

Women, Decent Work and Empowerment in Rural Egypt



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Acknowledgements.....	2
About the Authors	2
Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	5
Background Literature and Theoretical Approach.....	7
Women and work in rural areas of Egypt	8
The importance of productive assets: Land	9
Rural women’s empowerment	9
Significance of the Current Study	11
Methodology	12
Overview of major social, economic and policy development in Egypt which affect rural women’s access to decent work and productive employment.....	16
Description of the two study areas.....	19
Working conditions for different categories of workers	22
Wage workers	22
Contributing family workers.....	30
Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers).....	33
Members of cooperatives and producer organizations.....	39
Employers and entrepreneurs.....	41
Empowerment of different women workers’ categories.....	44
Social and Economic Advancement	45
Agency and Power Dynamics	48
Dignity and Value	51
Moving Forward and Policy Implications	53
Wage workers	53
Contributing family workers.....	54
Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers).....	55
Entrepreneurs and employers.....	56
References.....	57
Appendix I	63

Executive Summary

Rural Egyptian women play a key role in food security, income generation and agricultural production but their contributions remain invisible and they face difficulties in accumulating assets, accessing work opportunities under decent work conditions and respective training, and have limited bargaining power at the household and community levels. Therefore, it is important that we document rural women's experiences in agricultural work and their contributions and suggest efficient ways that enable them to overcome these barriers. Very few studies have examined the challenges and opportunities faced by women working in the agricultural sector in rural Egypt. The few studies that exist were conducted in the 1990s. This report analyzes the extent of social, economic and political empowerment for women workers in various types of employment in rural Egypt. It identified the challenges they face and made recommendations for overcoming them. We included as many different types of workers as possible in our study - own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers), wage workers, contributing family workers, entrepreneurs and employers, and members of producer organizations in both the Old and New Lands in order to ensure that our findings were as representative as possible of women's and men's experiences of agricultural work and working conditions in rural Egypt.

We employed an extended case study approach to conduct this research. We collected data through interviews and focus groups in two areas in rural Egypt, which have common socio-cultural, historical and economic ties but differ significantly in socio-cultural norms, economic and political context for women's roles, responsibilities, social status and land ownership rates. The Old Lands were originally mainly irrigated by the inundation of the Nile River while the New Lands became cultivable only after the construction of the High Aswan Dam in the 1950s. These areas also differ in the type of agricultural production (e.g., crops grown and their profitability), gender and social norms (e.g., relative degree of social control), and availability of services (e.g., healthcare and agricultural extension services). This geographically comparative approach highlighted the complexity both of rural women's experiences of employment as well as their ability to empower themselves economically, socially and politically through the employment available to them in the two regions. In order to draw conclusions about women's experiences, our study also considered men's experiences in the same types of work. The comparison between men's and women's experiences helped us generate a broader understanding of gender gaps in wages, asset accumulation, employment opportunities and bargaining power for different types of work and workers. By understanding the constraints rural women face in accessing decent work, we identify specific needs for achieving women's empowerment through their social and economic advancement, enhanced power and agency, as well as dignity and value. Our study generated findings about labour seasonality, remuneration, gender norms, formal regulations, informal processes, agricultural extension services, healthcare, pensions and other social protection available to women in agricultural work in rural Egypt. These, in turn, provide us with key insights about the contributions rural Egyptian women make to the agricultural sector, and to food security for their households and communities.

Key words: women's empowerment, gender equality, decent work, Egypt, rural areas

Introduction

This research examines the gendered dimensions of women's work in rural Egypt. It specifically focuses on the aspects of decency of work and employment in two regions Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh. Inter alia, it examines rural women's working conditions (seasonality, remuneration, gender norms, formal regulations, informal processes, services available). We have attempted to include as many different types of workers as possible in our study - wage workers, entrepreneurs and employers, and the self-employed including own-account workers (i.e. subsistence and small-scale producers), contributing family workers as well as members of cooperatives and producer organizations - so that our findings are as representative as possible of women's experiences of work and working conditions in rural Egypt.

In this study entrepreneurs and employers are defined as individuals who own more than five acres of land in Noubariya or three acres in Kafr Sheikh (land is more productive in the latter community), or those who own medium-size enterprises (15 milking cows, a shop or blacksmithing workshop, for example). Not much is known about women's working conditions in this category in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It is important to learn from successful women entrepreneurs and employers to design and adapt models for replicating their success. Equally important is to examine their working conditions and the potential of decent work for their increased empowerment.

Rural wage labourers are among the most disadvantaged group of workers. Not only do they tend to be from the poorest families, with the smallest number of assets but also wage workers are most strongly affected by seasonal trends in employment, low and fluctuating pay, and unregulated working conditions (Termine and Percic 2015, Razavi 2007; Dey de Pryck and Termine 2014). Limited research has been done on wage workers in the rural areas of MENA. Research from Morocco and Egypt also suggests similar findings for wage workers (Jensen 1994; Najjar et al. 2016 forthcoming). Since labour is the most important asset the landless rural poor in general, and women in particular, possess it is critical that we pay attention to improving wages and working conditions for this category of workers and eradicate gender-based inequalities, such as the gender wage gap (Razavi 2007).

We discovered that there are significant differences between the definitions of statuses of employment as provided by the ILO and how women identify themselves and are identified by their immediate environment (e.g., households and community members). Many of the women who identify themselves and are identified in their societies as "contributing family workers" are in fact according to ILO definitions for categories of labourers actually "own-account workers". It needs to be noted that in our study, we considered the local perceptions of the "contributing family workers" category because large numbers of rural women in Egypt actually identify themselves (or are being identified as such by their household members or wider community) as being 'helpers' and consequently face challenges that are different from other groups of workers. Much has been written in Egypt about the economic significance of unpaid contributing family labour for household wellbeing as well as the considerable time invested by women in fulfilling these ostensibly supportive tasks (Larson 1991; Jensen 1994). The same authors emphasize that people classified as primary breadwinners would be unable to earn their incomes without the

supportive unpaid labour provided most commonly but not exclusively by women and children (ibid). Yet, this group of workers tends to be most undervalued and invisible in employment statistics as well as national accounts of work and policymaking in Egypt.

