friends or churches.[51] Some women respondents worked as cleaners in the churches or in pastors' homes.

Most jobs for men are also in low-skill sectors. Work that is more accessible and preferred by men centers on small businesses, usually street vending. Forty-four of our respondents were engaged in this activity. Others worked as day laborers, construction workers, or in factories in Sitta October, Nasr City, or Ain Shams, where most employees are Sudanese refugees (they usually earn between LE 10-20 per day). Some worked as security guards, office cleaners, teachers in refugee schools, or office assistants (see

[51] Refuge Egypt at All Saints Cathedral runs domestic cleaning courses and offers job placements; Margirgis Church in Heliopolis offers job placement services.

Table 22 for further details). A few worked as drivers, either for embassy staff (one respondent was a 'casual' driver working for a diplomat from the Kenyan embassy) or affluent Egyptians. One-fifth of the respondents earned between LE 201-300 per month, usually working as day laborers, office attendants, or factory workers. Another one-fourth earned between LE 301-400, and less than five percent (11 respondents in jobs such as private drivers, tourism or business) were paid more than LE 800 (Table 25). In order to assist families and contribute to the household income, children often have to drop out of school and work. A few children as young as 12-years-old had to work as domestic cleaners or nannies for Egyptian families.

Several highly educated refugees were able to practice their professions. An economist with a PhD (closed file) worked as a consultant for Egyptian companies. However, after 1995 his job prospects diminished and he began doing freelance translation work, being paid LE 5 per page. Recently, he left for the Gulf in order to search for better job opportunities. A southern Sudanese doctor living in Alexandria managed to practice his profession. He worked voluntarily in one of the private clinics belonging to an Egyptian professor who taught him at the university. He received LE 50 per day, working three days per week. He commented *"Even if this is little money, I am happy because I am practicing my profession."* Recently, he started working in a newly opened clinic at the Saint Mark Church where he earns LE 400 per month.

Table 22

Type of employment of respondents

		Frequency	Percent
	Handcraft	6	3.4
	Selling	44	24.6
	Domestic Cleaner	49	27.4
	Catering	4	2.2
	Construction	4	2.2
	Factory	12	6.7
	Teaching	4	2.2
	Translation	4	2.2
	Tourism	2	1.1
	Office	10	5.6
	Cleaning	9	5.0
	Driver	2	1.1
	Tailor	1	.6
	Consult	1	.6
	Technician	1	.6
	Hair dresser	2	1.1
	Other	22	12.3
	Total	177	98.9
	No answer	2	1.1
Total		179	100.0

Another professionally active respondent, a western Sudanese woman with 'non-eligible for resettlement' status, worked as a singer in Sudan. After she had moved to Egypt, she set up a band and started performing at weddings and parties. She is very popular with

both Egyptians and Sudanese. The six-member band receives between LE 1,200 and 1,500 per performance.

Some of the refugees gained qualifications in computers and opened up their own businesses where they run computer courses for a fee. Their clients are other Sudanese or Egyptians. Another respondent learned how to fix TVs and electronic equipment and opened up a shop in Ain Shams. During the 2003 African football games, an unemployed father and member of the Southern Sudanese Students Association in Alexandria opened up a tea business, where a large number of Sudanese used to gather to watch the games. He was earning between LE 20-30 per day. A relatively ad hoc yet profitable means of self-employment is filling out applications for resettlement for the Australian embassy or the US lottery for a fee. Occasionally, Sudanese refugees get work that requires knowledge of a foreign language. Four of our respondents worked as translators, either for embassies, newspapers, or organizations assisting refugees (International Organization for Migration). Women often engage in their own businesses, such as embroidery, henna, hair plating or Aragi brewing (Curley 2004).[52]

Table 23

Earning per month in LE

		Frequency	Percent
	0-200	14	7.8
	201-300	38	21.2
	301-400	43	24.0
	401-500	36	20.1
	501-600	14	7.8
	601-700	7	3.9
	701-800	9	5.0
	800+	11	6.1
	No answer	7	3.9
Total		179	100.0

Due to the low-salaried employment, some of our respondents had to have more than one job. Women often engaged in additional income-generating activities, such as sewing and knitting traditional Sudanese table cloths and bed sheets, which were usually sold to those traveling to the West.

In comparison, the work situation of Egyptian respondents in Arba W Nuss was similar. Out of 10 informants, eight had some type of employment in informal sector. The low-skilled jobs performed by poor Egyptians (street vending, shoe polishing, domestic work, day labor) paid slightly better than those of Sudanese refugees in comparable jobs

[52] The most profitable type of work found among our interviewees was selling passports and canceling entry stamps to Egypt on refugees' documents. Their clients were interested in either re-applying to UNHCR or who wanted to go back to Sudan while their process at UNHCR was still ongoing.

(average salary between LE 255-500). The only profession in which Egyptians were paid less was domestic work (LE 500 for month).

Table 24

Salaries according to jobs

Type of work	Earnings per month L.E.								Total
	0-200	201-300	301-400	401-500	501-600	601-700	701-800	800+	
Handcraft		2		1	2				5
Selling	3	8	13	8	4	1	2	5	44
Domestic Cleaner	3	9	10	13	6	3	3	2	49
Catering	1	1	1				1		4
Construction		1	2				1		4
Factory	1	3	5	1	1			1	12
Teaching	1	1	1	1					4
Translation			1	2					3
Tourism				1				1	2
Office		5	3	2					10
Cleaning	1	3	2	2			1		9
Driver						1	1		2
Tailor				1					1
Consultant						1			1
Technician				1					1
Hair dresser			1					1	2
Other	4	5	4	3	1	1		1	19
Total	14	38	43	36	14	7	9	11	172

Table 25

General income per household according to status

Income of those working in the household	Status				Total
	CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	
0	28	23	2	3	56
1-300	27	12	3	2	44
301-600	65	20	2	6	93
601-900	28	7	1		36
901-1500	20	2	1		23
>1500	4				4
Total	172	64	9	11	256

Impact of job market on gender roles

The experience of exile has upset the traditional structure of Sudanese households and the community at large, with the reversal of power relations and gender dominance.

