Cairo’s Informal Areas
Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials
To all people living in informal areas.
This book has been published in the framework of the Egyptian-German Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP), implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development, the German Development Bank (KfW) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).
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**About the Contributors**

**Abbreviations**
Foreword

The challenges of an increasingly poor urban population, as well as the mushrooming of illegal or semi-legal settlements and slums, have been acknowledged by both local authorities and international development agencies. The insecurity of tenure, the poor housing conditions, the insufficient supply of basic public services such as water, sewage, streets, electricity, schools, and health centers, as well as the need for political and social inclusion, have been the focus of discussions at international conferences.

The response to these challenges has been articulated by an international consensus of comprehensive approaches for improving the living conditions in informal areas, raising the quality of life in poor and deteriorated districts, creating circumstances for long-term poverty alleviation, and guaranteeing legal and secure tenure. A commitment to the Millennium Development Goals by the member countries of the United Nations is assured by their having put these strategies on their national agendas.

GTZ has been engaged in urban and municipal development since the 1980s, and continues to practice its broad expertise in urban development projects as well as in multilateral initiatives. GTZ is an active member in the Cities Alliance, a global coalition of different countries whose aim is to improve the living conditions of the urban poor by concrete and direct measures. As a result, sustainable urban development as pursued by GTZ is helping to create liveable and socially inclusive cities for all residents.

In Egypt, GTZ supports governmental authorities of various levels in performing their tasks by adopting a variety of conceptual approaches, such as participatory strategies for upgrading informal areas and capacity development. GTZ also strengthens private sector and civil society organizations in recognizing and exercising their responsibility within the urban community and their roles in resolving existing problems.

This book features a comprehensive view of sustainable urban development, and of all stakeholders involved in that process. We hope it will be of interest to a wide range of experts concerned with urban development.

Jörg Werner Haas
Isabel Matteo-Küçükali

A Common Call for Respect and Action

Looking back, the initial idea of this book was to give a voice to all—or at least most—of the stakeholders in informal area development. The intention was to ensure that the thoughts and opinions of the residents of these areas were represented. We hope that both the idea and the intention have been realized. The picture is certainly not complete, and never can be. Egypt is too multifaceted, too deep, and too many things are happening every day.

This book shows the complexity and the diversity of the situation. It is a look at, into, and out of the informal areas from the perspective of residents, governors, ministers, academics, consultants, and colleagues of development cooperation. Hopefully it will lead to a better understanding of those 60% of Greater Cairo’s population who live in so-called informal areas, the majority of which are young, productive people, full of potential. They deserve our attention and trust, and they need our investment.

The book also attempts to serve as a platform for discussion and to stimulate further dialogue. Not only can it contribute to a better knowledge of the complex reality in these areas, but help decision-makers, investors, planners, and academics see the advantage that coordinated implementation has over separate planning efforts—an implementation that, instead of top-down measures, takes the needs of the residents into consideration. A common vision for upgrading informal areas is urgently needed. Seeing the magnitude of the challenge, stakeholders will benefit from joining forces in the development of informal settlements.

Financial resources are certainly limited. The governors have a pivotal position and they know their governorates very well, but they are without autonomous budgets. Nevertheless, there have been efforts on the part of national entities to direct financial resources toward the governorate level, such as the Egyptian government’s launching of the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF). And there is the Egyptian-German Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP)—jointly implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development, the German Development Bank (KfW) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)—which advises its partners on informal area issues. There are many committed and motivated partners, and there is hope that Cairo’s informal areas will see better days in the future.

This book is an eclectic mixture of academic contributions and journalistic articles, as well as interviews and speeches. The first chapter gives a broader view of Cairo and its informal areas. Chapter two presents a picture of daily life and work in informal settlements, as well as the problems, hopes, and concerns of the residents. The third chapter focuses on participatory methodologies and their implementation. Chapter four sheds light on the work of national and international cooperation partners, as well as other involved stakeholders. The final chapter stresses different perspectives, aims, hopes, and plans regarding the future of informal areas.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the book through their support, thoughts, ideas, articles, concerns, and visions. It shows that there are so many dedicated actors who are all willing to participate, to get involved, and to communicate their views on their capital city and its inhabitants.

Marion Fischer