Subsistence farmers or small-scale producers¹ also emerged as distinct groups of workers in the different communities in rural Egypt in which this research was conducted. These are farmers who mainly farm less than an acre of land (which is owned and/or rented) for their own subsistence purposes and selling the resulting surplus. There were very few subsistence farmers in Noubariya (in the New Lands) because most farmers owned larger plots of land (on average 5 acres) and were able to farm on a commercial basis. Kafr Sheikh (in the Old Lands), by contrast, was home to many subsistence farmers who also occasionally sold surplus corn, rice, wheat or cotton.

We also included members of producer cooperatives in this study. These are workers working in income generating groups that employ participatory decision-making processes. This category was not very prominent in either area and generally involved men. Women were seldom involved in producer cooperatives.

Kafr Sheikh in the Old Lands and Noubariya in the New Lands² were chosen for this study based on differences in the type of agricultural production (e.g., crops grown and their profitability), gender and social norms (e.g., relative degree of social control), and availability of services (e.g., health care and agricultural services). This comparative approach serves to highlight the complexity both of rural women's experiences of employment as well as their ability to empower themselves economically, socially and politically through the decent work available to them. In order to draw conclusions about women's experiences, our study also considers men's experiences in the same types of work. The comparison between men's and women's experiences helps us generate a broader understanding of gender gaps in wages, asset accumulation, employment opportunities and bargaining power for different types of work and workers.

As part of this research, we reviewed the existing literature on women's employment in agriculture in Egypt and the MENA region, and in the Global South at large. We also reviewed research on topics such as gendered wage inequity, skill discounting and occupational segregation in agriculture; land and asset ownership and control; intra-household bargaining; and institutional sexism and gender discrimination in global governance regimes, which were identified in the existing literature on women's employment in agriculture as important for

¹ There is no unique definition of "small-scale producers". Using farm size as a criterion, households with less than two hectares of land are usually characterized as small-scale. However, the distribution of farm sizes can be very different among countries and depends on a number of agro-ecological conditions, economic and technological factors. FAO, therefore, adopts a broader definition of small-scale producers, and includes those who produce low quantities and yields, have low capital and education levels, and lack the skills to participate in markets, produce primarily for home consumption and rely heavily on family labour (FAO, forthcoming and FAO, 2010).

² The Old Lands are land cultivated originally with the inundation of the Nile. The New Lands are lands which are cultivated more recently after the building of the High Aswan Dam in 1952.

understanding women's work and working conditions. We selectively present the work of other scholars throughout the paper, in order to frame and contextualize our findings about women's work in rural Egypt.

Where relevant, we drew upon three other studies, which were conducted in the two study areas. The first was on gendered patterns of asset ownership and control in Egypt, the second was on male and female farmers' adoption of agricultural innovations in Egypt. The third study was the first author's dissertation on women's access³ to land in the Mubarak Resettlement Scheme (MRS). Noubariya was one of the communities included in the MRS (Najjar 2013).

The study employs the conceptual framework for rural women's empowerment within the context of decent work as developed by the FAO. The framework seeks to achieve interdependent empowerment components of social and economic advancement, dignity and value, and power and agency for rural women. It operationalizes the "pillars" ILO identifies for decent work, namely, employment creation and enterprise development, social protection, standards and rights at work, governance and social dialogue for achieving empowerment (for more information see Appendix I).

Within this context, this research addresses the following questions:

1. What are working conditions like for women in selected value chains⁴ (in terms of seasonality, hours of work, technologies, tasks, policies) and do they vary by gender?
2. What is the wage gap for different operations and tasks performed by women and men?
3. What is the role of power and agency (decision-making power and control over income) in shaping workers' ability to empower themselves through paid agricultural work?
4. What types of employment opportunities are empowering for rural women and why? (i.e. identify examples of good practice).
5. What is the occurrence and intensity of child labour and youth employment? What are working conditions like for specific activities?

The report will start with a literature review that identifies the significance of the study. This will be followed by an overview of methods used; important social, economic and policy development in rural Egypt; and description of the research sites in the New and Old Lands. Findings about working conditions and empowerment outcomes will be presented subsequently. This report ends with a summary and recommendations for ways to move forward for the empowerment of different groups of rural women workers.

Background Literature and Theoretical Approach

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains one of the most gender unequal regions in the world in terms of employment and work opportunities. Rural areas are especially so due to more rigid patriarchal familial and societal structures and fewer opportunities in education and employment for women (Martini 2011, ILO 2017). Rural men's participation aged

³ The term access is used because landholders have usufruct rights until a 30-year land installment payment matures into landownership status.

⁴ These were then replaced with a comparison between the Old and New Lands.

between (15 -50 years) in the total rural labour force was 78 percent compared to rural women's participation to total labour force that reached 22 percent of the same age in 2014. Whilst rural men within the 20-30 years age group represented around 65 percent of the total rural labour force compared to 35 percent of rural women within the same age group. Agriculture remains the main source of livelihood in rural areas. It employs 28 percent of the Egyptian population, including 43 percent women and 24 percent men (World Bank 2013). Despite the significant numbers of women workers employed in agriculture, women in rural Egypt have limited access to credit, inadequate land rights and are reported to be largely excluded from agricultural extension services (Larson 1991; El-Tobshy 2005; Barnes 2015). This is because women are always relegated to 'helper' status and not understood to be farmers in their own right (Badran 1993; Jensen 1994; Larson 1991). Barnes (2015), for example, finds that although many women irrigate the land in the absence of a male head of household, extension agents and engineers still refuse to acknowledge the fact that women are involved in irrigation and often actively undermine their contributions. The limited hiring and visibility of women agricultural extension workers also plays a role in women's marginalization and invisibility in farming. Larson (1991) notes that women are often visible in the field but not in statistics.