> *"I see myself as a dead man, no longer useful to my family or society. I wish I could be given a chance where I can become useful again." Dinka father of five children, closed file.*

A large number of men, especially those married or highly educated, argued that they preferred to stay at home instead of engaging in exploitative and low-paying jobs, some

of which paid only LE 150 per month. Thus, the job market for Sudanese refugees in Egypt has had a significant impact on traditional Sudanese family roles. In Sudan, most of the women stayed at home and took care of children, whereas in exile they become the primary bread-winners for the household, exercising control over the family's budget. Men, on the other hand, who remain at home have to take up the housekeeping and child-care tasks traditionally performed by women. This situation has severe consequences on men's psychological well being and self-esteem. All men respondents expressed their frustration and dissatisfaction. They feel that they have lost their position both in the community and in the family. Some complained that they are tired of being house husbands, and taking care of children is not easy for them. One father stated: *"They [children] don't remain quiet, they always run and move around, demanding and asking for things. I always have a headache because of them. I can only get some rest when their mother comes back from work and I can go out to see my friends in the southern Sudanese club, to chat with them, breathe fresh air and drink tea."* [53]

Men experience feelings of uselessness as they feel dependent on their wives both economically and socially. *"Look at me, I have to run after errands at home. I always smell of children's urine, and my head is exploding because of their screams. I feel powerless. Even the children do not respect me."* Men often resort to drugs and alcohol as ways of coping with the transformation of social relations in the household and the loss of personal self-esteem (Curley 2004). One of the men (whose wife had left him and moved to her uncle's house after they had not been referred for resettlement) commented: *"My wife used to work and pay rent and all the other needs. When she left, I was by myself, with no income. I had to move to my brother's house and share with them their accommodation and food. I sometimes feel ashamed even among my own family about my inability to help."* It was later revealed by this wife that her decision to move out was due to the fact that her husband used to beat her. After sometime, she returned to her husband, warning him that if he continued to mistreat her and her child she would leave him and return to Sudan.

The role reversal at home and the economic independence gained by wives have contributed to the emancipation and empowerment of women. They have asserted their roles both in relation to their husbands as well as to the community at large. Through controlling the money, women can exercise their power and negotiate their rights, for example in deciding on the frequency of sexual intercourse (Lejukole 2002). Economic independence of women enables them to take decisions about themselves and their children, often by standing up for their rights against harassment and mistreatment by their husbands. This puts men in a vulnerable position where they are afraid of responding aggressively. In general, married men complained about their wives disrespecting them and "misbehaving." However, at the same time, women do not consider the newly gained independence as advantageous. Some women complained about the hard work they had to carry out in order to support their families, the consequences of staying away from children and the inability to perform their traditional housekeeping child-caring roles. One southern Sudanese mother recounted, *"My work creates psychological problems for my children as I stay away from home. They become*

[53] Some of our women respondents complained that they had to quit their domestic work as a *'mobeet'* (live-in maids) because their husbands were unable to take care of the children and were mistreating them.

closer to their father and now love him more than they love me. In Sudan I wasn't working even in the public offices, I had never experienced working in other people's houses. Here, I have to put up with abuse and quarrels from women who are, like me, mothers or sometimes younger than my daughters."

Work Conditions

> *"If you don't like to work, you can leave and we can get another Sudanese, they are many around looking for work, so you choose either to quit or to continue working with the same pay." Egyptian employer's response to the request for increase in pay.*

Being employed illegally makes refugees vulnerable to abuse at work. The high rates of unemployment or under-employment in Egypt and the wide availability of cheap labor has meant that Sudanese must be willing to accept poor treatment and harsh conditions. Respondents complained of long-working hours — sometimes between 10 and 12 hours a day — with a few having to work up to 16 hours a day. Sudanese men are often preferred by employers looking for day laborers as they are paid less and work harder. On average, a Sudanese day laborer earns between LE 8-10 per day, whereas an Egyptian gets between LE 12-15. Often the amount of payment depends on whether the day laborer is a 'master' (i.e. has a box of tools) or is a regular low-level employee — the latter receives a lower payment. In addition, work is mostly done in dangerous and harsh conditions with no access to toilet facilities in factories or at construction sites. Verbal and physical abuse from employers and other co-workers often causes psychological and physical health problems.

Women, particularly young girls, working as domestic cleaners and nannies for Egyptian families complain about the mistreatment and verbal abuse. Often they are shouted at, being told: "*We know that you Sudanese are very lazy people. I made a mistake to employ a Sudanese*." In many cases they are not allowed to use bathroom facilities or drink water from cups. Some are only given leftovers to eat. Sometimes, employers do not pay them salaries for several months and when they do they give them reduced amounts. When an employee wants to leave work she is often accused of stealing valuables and not given any last payment. Sudanese employees are too afraid to report mistreatment to the police due to the lack of their legal status. However, they have come up with creative strategies to protect against such treatment. One of the domestic cleaners in Alexandria, a recognized refugee, reported that she usually does not tell the employer of her intention to leave. Once she receives her payment, she simply does not show up to work on the next day. She also suggested to other women not to give their address or phone number to the employer, so they are unable to find them. In this way, she avoids harassment.[54]

As a result of poor working conditions, maltreatment by employers and co-workers, low salaries, and lack of secure employment, Sudanese refugees tend to change their work quite often, either by choice or because they are laid off, exacerbating both financial and emotional instability of the Sudanese.

[54] Previous studies confirm the treatment of Sudanese and domestic workers in general (Ahmed 2003; SUDIA 2003).

Although 90 of our respondents were not working, it is interesting to note that, if all household earned income was added to the household budget, only 56 of interviewed households claimed they didn't have access to earned income (Table 23). Presumably, they either relied on assistance, remittances, or social networks of support.