Women and work in rural areas of Egypt

Larson (1991) and Jensen (1994) explore the impact of employment on rural women's social and economic status in Egypt. They note that women's contributions are often dismissed as insignificant and unimportant even when they contribute a large share of family income (Larson 1991; Jensen 1994). The undermining of women's contributions happens even when they actively control the income they earn and spend large portions of it on meeting the family's needs (ibid). In order to make women's contributions more visible, Jensen (1994) argues for less formal and less rigid methodologies and tools both for conceptualizing work as well as accounting for work and evaluating it in the Egyptian context. It is also important to consider that although wage work is accounted for and therefore visible, it carries little prestige for women in rural communities of Egypt, where cloistering women from unrelated men is often considered the ideal (ibid). Furthermore, Jensen (1994) argues that wage labour is often carried out by women from the poorest families, often as an option of last resort. It may provide a subsistence wage but produces very little surplus. Even when they have active control over their income, wage work does not offer women much of a vehicle by which they can elevate their economic or social status. Ali (1998) finds that men's return due to the Iraq war compounded with reduced government spending on social subsidies due to structural adjustment policies pressured women to increasingly participate in the wage sector in rural Egypt for the economic survival of their families. Other concerns over the mechanization of agricultural enterprises in Egypt have also been raised because women typically have much weaker access to machinery and are more likely than men to lose work as a result of mechanization (Badran 1993; Jensen 1994). Other economic activities such as selling in the market may not be considered either dishonorable or prestigious. Nonetheless, such activities may be seen as more socially appropriate ways for rural Egyptian women to make a contribution to household income than wage work (ibid).

The importance of productive assets: Land

Landed property is the most prominent form of capital accumulation and the most important indicator of status in much of the world. Writing about Bangladesh, Smillie (2009:41) notes: “Those with land are not just better off; they are important. Those without it are nothing.” As in much of the rest of the world, private ownership rights in landed property also hold a very privileged position in the MENA region. Land provides social status, opportunities to participate in public life, access to credit and a stable source of income and food security (Agarwal 1994; Baruah, 2010; Doss et al 2008; Deininger et al 2010; Field 2007; Kumar and Quisumbing 2013; Peterman 2011). Because women are known to be disadvantaged in land and property ownership in much of the world, improving their access to such resources has become a major endeavor for many development organizations. Much research also points to discrepancies between women’s ownership of and control over resources (Agarwal 1994; Doss et al. 2015; Gammage et al. 2016). Both scholars and practitioners have applied themselves to understanding how best to enable women to acquire these assets and to assert control over them (see, for example, Agarwal, 1994; Baruah, 2010; Razavi 2007, 2009).

At 5 percent, the MENA region appears to have one of the lowest rates of women’s landownership in the world (FAO Gender and Land Rights Database). Women’s access to land in Egypt has been described as “alarmingly low” and “lagging behind” (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2007). Even by law, women in Egypt are entitled to inherit only half the amount of natal property that their brothers do but in reality most women do not even end up owning this limited share. Deep-seated cultural norms ensure that in practice brothers control the shares of their sisters, and women’s ownership is just nominal (Moors 1996; Najjar 2013). Brother-sister relationships are socially and culturally very important in the region. Brothers are expected to take care of their sisters in case of adversities such as deaths of fathers or husbands. Women themselves refrain from claiming their land rights to maintain good relationships with their brothers (Stauth 1990; Moors 1996; Najjar 2013). Women are expected to marry and access land in their husbands’ homes.

Rural women’s empowerment

Although there is a burgeoning literature that has emerged in the past few decades on women’s economic, social and political empowerment in different regional settings in the Global South, very limited research (Martini 2011 is one exception) has been conducted about rural women’s empowerment in Egypt or the MENA region more broadly. It is well-understood and well-documented that empowerment is context-dependent (Alkire et al. 2013; Solava and Alkire 2007) and essentially a process. Empowerment studies conducted in different parts of South Asia, for example, illustrate the importance of context in general and the differences between urban and rural settings in particular. For example, Schuler and Hashemi (1996), who conducted empowerment research with the women workers of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in the early 1990s, identified six specific indicators of women’s empowerment in Bangladesh: sense of self and vision of a future, mobility and visibility, economic security, status and decision-making power within the household, ability to interact effectively in the public sphere and affiliation with

non-family groups. A subsequent study of empowerment as experienced by urban members of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India revealed that one of the indicators, namely mobility and visibility, was far less important than others (Carr et al., 1996). The priorities and aspirations of urban members of SEWA, who had always been relatively visible and independent workers in the informal economy, were significantly different from those of the rural members of Grameen who were new entrants to the paid economy.

In this study, we use the FAO definition of rural women's empowerment through decent work and productive employment. In this framework⁵, empowerment is seen as a process of three inter-dependent and mutually-reinforcing empowering components, namely: women's social and economic advancement; women's individual and collective power and agency; and women's dignity and value.⁶ These three empowering components address specific gender needs and women's human rights through the scope of decent work pillars. This process stimulates the transformational change that ultimately leads to gender equality in the world of work and can be accomplished on both individual and collective level. We align this definition with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda which in this context includes gender-equitable access to employment opportunities; strong social protection floors for both women and men of all ages; equal protection of worker's rights, particularly those working in agriculture and in the informal rural economy; as well as equal opportunities for organizing, mobilizing and expressing collective agency (FAO, forthcoming and Figure 1 in the Appendix).

According to the World Bank (2017), 57% of the population in Egypt live in rural areas. Most of the research, policy, and development interventions that focus on empowering women through employment are based in urban contexts (Termine and Percic 2015). Yet, much of the population in the region reside in rural areas where inhibiting gender norms, often cited as the root of gender inequalities (Gammage et al. 2016), are far more entrenched. Rural areas in the region are also characterized by high rates for male outmigration, especially of male youth (see, for example, De Haas and Van Rooij 2010; Martini 2003; Larson 1991; and Ali 1998).