Remittances

As noted, the major support network — relatives and friends abroad — contributes significantly to the inflow of hard currency into the Egyptian economy. With the Sudanese diaspora growing in the Gulf, Europe, North America, and Australia, the flow of capital has become easier. A good number of the respondents relied completely on the financial assistance received from relatives and friends from abroad (including from Sudan). Among those who did not earn any income (90 respondents), almost half (40) lived exclusively on remittances. A total of 94 households (recognized refugees and those with closed files) admitted receiving remittances from abroad (Table 26). The money is usually transferred through Western Union offices and, in a few cases, refugees use Thomas Cook or Norta wire-transfer services. Evidence of how important Sudanese are as clients of the money transfer business in Egypt is the number of newly opened Western Union offices, which are located in places frequented by Sudanese, mainly in front of churches and in the main Sudanese residential neighborhoods. Other businesses often used by Sudanese, especially southerners, are small telephone shops and internet cafes. Through telephone and internet, resettled relatives and friends can be reached easily and reminded not to forget those in Cairo.

Those who lack valid identity documents necessary to collect money must rely on close kin or trusted friends to be the 'official' receiver of funds (Akuei 2004). In fact, among the respondents, it was those with closed files who most often received financial assistance from abroad.

Table 26

Remittances

Does respondent receive remittances from family/friends	Status				Total
	CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	
Yes	66	19	1	5	91
No	30	22	4	5	61
Total	96	41	5	10	152

Usually, money is sent on monthly basis, with some receiving larger amounts less regularly. It is used to cover daily living expenses, as well as weddings, funerals, and departure parties for those leaving for resettlement. In emergency situations, relatives and friends send money to cover medical treatment, children's education, or the cost of travel to Australia for those accepted under the private sponsorship scheme. The amounts range between $100 to 150 per month, with some receiving over $400, usually irregularly (Table 27). The money is usually shared with the closest relatives, but it is rarely enough to cover all monthly expenses. Most money is remitted from Canada, Australia, or the US, and less frequently from the Gulf. In the case of single young women and men who came to Egypt to pursue education, financial support comes from their relatives in Sudan.

In some instances, the trans-national travel of money goes from a western country to Egypt and then continues on to Sudan. Ten respondents supported their families in Sudan (three of them with remittance received from the West).

It is a matter of honor for the refugees who have managed to achieve a better living standard to support their next-of-kin by sending them a portion of their income. Stephanie Riak Akuei (2004) studied the effect of this obligation on Sudanese refugees resettled to the United States (Akuei 2004). As her research shows, the expectations which are placed upon those refugees "who make it to the golden land" places a severe economic and psychological burden them. The situation is exacerbated by the perception among Sudanese of the life in the West as a place offering easy access to jobs, education, and wealth. The resettlement myths, however, are not willingly dispelled by resettled refugees, even though they find it hard to keep up with their financial obligations towards relatives and friends in Egypt and Sudan. The demands lead to financial difficulties and psychological problems. Nevertheless, not honoring these financial obligations, Sudanese expose themselves to shame.

Table 27

Remittances received in USD

	Frequency	Percent
.00	99	36.8
42.85	1	.4
50.00	8	3.0
63.00	1	.4
75.00	4	1.5
90.00	1	.4
100.00	35	13.0
111.42	1	.4
142.80	1	.4
142.85	1	.4
150.00	16	5.9
171.42	1	.4
200.00	12	4.5
300.00	1	.4
357.14	1	.4
400.00	1	.4
500.00	6	2.2
600.00	1	.4
700.00	1	.4
No answer	77	28.6
Total	269	100.0

Remittances have a direct economic impact on both the countries from which they are sent (as this income will not be spent there) as well as on those economies where the recipients live. A rough estimate of the remittances coming into the Egyptian economy per year for a group of 94 households amounts to $170,000 (based on the calculation that households receive on average $150 per month). These findings are likely to be grossly underestimated as people in general are loathe to reveal income accurately This group represents only a small number of Sudanese living in Egypt who rely on them..

Economic Impact

Comparing total monthly living expenses of Sudanese to Egyptian households will help show the economic relevance of Sudanese refugees to the host society. Such a comparison will give us a better grasp of the impact refugees on the host economy. As can be seen from previous discussions relating to housing, education, and health needs of Sudanese refugees in Egypt, the cost of living is in fact higher for refugees than it is for locals. Only five out of Sudanese respondents declared that they did not have any monthly expenses. They were families; both closed files (2) and recognized (3), who relied entirely on the support of other household members by sharing their housing and food (Table 29). For the majority of our respondents, the monthly expenses ranged between LE 500 and 600, with 11 households claiming monthly living costs higher than LE 1,500 (Table 28) (for the breakdown of monthly living expenses relating to rent, food, transportation, medical, and education see Appendix 3). In comparison, the Egyptian households interviewed in Arba W Nuss reported household expenses ranging from LE 150-800, depending on the size of the household (between one and eight persons).

Table 28

Total expenses per month in LE versus refugee status

Total expenses	Status				Total
	CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	
0	2	3			5
1-300	33	17	2		52
301-600	62	26	3	8	99
601-900	47	8	1	3	59
901-1500	23	6	2		31
>1500	8	2	1		11
Total	175	62	9	11	257

Table 29

Total expenses per month in LE versus type of household

Type of household	Total expenses						
	0	1-300	301-600	601-900	901-1500	>1500	Total
Multiple-Family Household	2	1	10	3	2	1	19
Single-Family Household	3	11	29	28	12	6	89
Extended-Family Household		4	14	16	10	2	46
Single Person Household		4	6	4	1		15
Group of Friends Living Together		32	40	8	6	2	88
Total	5	52	99	59	31	11	257

On the other hand, the total income per household ranged between LE 600-700 for refugee respondents, including salaries, remittances, and financial assistance received. While comparing the total expenses and total income of our respondents, it is worth mentioning that 16 respondents were in fact able to save money (there were more respondents in the income brackets of LE 901-1500 and over, than were in the same

expenses brackets – Table 28 and Table 30). It is interesting to observe that although only five respondents claimed to have no expenses per month and 28 claimed not to have any income (Table 29*)*. This discrepancy might be linked to the reluctance of respondents to disclose their real income. Although the validity of the data can be questionable, as it is very difficult to collect reliable information with regards to financial matters — both income as well as expenses — these findings can provide us with limited guidance as to the financial situation of refugees.

Total monthly living expenses tend to be lower among respondents residing in Alexandria, but their monthly income is also less than those who live in Cairo. On the other hand, the gender of the respondents did not make any significant difference, with households headed by both women and men having comparable monthly incomes and expenses. Based on the data available, the monthly needs of households vary according to the composition of the household, including the number of children needing education and the number of persons able to contribute to the overall household budget. An average family of five spends between LE 650-700 per month for basic survival. In comparison

Table 30

Total income (salaries, remittances, assistance) per month in LE versus refugee status

Total income (salary, remittances, assistance)	Status				
	CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	Total
0	15	12	1		28
1-300	19	10	1		30
301-600	57	22	2	6	87
601-900	39	11	3	4	57
901-1500	33	7	1	1	42
>1500	15		1		16
Total	178	62	9	11	260

an urban poor Egyptian family of five has monthly expenses ranging between LE 350-450. Based on these calculations, a Sudanese refugee family of this size contributes a minimum of $1,300 per year to the Egyptian economy.[55] This number is significantly lower from the previous estimate by the 1997 UNHCR self-reliance survey, which quoted a figure of $5,300 as *needed* by a family of five to cover all their basic needs (Sperl 2001).[56] However, the evidence shows that even the most marginalized and poorest refugees are active consumers and contributors to the local economy. In fact, the biggest influx of money goes into the rented housing sector, followed by food and transportation. Remittances, as previously mentioned, constitute the primary source of hard currency inflow into the Egyptian economy. These findings are consistent with refugees contributions made to local economies in other contexts (Kok 1989; Callamard 1994; Kuhlman 1994; Harrell-Bond 1986).

[55] The exchange rate used for the conversion of total expenses in Egyptian pounds into dollars was LE 6.16 to $1.

[56] The difference might be a result of the depreciation of the Egyptian pound and at the decline of the Egyptian economy in general. In 1997, the exchange rate was LE 3,3 to $1. In comparison to the national statistics, per capita income and purchasing power parity for Egyptian population in 2000 amounted to $4,878 with a decrease to $3,793 in 2002 due to devaluation of Egyptian pound (EHDR 2004).

Social and Cultural Contributions

Apart from the direct influx of cash into economy, the presence of refugees might have other indirect positive effects on the host society. The tangible benefits to the host community in some parts of Cairo, for example in the shanty area of Arba W Nuss, include business for local bakers, greengrocers, and internet and telephone centers as well as establishment of new assistance programs serving both the refugee and local communities. In some cases, the hosts themselves realize the potential of generating additional income by employing refugees. Some devise particularly innovative strategies to capitalize on the opportunities created by the refugee presence (Whitaker 1999). For example, owners of internet cafes frequented by Sudanese refugees determined to maintain contact with their fellow countrymen abroad prefer to employ Sudanese. The same goes for Somalis (Al Sharmani 2003). They can serve their clients in their own language and gain additional customers. Others, especially those of mixed Egyptian-Sudanese background, run restaurants and coffee shops, which offer Sudanese traditional meals and Sudanese coffee. These establishments also prefer hiring Sudanese in order to extend their business to the refugee community. In addition, refugees are active consumers, contributing directly to the development of business, especially small greengrocers, bakers, and food sellers. Hence, refugees can also be seen as agents of social change, both in economic terms as well as social terms (the emergence of local NGOs taking up refugee rights issues has broadened the debate on human rights in the country).

Moreover, those employed in the humanitarian sector serving refugees in Egypt make a noticeable economic contribution to the host society.[57] Expatriates working for UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, including NGOs, are paid high salaries and can afford higher rents and are also consumers. The humanitarian sector also creates job opportunities for Egyptians.

Despite being economically and legally marginalized, Sudanese refugees are finding ways to make a place for themselves in the difficult economic and social conditions of the Egyptian host society. However, due to the existing reservations, of the greater the economic and developmental potential and impact of refugees on the host society is lost (Kok 1989). Only by removing these restrictions and creating an environment where refugees can have their human rights respected will their economic potential and contribution to the host society be able to flourish.

In conclusion, Sudanese refugees are active participants in solving their own problems at the local level: by establishing support systems, lending centers, providing housing for their community members, creating refugee associations and communities, and claiming rights as a group as well as creating access to rights and to services.

[57] For comparison with Tanzania see Whitaker 1999.

Chapter 5
Marginalization versus Local Integration

Integration and Co-existence — Feasible for those on the Margins? Adaptation or Living on the Margins Purposively

A discussion on the livelihood strategies of refugees would fall short if it only considered the 'materialistic' side of life. As proposed in the definition of livelihood, a broader view of the concept allows us to look into the issues of rights and refugees' desires and plans for the future, providing an opportunity to study refugees as active and dynamic forces instead of as passive and vulnerable victims.

Assessing the feasibility of local integration for Sudanese refugees requires the examination of the relations between the hosts (the Egyptian society) and their guests (the Sudanese refugee community) and the extent to which rights can be accessed and claimed by non-citizens. Usually, when asked about their interactions with the locals, Sudanese lament the discrimination, daily harassment, and lack of respect: "*[They] see us as their servants and expect us to work in their houses and serve them. They treat us with no respect as if we were not human beings.*" By using observations that go beyond stereotyped views we can see how individuals relate to each other. As Harrell-Bond (1986) argues, such an approach allows for a more authentic description of a complex social reality by observing actual relationships rather than by asking opinions (Harrell-Bond 1986). The issues of possible integration in Egypt and marginalization processes will be discussed by looking at the politics of the host government, the host society, international organizations and service providers and refuges themselves.

Integration without Rights — Marginalization by the Host Government

Officially, the Egyptian government, as most of the other host governments in Africa, does not support the policy of local integration as one of the durable solutions to the refugee problem. As was discussed, the restrictions the government places on refugees in terms of enjoyment of rights and access to public services does not meet the requirements of 'local integration' as identified by UNHCR. The integration into and the interaction with the host society pose different challenges, depending on whether one has refugee status or not. However, 'real' integration between the host and the guest communities can not take place when the most basic rights, including the right to education and the right to work, are considerably limited and the possibility of naturalization (Art.34 of the 1951 Convention) is ruled out.[58] In this regard, refugees as a group are marginalized in terms of their status and entitlements in comparison to the nationals.