This study is based on empirical research to explore working conditions for women and men in different occupations in different regions as well as the role of social, economic and political empowerment in shaping employment experiences for different types of workers. We look at patterns in women's needs and outcomes for specific types of workers while also paying attention to the role of age in determining women's socio-economic advancement, their power and agency as well as dignity and value at their work place and of their work. In parallel, we pay

⁵ This framework overlaps in parts but also extends beyond the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

⁶ Social and economic advancement entails women accessing "gainful employment opportunities, improved skills and resources to compete in markets" as well as resource accumulation. It also focuses on education and the skills development needed to access gainful employment activities within this context. Power and agency entails women having an increased ability "to make decisions and act upon them and by exercising control over their resources and returns." It also focuses on control over and input into the use of income earned from the household's productive activities. Dignity and value entails dignity at work, particularly how people are treated and treat others at work as well as the level of individual's satisfaction with the work and how and whether the society values their contributions. It aims to focus on the freedom to choose and satisfaction with work, conditions of employment, forced labour, and child labour. The first two components are adapted from the framework proposed by Golla et al. (2011) whilst the third component is derived from Eyben's concept of economic empowerment (2011). This definition is further elaborated on in the conceptual paper on rural women's empowerment through decent work. See FAO, forthcoming.

special attention to issues faced by young people (between 15-24 years)⁷, especially young women, because this group experiences a much higher level of unemployment in the MENA region.⁸

We explore the empowerment potential of different types of employment for rural women in the two regions in Egypt. We document how working conditions interact with broader institutional structures and cultural norms to shape the experiences of women in various types of employment. The premise of our research is that decent work and decent working conditions can empower rural women on all levels and contribute to sustainable gender equality in the world of work.

Significance of the Current Study

Most of the literature on women and work in rural areas in Egypt was produced in the 1990s (Badran 1993; Jensen 1994; Larson 1991). Since then neoliberal policies such as deregulation, privatization, trade liberalization, state withdrawal from welfare provision, welfare cutbacks and structural adjustment were increasingly implemented (Bush 2007). There has simultaneously been increased international pressure on Egypt to reduce discrimination against women in various spheres of life. Interventions such as the provision of food aid and land to women in resettlement schemes in the New Lands are examples of policies and programs undertaken by the national government and international development agencies to empower Egyptian women and achieve gender equality⁹ (Adriansen 2009; Najjar 2013). Efforts to empower women economically have been complicated by the return migration of men who had previously left to work in Libya and Iraq because it led to more intense competition between women and men for lower-paid jobs and work that men would previously not have accepted.

We follow up on the ground in 2016 to examine the experiences of rural women with different types of work and the working conditions they experienced in both the Old and New Lands. This research is relevant for studies of gender, decent work in rural areas, global governance, social change and economic development.

⁷ The study uses the UN age definition of youth which refers to people aged 15 to 24 year. It is to be noted, however, that national age definition for youth in Egypt ranges between 15 to 29 years of age.

⁸ Youth unemployment and frustration of young people in the region has been written about quite often as being one of the primary reasons for the growing support among young people for religious fundamentalism, coups and other forms of political uprisings, including the recent Arab Spring. About 13.4 percent of the youth are unemployed — 9.9 percent among men and 24.8 percent among women (Ahram Online Monday, 05 December 2016). These rates are probably higher in rural areas.

⁹ Hereby, gender equality refers to the state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life, including equal access to, ownership of and control over resources and decision making. It also entails that women and men are equally valued and have the freedom to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by rigid gender roles, prejudices and discrimination (FAO TERM Portal).

Methodology

The research employs an extended case study approach to understand women's experiences with different types of employment (Burawoy 1998). Case studies are used for in-depth exploration of a tangible theme such as a process or an event where researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collections methods (Creswell 2002).

The primary fieldwork for this study was conducted in 2016 with a total of 127 respondents (65 women and 62 men) (see table 1 for details). We conducted 85 interviews (47 women and 38 men) and six focus groups (2 with women only, 3 with men only and one with both women and men) with different types of workers. We used both ILO and field-based categories (see Table 1) in both the Old and New Lands in order to understand the empowerment potential of women's employment in different types of work. Many of the respondents - particularly the tuk tuk drivers and the wage workers - fit into the youth category (aged between 15 and 24 years).

The respondents were recruited through a snowballing approach. Key informants in the community were asked to identify households and persons who fit into the different categories who also then led us to other respondents. In Kafr Sheikh, we depended on engineers in four Local Agricultural Cooperatives¹⁰ (LACs) to recruit the respondents who in turn led us to other respondents. Respondents were either interviewed in the LACs or in their own homes. In Noubariya, the first author had contacts established during her earlier PhD work. Three villages were targeted for the study. Some of the respondents were already known to her while others were recruited by other women landowners, their adult children and village engineers.

We also drew upon relevant findings from previous studies conducted in the areas since 2010, particularly three studies related to 1- gender and assets ownership and control in both study areas, 2- gender and innovations adoption in both study areas and 3-women's access to land in Noubariya. Table 1 lays out the research methods we used to collect the data. We aimed at gaining in-depth information on the pay and working conditions from a small sample size (Patton 2002). The interviews lasted between two hours and an entire day. Focus groups lasted between 2-4 hours. The interview and focus group questions were aimed at understanding gender norms related to employment, wages, asset ownership and control, problems faced at work, services available (microcredit, social insurance, and child care services), child labour prevalence, perceptions related to rights at work, and ability to voice one's opinion and concerns for affecting change (at work, at home and more generally in society). Most of the data was collected by the primary author but some semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted by four female and four male research assistants in the two areas. These assistants were trained by the primary author.

The employment categories included employers, including entrepreneurs and employers, wage workers, contributing family workers and own-account workers, such as small-scale and

¹⁰ Local agricultural cooperatives are responsible for providing farmers with inputs, marketing and technical advice in a given village. LACs are governed by a village engineer and 7 board members. All landowners in a respective village are members at large and vote in the 7 board members.

subsistence producers, as well as members of cooperatives and producer organizations, as per Table 1 below. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive and women and men included in the study often engaged in multiple work activities. Wage workers in Kafr Sheikh, for example, are often also renters of land or owners of small farms (smaller than 1 acre, often smaller than 0.5 acre).