For those without any legal status, full integration is not an option. By living on the margins of the society due to their illegality, the ability to claim rights is further constrained and access to services available to locals is even more difficult.

[58] Currently, a new regulation relating to an amendment of the Nationality Law of 1975 (passed in 2004) is being implemented to allow children of Egyptian women and of foreign fathers with residency (subject to several strict criteria) to apply for an Egyptian passport. This provision might possibly benefit some children of Sudanese-Egyptian families.

Marginalization by the Host Society

The success of integration depends as much on the relations between the host and the guest populations as on the policies of the host government towards refugees. The ability of a displaced population to pursue sustainable livelihoods is strengthened when they feel welcomed (or at least not resented). They will not constantly fear arrest or harassment by the police, conflict with the host society, and social disagreements (Jacobsen 2001). Relations with the host population also determine the mode of adaptation and co-existence.

The situation in Egypt represents a mixed picture. In general, the respondents lamented the limited interactions they have with Egyptians, the distant attitude and lack of openness of the society, and the daily harassment they receive from them. Sudanese complained about the lack of respect from the Egyptians and verbal insults they hear constantly in addition to incidents of violent attacks by the Egyptian youth. The police often stop Sudanese refugees under the pretext of checking papers and extort from them the little money they might have. In the past, there were several incidents of Sudanese wounded by the locals, including stabbings and beatings. In 2004, a gang of criminals and drug-users operated in the poor neighborhood of Arba W Nuss, attacking Sudanese children and men on the street (Le Houerou 2004, Grabska 2005). Some of them suffered head injuries and bruises.

> *J46 is a single southern Sudanese living in Alexandria. When asked about her interactions with the locals, she said "I have problems with young, mature and elderly Egyptians who insult me simply because of my black color. Sometimes they throw stones at me or pour water over me. Animals like donkeys, dogs and horses can move in the streets freely and no single Egyptian would bother them or throw stones at them. Why do they do it to me? Is it because they respect the animals more than me? I am afraid and it disturbs me."*

Another southern Sudanese elderly woman lamented, *"They never respect me as a mother, and they call me bunga-bunga when I go to work. One day a boy of 15 years old hit me with a tomato, which spoilt my dress. I did not respond and none of the Egyptians around responded. I went home sobbing quietly.*"

In public schools and in playgrounds, Sudanese children are often verbally and physically abused by Egyptian children, who call them names and hit them. In order to protect their children, families lock them inside apartments and do not allow them to play outside. As a result, further segregation of the two societies takes place and Sudanese children are cut off from interactions with their peers. When refugee parents complain to the school administration about the mistreatment their children receive from the Egyptian pupils, there is usually no reaction. Southern Sudanese respondents who have been declared NER complained that UNHCR is forcing them to locally integrate in Egypt, without giving them any assistance and adequate protection.

However, informal integration is common, especially among the Sudanese refugees of Arab origins. Place of origin and religious background also play a role in integration. Those of Arab Muslim origins coming from the northern part of Sudan are more closely

aligned with the Egyptian Arab society, while those of Christian origins are subjected to further marginalization. As noted, the northern Sudanese diaspora has long-held traditions and deep roots in Egyptian society, going back to the 'Condominium' times of the British rule, where Egypt and Sudan were perceived as one. Many Egyptians still refer to Sudanese as "their brothers," however they also use the more disparaging term "poor cousins." The Galya community of Sudanese born in Egypt (of Muslim north Sudanese descent) is quite visible, especially in residential areas such as Ain Shams dating back to the 1940s, enjoying a very different status than the rest of the Sudanese. They usually reside in popular areas of Cairo, where the interaction with the Egyptian community is easier since their lifestyles are similar. Intermarriages in this group are common. Fábos (1999) shows that these Sudanese are investing in their future in Cairo by interacting with, and living, in the Egyptian society. Yet, at the same time, they are also maintaining a sense of cultural coherence and distinctiveness without challenging the social order. The concept *adab,* which encompasses the beliefs and norms regarding propriety that both Sudanese and Egyptians draw from Islamic and Arab traditions, is a key notion for an ambiguous ethnic construction. As Fábos argues, northern Sudanese (those of Muslim Arab origins) constantly use and reshape *adab* in order to align their ethnicity their Egyptian hosts (Fábos 1999).

In comparison to this well-established and integrated group of Sudanese expatriates who enjoy rights close to those of Egyptian citizens, 'newly' arrived Sudanese go through very different experiences. Often, the refugees are perceived by the Egyptian community as impoverished, poorly educated, and of a very different cultural background that is even considered immoral. In fact, even the Galya community claims that since the arrival of the refugees, the image held by Egyptians of the Sudanese has changed. They are actually worried that due to this negative development, their rights in Egypt will be constrained. Xenophobia and racism are said to have increased in Egypt in recent years, as the economic situation has deteriorated and society has become more conservative and inward looking. Fear of foreigners and strangers demonstrates itself in derogatory treatment. The government often uses illegal migrants and refugees as scapegoats for economic and social problems, linking their presence to the rise in criminal activity, delinquency, prostitution, demoralization of the Muslim society (by the alleged loose and provocative manners of African women), and drug proliferation. In fact, this strategy of 'scapegoating' is often used by host governments everywhere, particularly those in poor economic conditions (Jacobsen 2001:13).

Just as the host governments and community see the presence of refugees as transitory, refugees also perceive their stay as temporary. Refugees do not currently see the possibility of integrating into the Egyptian society due to the restricted rights as well as the economic and social situation of the country. J18, a single man from the Nuba Mountains, did not think that Egyptians would welcome integrating more people into their large population. Instead, they would prefer to see a number of Egyptians migrate outside of Egypt in order to ease the population pressure here. *"See, I am a well trained and experienced English teacher, but they [Egyptians] do not like to employ me. Integration comes with the provision of employment, education to refugee children and other rights such as equality of treatment of refugees by Egyptians. As long as it does not take place, integration would not be possible.*"

Self-Marginalization

Marginalization and lack of integration prospects also originate from the attitude and desires of refugees themselves. Many Sudanese refugees come to Egypt with the hope of being able to get a ticket to a western country to enjoy a better life. They see Cairo as a long painful bus stop or a waiting room they have to cope with until they reach their desired destination. Purposively, they do not build strong relations with the host community as they perceive it as a waste of time. Many respondents stated that they have no intention to integrate in Egypt because they do not want to stay here and they will either migrate to the West or go back to Sudan.