Contributing family members are also sometimes small-scale producers. Many women, for example, reared poultry or livestock for sale. As another example, men, especially in Noubariya, who were small-scale producers also performed wage labour during financial hardships or to sustain their small businesses (petty grocery stores or tuk-tuk driving, for example). We labeled individuals whose economic activities could fit within different categories according to the type of employment that they considered to be their mainstay. Women who sold poultry, for example, were labelled as contributing family workers if they themselves identified being a ‘helper’ as their primary economic activity. Along the same lines, as mentioned earlier, we labelled women who are classified by ILO as small-scale producers as contributing family members because they identified themselves or were identified by others as such.

Table 1. Respondents and respective data collection methods.

Type of employment (classification as in the field)	Livelihood strategies (classification as per ILO status in employment)	Type of data collection	Additional characteristics
Wage workers	Wage workers	1 focus group with 6 women in Noubariya and 1 with 6 women in Kafr Sheikh	- Women wage workers were mostly from landless households. - Wage work is considered an option of last resort for women.
	Small-scale producers (some had small areas of land)	1 focus group with 6 men in Noubariya and 1 with 6 men in Kafr Sheikh Interviews with 6 women in Noubariya and 6 women in Kafr Sheikh	- Many (both men and women) in this category left school at a young age (8-12 years). - Some men in this category owned small parcels of land (less than an acre) on which they worked as small scale producers to combine their livelihoods with wage work.

Middlemen/ Middlewomen	Wage workers	2 women in each of Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh	<p>- Middlewomen in both regions are usually also labourers.</p> <p>-Middlemen and middlewomen are important agents in setting the conditions for work (e.g., transportation and meals) and the pay for wage workers.</p> <p>- Some middlemen in Noubariya are simultaneously employed as full-time farm attendants on bigger farms (5 acres or larger).</p>
	Own account workers	3 men in Kafr Sheikh 2 men in Noubariya	
Small-scale producers (including farm renters in both areas and small-scale land owners in Kafr Sheikh (less than one acre))	Own account workers	3 women in Kafr sheikh 6 men in Kafr Sheikh 2 men in Noubariya	<p>- Small-scale producers in Kafr Sheikh renting farms in this category rent 0.5-2 acres of land to grow rice and wheat for home consumption and also to sell surplus.</p> <p>- Due to the small sizes of landholdings in Kafr Sheikh, often many small-scale land owners rented additional land, with preference for areas and times of year when rice is the primary crop in the rotation cycle.</p> <p>-This category in Noubariya most commonly entailed 5-year rental arrangements for a fruit orchard.</p>
	Contributing family workers		
Small scale producers (dairy processing and small-scale businesses; such as vegetable and fruit sales and children's nurseries)	Own account workers	6 women in Kafr Sheikh (one poultry farmer, 2 vegetable and fruit sellers, 1 fish seller, one restaurant owner, one dairy processor) 5 women in Noubariya (1 nursery owner and 4 dairy processors) 2 young male tuk-tuk owners in each of Kafr Sheikh and Noubariya	<p>-4 of the 6 women respondents in Kafr Sheikh were heads of households.</p> <p>-There is a milk collection point in Noubariya which has created a market for milk sales.</p> <p>-The male tuk tuk owners were wage workers at a younger age and continue to work in the wage sector when they are in financial need.</p>

<p>Entrepreneurs and employers (medium-sized enterprises) Entrepreneurs And Employers</p>	<p>Entrepreneurs and employers</p>	<p>5 men in Noubariya 2 men in Kafr Sheikh 3 women in Kafr Sheikh 4 women in Noubariya</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All women landowners (regardless of size of plot) were included in this category. - Women landowners in Kafr Sheikh did not necessarily oversee or manage their farms. In Noubariya, on the other hand, many women landowners managed their own farms. - In Noubariya, the Graduate settlers in good standing were also entitled to owning additional property (greenhouse, shops, 200m² of residential or investment land)
<p>Contributing family workers</p>	<p>Contributing family workers Small-scale producers</p>	<p>5 women in in each of Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh One Zamala (reciprocated labour) group in Kafr Sheikh (with 7 men and 7 women)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This category also occasionally sold products such as milk or poultry, but were mainly focused on their families' subsistence. - In Kafr Sheikh, women contributed significantly more than men to the reciprocated labour groups called Zamala, which is considered an extension of household work.
<p>Members of cooperatives and producer organizations</p>	<p>Members of cooperatives and producer organizations</p>	<p>1 group of men in each of Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh (one focus group with 5 members of a producer organization in Kafr Sheikh and one interview with the president of a producer group in Noubariya)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This category is relatively uncommon in both regions, however, with a slightly stronger presence in Kafr Sheikh. - In Noubariya settlers did not know each other well enough to collaborate in collectives.

Officials (engineers for Local Agricultural Cooperatives (LACs), Head and Deputy for the Land Reclamation Sector)	Employees	5 men in each of Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh 2 men in Cairo 1 male representative of farmers' syndicate in each of Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh	- Public service employees. - All LAC engineers were men. - Most extension agents, appointed to specific regions, were also men. - Women extension agents often only performed office-based administrative duties.
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Overview of major social, economic and policy development in Egypt which affect rural women's access to decent work and productive employment

The literature on this topic as well as our empirical primary findings from this study reveal that structural adjustment policies which have been implemented since 1991 led to a dramatic increase in price of agricultural inputs and land rentals which fueled landlessness and increased rural inequalities (Bush 2007; Bush and Broomley 1994; Bush 2004). By 1997, landowners who had been evicted from their lands in previous decades and their families made up 10 percent of the Egyptian population (ibid). Only 1.5% of farmers who had been evicted from the Old Lands were given 2.5 acres of land each and a house in the New Lands (Saad 2000). This group of farmers had previously been awarded land in other areas in the 1950s when President Nasser introduced land distribution schemes by imposing land ceilings on large landowners. President Mubarak introduced 'Law 1992' in the 1990s to return some of this land to the original owners (Bush 2007). Very limited research has been conducted at the field level to explore the impacts of both social equity-inspired land distribution in the 1950s and structural readjustment policies in the 1990s and after. Our findings reveal very unequal relations between renters and owners under sharecropping regimes in the Old Lands with regard to decision-making as well as input and labour cost sharing. We also found that farming in the Old Lands of Kafr Sheikh is unprofitable due to land fragmentation and expensive inputs. These factors have led to increased workload for women who are wives of farmer renters or renters themselves. Because farming is unprofitable in Kafr Shekih, people who do farm must exert significantly more effort than in Noubariya to eke out a living from the land.

Another policy of relevance to our work and case study areas is that of distributing land to women in the New Lands, particularly in the MRS. Land reclamation and redistribution efforts in the past in Egypt have always been gender-blind, resulting in extremely male-biased titling of land in the names of male "heads of households." Our fieldwork revealed that the World Food Program provided food aid to settlers in the Intilaq settlement (one of 24 settlements of the MRS) in Noubariya on the condition that women receive 20 percent of the distributed land titles. Settlers accessed land and housing in nearby villages. Each distributed parcel of land was either 2.5 or 5 acres. Settlers who held a university degree or diploma were allowed to access 5 acres of land and a homestead in a nearby village. The rationale provided for this in the MRS was that endowing educated unemployed people with land might motivate them to take up farming or to open businesses in order to support themselves.

Even though the MRS adopted land titling for women largely due to international pressure and the Mubarak regime's desire to appear adequately pro-women to international watchdogs and donors who were alarmed by his government's broader human rights record, the MRS was noteworthy because of its explicit focus on giving women land. Few studies have looked at women and their experiences with access to land through the MRS. Adriansen (2009) points to land distribution to women in the MRS as a promising means to increase the participation of women in public life. Najjar (2015) describes how women landholders in the MRS used innovative farming methods to adapt to climate change, but received very little support from the state, which continued to be focused single-mindedly on 'strategic cash crops.' The same researcher also emphasized the persistence of social norms that excluded women from meaningful participation in decision-making on agricultural and land-related committees (ibid).

Egypt does not have a policy on gender nor on employment. However, there are several strategies that make a cross-referential reference to both issues. Foremost, the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030 (2009, SDS) serves as a guiding umbrella for the improvement of basic living standards for the national population and aligns the strategy objectives with the objectives of the Post 2015 Development Agenda. The objective of the strategy is to develop an unified long-term political, social, and economic vision as the base for short and medium term development plans at the national, local, and sectorial levels. The strategy addresses social issues, including social justice, health education, and training, as well as the economic dimension, including provision of decent and productive jobs through decreasing unemployment and increasing productivity, and transformation of the informal economy into formal. Yet, this strategy is not tailored to meet the needs of rural women in terms of gender-equitable employment and empowerment.

To fill this gap, the National Council of Women is currently developing a Gender Plan (to be published in 2017) that will be in line with the general objectives of the Sustainable Development Strategy but at the same time addressing the main gender issues omitted in it. The objective of the Plan is to enhance the role of Egyptian women in the society and enhance their empowerment through adopting policies and strategies that support a more efficient improvement of women's situation. Inter alia, the Plan aims at enhancing the contribution of women in the national economy and increase the employment rate of women through implementing micro and small projects and development of women's skills through a program entitled "Training for Employment" with the objective of creating job opportunities for women through their skills' improvement. However, it is not yet known to what degree decent work and productive employment for rural women will be integrated into this strategy.¹¹

The Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy 2030 (2009, SADS) aims to fulfill several relevant objectives to be met during the period 2010-2030, including increasing the productivity of both the land and rural units, increasing the competitiveness of agricultural products in local and international markets, improving the living standards of the rural inhabitants, and reducing poverty rates in the rural areas. It is worth noting that although the agricultural strategy has indicated a number of policies and programs that would address rural women directly, e.g. through provision of income generating activities (dairy products, meat production, poultry

¹¹ Information based on internal FAO report (2016). The strategy was revised in 2013 and still pending approval by the Parliament.

production and fisheries) as well as linking them to markets and facilitating access to finance, the strategy does not address other relevant issues for the promotion of gender-equitable decent work and rural women's empowerment through productive employment in agriculture, e.g. equal access to social protection and decent working conditions, equal access to safety and health at the workplace and equal participation in farmers associations.

Perhaps more directly relevant to decent work is the revised Labour law¹² which addresses issues related to maternity leave, child care leave and child care facilities. Yet the law does not address the needs of working rural women in the informal sector in the rural economy who do not have any form of social protection or lack a safe working environment, nor it acknowledges different types of women workers such as wage workers or contributing family workers. These considerations are important as the latter is not recognized as a labour category and the former is not represented in labour unions and organizations.

For formulating targeted employment policy it is key to collect data on relevant indicators. In terms of national data collection, analysis and dissemination, there is a gap in addressing access to decent work and productive employment disaggregated by age, sex and location, particularly in national CAPMAS surveys such as the Household Income, Expenditure and Consumption Survey, the Economic Census Survey and the Labour Survey.

Overall, there is absence of a national policy framework that would address in an interdisciplinary manner issues related to rural women's access to decent work and productive employment at equal terms as men. Among other, these issues, include rural women's time poverty related to their triple work burden, promotion of equal pay for equal work in the rural economy with emphasis on agriculture and productive value chains, women rights at work, occupational safety and health as well as age-related issues linked to youth unemployment/underemployment or 'missing' workers and child labour prevention in the agriculture sector, including girls' hidden forms of labour.