> *"I am tired of life here, I want to leave this country but not to Sudan," refugee with a closed file.*

Among our respondents, both with closed filed and those recognized, almost all have submitted applications to the Australian embassy for the private sponsorship program. In fact, the presence of a large Sudanese diaspora in Australia provides opportunities for sponsored applications. Although affidavits of support usually should be sent by family members, there are several Sudanese organizations and churches that send forms to those interested. Moreover, Australian forms are widely available in the Cairo market and can be purchased for $50-100. In fact, several respondents asked our research assistants for help in filling out the forms.[59]

The private sponsorship program puts the responsibility of supporting the newly arrived migrant on the sponsor, including covering the costs of travel and accommodation upon arrival. Despite the high expenses related to airplane tickets, especially for large Sudanese families, many apply. During the past years, the Australian embassy has been receiving over 200 applications a week, which is a higher number than those applying for asylum through UNHCR. Annually, 1,500 persons benefit from Australia's private sponsorship program. Among our respondents, at least 20 out of 183 (over 10 percent) respondents with closed files were accepted and left for Australia by the time the fieldwork was finished. The rest were waiting for their results (some had submitted several applications, including some in the names of their spouses or children). In many cases, after their arrival in Cairo, Sudanese go straight to the Australian embassy. A number of respondents, both recognized and rejected, had applied up to three times to the Australian embassy.

Many refugees, especially those who have been in Egypt for an extensive period of time and have closed files, intend to repatriate if their aim to migrate to the West becomes unattainable. The decision is linked to the situation in Sudan as well as the availability of funds to cover the journey back home. During the course of our fieldwork, several of our respondents and their flat mates returned to Sudan. Unsuccessful in getting recognized and resettled and without access to education and skilled jobs, they felt they were wasting their time in Egypt. They went back home to re-start their lives.

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[59] As noted above, some refugees consider the filling out of forms as a business and take small fees for providing this service (around LE 40 per form). Recently, the refugee-run association *Mussaadeen*, which used to help in preparing claims for UNHCR, started offering assistance in filling out sponsorship forms for Australia.

Another element of self-marginalization comes from the fear of losing their culture. The reason some Sudanese refugees do not want their children to go to Arabic speaking schools or to socialize with Egyptian children is they are afraid that the children would be 'Egyptianized.' As one southern Sudanese commented, she does not want to integrate into Egyptian society because that would make her abandon her own culture in favor of one that she does not like. Her hope is to return to Yambio and join her people. If she acquired a different culture right now she would be a stranger to her own society.

Fragmentation and tribalization of the Sudanese society, distinctive ethnic identities as well as the underlying divides originating from the conflict in Sudan perpetuate the difficulties of integration into the host country. Different ethnic groups maintain mutual suspicion and lack of trust in each other. This often results in limited interaction with each other and, hence, leads to a replication of patterns of behavior from Sudan. Sudanese refugees, especially those from the south, tend to associate themselves with their ethnic group, where kinship plays a determining role. In exile, they cultivate and maintain tribal relations. The majority of the Sudanese in Egypt have established their associations (the Dinka group, Bari community, Fur Association, Nuba Mountains Association, to name a few) and have re-established their tribal justice system, whereby disputes are settled according to the ethnic norms and codes of conduct. One of our respondents was the Secretary General for the Abyei Association in Cairo who has recently been elected as the General Secretary of the Jieng (Dinka) Community in Cairo. The group of community leaders and elders meet regularly at Sakakini in Abbassiya to resolve problems that arise between community members as well as marriages and divorces.[60] Participating in these ethnic organizations allows refugees to practice their traditions, and support each other morally, culturally, psychologically, and financially. In addition, for those displaced populations who have undergone a cultural and societal rupture in Sudan, recreating a common system of norms introduces some level of stability into the lives of those far from their place of origin. Social interactions and close community associations are part of the reproductive coping strategies employed by the refugees.

The segregation and marginalization of different Sudanese groups further contributes to the cultural exclusion of refugees from the host society. Sudanese attempt to continue their lives in ways accepted in Sudan, without making an effort to understand the local conditions and norms. Common complaints from Egyptian neighbors and landlords, which often results in home eviction, relates to the frequent family and friends visits, that are common to Sudanese (Fábos 2002). In Egypt, although family visits are accepted, they do not happen on daily basis, and the household usually consists of only the closest family members. Sudanese socializing and the practices of hosting guests until late at night are considered annoying and against Egyptian norms. Hence, conflicts between the two communities erupt, without either side making the effort to understand each other. Many of our respondents confessed that their major problems with the Egyptian neighbors are linked to their frequent visitors. *"They do not understand that we, Sudanese, make frequent visits to relatives and friends. When someone from our relatives or friends leaves for resettlement, he will have guests coming over all the time to say*

[60] For more in-depth discussion of different ethnic groups in Sudan see: *"A Study of Some Ethnic Groups in Sudan,"* Sudan Cultural Digest Project, Research Report, December 1998.

good-bye and wish them the best in their new lives. Egyptian neighbors always complain about it."

The lack of language skills and the unwillingness to learn the host language contribute to the marginalization of refugees. Several of our respondents commented that they lost their jobs or were unable to get one due to the inability to communicate with the employer. Some of the disputes with neighbors or problems with police resulted from the inability to explain their situation properly. Fortunately, the majority of Sudanese speak Arabic or Juba Arabic (a dialect).

> *AO26, a young man of Dinka origins with an NER status complained that he lost the only one job that he ever had due to the fact that his employer could not understand his Arabic. He lamented that Egyptians always laugh when he speaks his Arabic dialect.*

Sudanese tend to cook their traditional meals, if they can afford it. Myths about Egyptian food's effects on the body lead them to avoid Egyptian cooking. Some families restrain themselves from eating meat and fish because of cost, resorting to simple grains, beans, bread and rice. In some cases, Sudanese purchase food brought from Sudan. However, when asked about the cheap Egyptian food, almost all respondents admitted to consuming it, especially *fuul, falafel,* and *koshari*.