The uprising of 2011 led to important social and policy changes which are affecting the agricultural context in both the Old and New Lands. In the Old Lands of Kafr Sheikh irrigation development projects were halted and in the New Lands of Noubariya additional land distribution programs were also halted. It was also reported in Noubariya that the government stopped subsidizing export of oranges which led to sharp income losses for the many men and women farmers who cultivated oranges that are now as a result sold locally at much lower and unprofitable prices. The cotton produce in Kafr Sheikh was similarly affected by the loss of export markets. This was partially attributed to mixing different varieties (long and short) of cotton back in 2006. The resulting planting material was also mixed which made export of cotton and its use in local textile factories difficult. The frequent changes in ministers (Egypt has had six agriculture ministers since the Revolution) led to fluctuating prices for strategic crops, namely cotton and wheat, ineffective administration and continued uncertainty in the implementation of agricultural development programs. Most recently in 2016, all syndicates were dissolved until new regulations could be developed as to how to operate. The Uprising in

¹² The National Council of Women is currently conducting a study about the gap between the constitutional rights for women and the existing laws to present a proposal for changing the labour law and all related laws.

other countries in the Arab World as well as the Iraq war in 2003 led to the return of many migrant male labour workers from Libya and Iraq.

A review of government projects related to women's empowerment revealed that the state tends to focus on creating income generation opportunities for women (including through various types of paid employment and microcredit) without paying much attention to decent working conditions or women's ability to organize into and hold positions in unions or other organizations. Economic gains for women are only part of what development should tackle. It is equally important for women to be politically and socially empowered (Baruah 2005; De Pryck and Termine 2014; Termine and Percic 2015).

Description of the two study areas

We collected data in two areas in rural Egypt, which have common socio-cultural, historical and economic characteristics but differ significantly in socio-cultural norms, economic and political context for women's roles, responsibilities, social status and land ownership rates. We worked in the Noubariya area (the Intilaq settlement) in the New Lands, and Kafr Sheikh (Sidi Salem) in the Old Lands. The New Lands are desert lands that have been reclaimed since the Revolution of 1952 and the building of the High Aswan Dam. The Intilaq settlement in Noubariya was only reclaimed in the 1990s by the Mubarak Resettlement Scheme (MRS) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation.

The Intilaq settlement was of special interest to us because women in this community not only received 20 percent of the land titles distributed but were also invited to be board members of farmers' organizations. While the Intilaq settlement in Noubariya has a 20 percent land ownership rate for women, the Old Lands of Sidi Salem in Kafr Sheikh are known to have a much lower land ownership rate for women of 4 to 6 percent (FAO Gender and Land Rights Database; USAID 2010). As previously mentioned, the World Food Program (WFP) agreed to provide food aid to settlers in the New Lands based on the condition of women receiving a fifth of the land titles. The WFP also insisted on the inclusion of women in leadership positions on formal committees such as Water User Associations¹³ (WUA) and Local Agricultural Cooperatives (LAC). The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as well as the resettlement program provided very rigorous and formal training to graduate men and women settlers during the early 1990s. Taken together, these interventions created important and visible roles for women in agriculture in the New Lands. This is in sharp contrast with the Old Lands of the Egyptian delta (location of Kafr Sheikh) where women are far less likely to own agricultural land or to participate in public life, even when they owned land.

Additionally, in Kafr Sheikh (in the Old Lands) the parcels of land are smaller (one acre¹⁴ on average) and large, extended families typically work the land. Plot sizes are smaller in Kafr

¹³ Water User Associations are locally elected and are responsible for resolving conflict over irrigation water use as well as regulating its use.

¹⁴ The most commonly used unit of land in the MENA region is feddan, which is a unit of area measurement that originated in Syria, Sudan and Egypt, and is equivalent to 1.038 acres. Feddans will be reported as acres for simplification purposes. Each feddan is made up of 24 kirats. Kirats will be reported as kirats.

Sheikh, averaging less than an acre. Consequently, farmers in Kafr Sheikh tended to farm on multiple parcels of land (2-3 on average). By contrast, in Noubariya (in the New Lands) settlers typically have larger farms (between 2.5 to 5 acres) and they typically relocate to the area and farm the land as nuclear families. Some of the farmers who had previously been awarded land in the 1950s but were evicted in the 1990s were compensated with desert lands in Noubariya. The larger areas of cultivable land in Noubariya (compared to Kafr Sheikh) and the smaller number of family members, especially in the Graduate category, created wage labour opportunities in Noubariya on a regular basis for the landless poor, who also migrate (temporarily and seasonally) as families to the New Lands from other areas of Egypt in search of wage employment. Kafr Sheikh (in the Old Lands), on the other hand, has better established access to basic services such as government offices, health care and transportation.

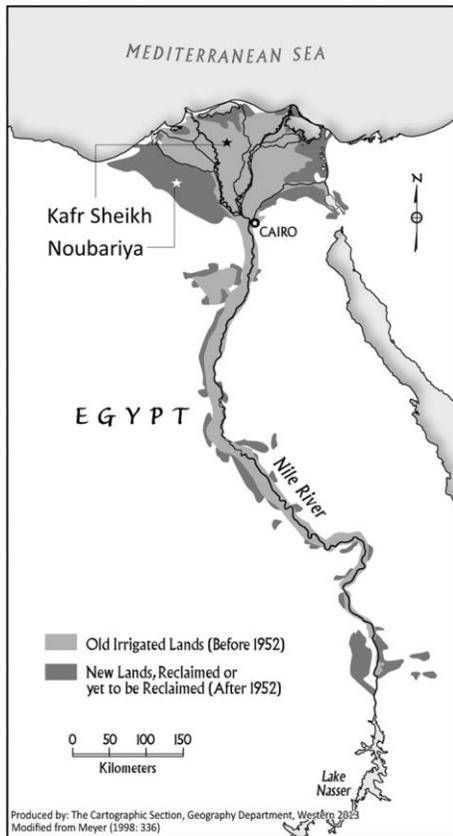


Figure 1. Case Study Locations in the Old and New Lands. Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh (adapted from Meyer 1998).

In rural Kafr Sheikh the production is primarily focused on field crops such as wheat, rice, cotton, alfalfa, and corn. Sugar beet cultivation and livestock production are among the most profitable in this area. The Intilaq settlement in the New Lands, on the other hand, is more actively focused on commercial fruit production and less on annual crops, such as vegetables,

potatoes, peanuts, wheat and beans. Some villages which are inhabited by the ‘evicted tenants’¹⁵, however, also engage in horticulture, but primarily rely on annual crop production (such as wheat, peanuts and alfalfa) due to inadequate funds for commercial fruit production and smaller plots of land. In such cases, land is typically titled in the names of grandfathers. Families access 2.5 acres of land and a homestead but the land is not adequate for supporting entire families, and some family members supplement income from horticulture or field crop cultivation with wage labour.