Co-existence, Territorial Transformation, and Adaptation

Relations in Exile

Although relations between Egyptian hosts and Sudanese refugees are often characterized by mistrust, tension, and violence (Le Houerou 2004), this simplification does not reflect the complex web of interactions between the two groups. Violent acts are most common in areas where there is a higher degree of poverty, as refugees and locals compete for resources and space. At the same time, another set of relations is created between the communities in their daily interactions and confrontations while securing livelihoods.

Transit Homes

Although the presence of refugees in Egypt is perceived by the government, the host society, and refugees themselves as temporary, to a certain degree all undergo a process of adaptation. Despite the psychological denial of adaptation and settlement, over time Sudanese newcomers have become residents of certain areas in Cairo, such as Ain Shams and Arba W Nuss. When taking a stroll along the unpaved roads of Arba W Nuss one is struck by a clear delimitation of territorial space between Egyptians and Sudanese, with the Sudanese households clustered around the two churches operating in the area. Rarely does one find Sudanese families living inside the Arba W Nuss zone. But evidence of Sudanese society's growing sense of comfort in the area is in the establishment of community-based organizations serving displaced migrants, including the South Sudanese Development Initiative and the Bari Association, expressions that the

community is asserting its voice and creating its territorial and spatial presence, even if transitory in nature.

Religious institutions play an important role in community. Nearby churches and church-based education programs for children attract more Sudanese Christians into the neighbourhood. Sudanese families rent flats in their proximity. In this area, rents tend to be higher than those located farther inside the zone. At the same time, Egyptian landlords prefer to rent to Sudanese because they are willing to pay more. In fact, due to the increased attention of UNHCR, NGOs, and the Egyptian authorities to the plight of refugees in the area, the rents now have rocketed to LE 250 for a simple room. Slowly, a more segmented map of the area has emerged, with Sudanese households clustered around church facilities, Coptic Egyptians living near the Coptic church, and the rest scattered farther away. Living space boundaries becomes linked to the presence of churches and the services they provide, religion, and nationality. Consequently, refugees could also be perceived as a dynamic force in terms of creating spatial and cultural networks, even in transit.

Spontaneous Territory and Space Creation

Adaptation and creation of territory can be observed not only at the community level, but also at the person to person level. By sharing living spaces and using the same facilities, Egyptians and Sudanese refugees come to understand each other and learn ways of dealing with each other as individuals. In Arba W Nuss, shared housing between Sudanese and Upper Egyptians is a common phenomenon, whereby the two groups live in immediate proximity and use the same bathroom and cooking facilities. In the majority of the cases, such arrangements were seen as comfortable. When asked what she thinks of sharing a space with a southern Sudanese single father with three children, an Egyptian woman from Minya replied:

> *I prefer to share a compound with Sudanese because they mind their own business and do not interfere with my life. When you share with Egyptians, they also come and want to know everything about your life. They will go around and gossip. Sudanese are better because they go about their own business and do not interrupt my life.*

The Sudanese neighbor of the Egyptian woman commented how their relations transformed over time in the compound and how the two groups learned from each other and now co-exist peacefully:

> *There are four rooms in this compound, which have been rented to different kinds of people. The people usually stay three or more months and then they move somewhere else complaining that these rooms are not good. But I have stayed here since the time I first arrived until today and this has become my compound since I have been here the longest. These people include both Egyptians and Sudanese, both married and single. Each one lives in his own way and has his own behavior…..*
>
> *Previously, when there were Sudanese living in this compound, we would eat together. But we do not eat with the Egyptians. Our relations with*

> *them are the normal human relations. We respect one another and do not disturb each other. We have to respect each other because that is what a human being should do. But in general, our relations with people in the compound are neutral. It is like when you see someone in the street that you do not know, you may greet that person and say to him three or four words and then say good-bye. ….*
>
> *Because I always insisted that they [the Egyptian neighbors] should not pour the water around, they have learned from me and changed their behavior. They actually observed my behavior. Before they changed, they were actually dropping waste all over the compound.*

As much as confrontation, tension, and violence are part of the daily existence of the two societies, there is another level of interaction that exists between them. To a certain degree they learn from each other, alter each other's behavior in daily con-existence, and adjust their ways of living to others.

While the situation is far from *de facto* integration of the Sudanese refugee community, complete marginalization is not the case either. Numerous examples of positive interaction between refugees and their hosts provided by our respondents reveal a more complex picture of the situation. In order to augment the chances for co-existence between hosts and refugees in the context of the Egyptian economy, the international donor community should provide assistance that benefits both groups. Excluding one of them, risks creating a more hostile environment in which the refugees will suffer. Kibreab's (1996) observation is of particular importance. He argues that "a host country's refugee policy (or lack of such) and a host population's attitude towards refuges cannot be favorable unless there is willingness on the part of the international donors to share the responsibility of hosting refugees in a manner that enables the latter to become self-supporting while offsetting the pressures that their presence causes on the host country's social and physical infrastructures and local commodity and labor markets."

Chapter 6
What we know and how to do better?

Concluding Observations

Refugees with closed files and those who have been granted refugee status live on the margins of the host society in terms of their cultural, linguistic, religious, social, economic, and political participation. Marginalization happens in three ways: the Egyptian government restricts rights and access to services for refugees, the host society adopts mistrustful and negative attitudes towards refugees, and refugees themselves fail to try to integrate into the host society. Egypt is seen by many refugees as a transit point on the way to a western country. Among our respondents with closed files as well as those with NER status, almost all have filed applications for resettlement either with the Canadian or Australian embassy. During the fieldwork, many of our respondents left for Australia.

The Sudanese refugee population in Egypt constitutes the largest group. While their experiences may not differ from other nationalities, there are differences between the Sudanese refugees themselves. The lack of legal status and unstable living conditions with limited access to rights forces those whose claims have been rejected to live on the extreme margins, but their livelihood strategies are very similar to those with refugee status.

The impact of the refugees on the host society should not be overlooked. By paying high rents and being consumers on the Egyptian market, even the most marginalized refugees infuse substantial amounts of money into the Egyptian economy. Remittances are one of the main sources and this hard currency constitutes a significant annual cash inflow. Thus, it becomes obvious that even under the most marginalized conditions, Sudanese refugees and other refugee groups significantly contribute to the local economy.

Although local integration is considered rather undesirable, by both the host community and refugees, the interactions between the two groups cannot be characterized as purely confrontational and hostile. In many ways, the marginalization process is brought on by the attitudes of both communities. Egyptians perceive refugees as competitors for meager resources and partially to blame for the bad state of the economy. At the same time, the newly arrived Sudanese refugees do not intend to stay in Egypt for long. They see it as a transfer point to a better life in the West and, hence, the majority does not invest in their current location. The desire for moving on and away from Egypt is strong. This hope, even if unrealistic, allows them to cope with their precarious living and economic conditions and, at the same time, removes them from the possibility of greater integration with the local society.

Although the research of urban refugees is growing in developing countries, it still tends to be invisible to other social scientists and policy makers. The bulk of research has been conducted in a restrictive manner, with researchers focusing on specific dilemmas existing in specific refugee communities without taking into account the large socio-political context of the urban setting in which refugee communities exist. Only by considering the local conditions of the asylum country can policies towards urban

refugees and the dilemmas of local integration in developing urban centers be adequately addressed.

Recommendations

These points illustrate the current challenges posed by the urban policy of refugees in Egypt:

1. With the number of recognized refugees growing and the possibility that the numbers of those resettled will decline in the future, there needs to be a comprehensive and integrated approach to assisting the refugee population in Egypt.

2. As it was shown, the changes in the UNHCR's policy in terms of refugee status determination for Sudanese over the past 10 years have resulted in rejecting many asylum seekers who would fit into the wider definition of refugees applied by the UNHCR since 2003. There is a need to revisit those closed file cases who would qualify under the more recent policy and improved procedures.

3. The issue of rights and recognition of rights for refugees in Egypt is crucial. Only by having the full access to rights, especially the right to education, work, and health services, will refugees be able to find solutions in the context of the Egyptian host society. However, refugee needs will have to be reconciled with those in the host society.

4. By marginalizing the refugee population, the Egyptian state is creating what will likely be long-lasting negative effects on its own population, whereby those marginalized will not be able to realize their potential within the host framework.

5. The economic potential of refugees should be recognized and harnessed to help meet the needs of the Egyptian economy with developmental policies targeting assistance to both refugees and the host population.

6. The current policy adopted by UNHCR in Cairo focuses on the vulnerability of refugees as criteria for assistance and resettlement. This approach prompts many refugees to use marginalization as a strategy for receiving assistance from UNHCR. There is a need for clarification and transparency of UNHCR policies with refugees. A better communication and direct contact with refugee communities would create an environment of trust and improve the relations between the two groups.

7. The current self-reliance strategy adopted by UNHCR is not based on the in-depth understanding of the refugee conditions and situation in Egypt. There is a need to reassess the UNHCR policy towards urban refugees in general.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Ethnic Background of Sudanese Refugees

Ethnicity/tribe to which respondent belongs		Region of origin in Sudan					Total
		south Sudan	east Sudan	north Sudan	west Sudan	central Sudan	
	Missing		1	1	1	3	6
	Acholi	2					2
	Achron				1		1
	Altais				1		1
	Arab				1	6	7
	Arakeen			2		2	4
	Bagara				1		1
	Bani Amer		1				1
	Bari	22					22
	Bejah		1				1
	Bertawi				1		1
	Bidearia					1	1
	Coptic			1			1
	Danagla			8		1	9
	Didinga	2			1		3
	Dinka	55					55
	Doubasi			1			1
	Funj		2				2
	Fur	1			13	2	16
	Galeen			10	1	6	17
	Gawama'a				1		1
	Gulfan				2		2
	Halfaween			1			1
	Hamar				1		1
	Hasania			1		1	2
	Hawara				1		1
	Heban					1	1
	Jul Chowl	1					1
	Kakwa	2					2
	Karko				3		3
	Kenous			1		1	2
	Kriesh	1					1
	Kuku	4					4
	Mahas			8		1	9
	Manaseer			1			1
	Masalit				1		1
	Mesyria				3		3
	Muru	5			9		14
	Ngiming				3		3
	Niema				2		2
	Niga Alkhael				1		1
	Nuba	2			13	2	17
	Nuer	3					3
	Nugud				1		1
	Nyangwara	3					3
	Ocawan	1					1
	Otoro				1		1
	Otuho	1					1
	Pujulu	6					6
	Rezigat					1	1
	Robatab			1			1
	Salamat				1		1
	Shawabina				1		1
	Shaygia			7		1	8
	Shilluk	3	2				5
	Tarsha				1		1
	Zande	10					10
Total		124	7	43	66	29	269

Appendix 2 – Expenses per month

Medical expenses per month in L.E. versus refugee status

Count

		Status				
		CLOSED	NER	APPEAL	DURSOL	Total
Medical expenses pr. month in L.E.	0	86	36	4	3	129
	1-50	75	23	4	7	109
	51-100	9	2			11
	101-200	3	1	1	1	6
	>200	3	1			4
Total		176	63	9	11	259

Expenses related to housing per month in LE

Expenses related to housing		CITY		Total
		Alexandria	Cairo	
	0	7	32	39
	1-100	11	34	45
	101-200	9	60	69
	201-300	7	37	44
	301-400	6	25	31
	401-500		15	15
	501-600		8	8
	601-700	1	3	4
	701-800		3	3
	>800		1	1
Total		41	218	259

Expenses related to food per month in LE

Expenses on food per month		CITY		Total
		Alexandria	Cairo	
	0	2	16	18
	1-50	2	16	18
	51-150	13	50	63
	151-300	19	94	113
	301-500	4	30	34
	>500	1	11	12
Total		41	217	258

Expenses related to transport per month in LE

Expenses related to transportation	CITY		
	Alex	Cairo	Total
0	1	37	38
1-50	33	110	143
51-100	2	53	55
101-200	5	16	21
>200		2	2
Total	41	218	259