In addition to settlers’ horticultural production on farms that are 2.5 to 5 acres in size, there are large farms (20-100 acres) in the New Lands, where more affluent investors produce fruit and offer wage labour opportunities. This high demand on labour also creates opportunities for hiring women in tasks for which they would usually not be hired in the Old Lands, such as weeding and planting. The high demand for family labour and wage work, including women’s labour, in the New Lands, combined with the fact that settlers have not known their neighbors for a long time, leads to less rigid social norms about what men and women do in agriculture. These factors also lead to less social control over women’s roles and movements. These different conditions in crops cultivated, extent of social control, labour demand, services available, and sizes of plots of land for cultivation influence the experiences of women who are working in local agriculture as wage workers, contributing family workers, small-scale producers, members of cooperatives as well as entrepreneurs and employers.

It is also important to mention that the services of the LACs are better in the Old Lands, where larger quantities of fertilizers, seeds for ‘strategic crops’ (e.g., seeds for wheat, cotton) and other inputs are available to farmers. Extension service support and access to credit is also stronger in the Old Lands.

According to the World Bank (2009), 53 percent of children (aged between 7-14) in Egypt are employed in agriculture on a temporary (e.g., during holidays and summer time) and full-time basis. Consequently, there is a high level of illiteracy, particularly for women, in both areas. The literacy rates for women above 15 years of age in Kafr Sheikh is 51 percent while for men it is 70 percent (CAMPAS 2006). In Behera, the province which Noubariya region belongs to, literacy is 68 percent for men and 48 percent for women. Poverty may also compel families to introduce children to agricultural labour while they are still very young. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line¹⁶ in Behera is 19.8 percent and 18.2 percent in Kafr Sheikh (CAMPAS 2013).

¹⁵ As previously described, this category of farmers lost their lands due to the Tenancy Law of 1992, which was applied in 1997 (Bush 2007). It gave back original landowners their lands, which Nasser had initially seized for landless peasants in the 1950s.

¹⁶ According to CAMPAS (2016) the poverty line in Egypt is at 482 EGP per month and is defined as the minimum income deemed adequate for an individual to meet basic needs.

Working conditions for different categories of workers

This section lays out the working conditions for different types of workers: wage workers, contributing family workers, own-account workers, members of cooperatives and entrepreneurs and employers. For classification and characteristics of each category please see Table 1. We define working conditions as the extent of ownership and control over productive and financial resources; access to employment opportunities; access to education and skills development; access to social protection and health care services; access to participation in social dialogue; as well perceptions related to the value of and satisfaction derived from the work.

For each category of workers, we will systematically outline what is common for men and women in the two areas and then move to what is different. Also at the end of each subsection summary tables will be presented to highlight the main findings (in terms of similarities and differences between the two study sites). Some aspects of the three empowerment components at various work types are linked to the working conditions. In particular, the social and economic advancement component is related to access to productive assets and opportunities for training at work. The dignity and value component, as another example, is related to how people are treated and treat others at work. We will be identifying the working conditions aspects related to these two empowerment components. However, we will explore their empowerment implications in greater depth in the empowerment section.

Wage workers

Wage rural workers can be classified into different categories: permanent, temporary, casual, seasonal, piece-rate workers in an employment relationship with a) farmer, farming or plantation company, or agricultural contractor, and b) rural non-farm enterprise/public actor in the secondary sector (including agribusiness and agro-industries) and tertiary sector.¹⁷

Most of the workers in this category in both areas are landless or near landless, owning or accessing family landholdings of small sizes. Workers in this category, in both areas, were the most vulnerable due to family poverty, precarious working conditions, low pay and erratic work availability. Many of the male and female workers in this category (23 out of total 24 interviewed in both areas) had left school at an early age (8-12 years). While some children work only during holidays, others leave school permanently for wage work. Children's participation in the wage sector is so common in both areas that there is a specific wage rate for 'children's and women's labour' in Noubariya and for child-specific tasks in Kafr Sheikh, such as counting worms in insect traps on cotton farms. It was reported that 6 out of 10 workers in Noubariya and 3 or 4 out of 10 in Kafr Sheikh are children. Of course, there is more work available for wage workers in Noubariya so it makes sense that there are more working children there. More male

¹⁷ FAO, 2013.

than female underage workers are employed in both regions. Girls are reported to be employed only when the family is in need.

Both men and women of different generations in both areas (23 out of 24) explained that the agricultural wage sector is an employment of last resort. A 24-year-old male wage worker in Noubariya highlighted that “no one would willingly work for someone else [on their farms] and that “certain conditions [which he explained later as the poverty of one’s family] oblige people to do that”. Women preferred a stable job (3 out of 6 interviewed in Kafr Shiekh and 1 out of 6 interviewed in Noubariya) explicitly mentioned preferring a stable, salaried job. Part of why wage workers saw agricultural labour as an employment option of last resort was because they were often harassed and humiliated at work. Men in Noubariya (3 out of 6 interviewed) complained about being bullied in their work: “even if the pay is good, a landowner or a middleman feels entitled to humiliate you. He will call you bad names in order to push you to finish the work.” Women in Kafr Sheikh (2 out of 6 interviewed) also complained about being humiliated at work “if you complain that a male worker is coming too close then the least word you will hear is ‘Why do you complain? You think you are very pretty?’”

In both areas, gender essentialisms and ideologies determined what women are hired for and what men are hired for as well as how much they were paid for the respective tasks. There were differences between the two regions in the availability of wage work and the rigidity or flexibility of gender roles, which may have evolved at least in part due to the scarcity or abundance of work available for men. Even though in the New Lands women were able to access less traditional jobs, some tasks such as pruning, weeding and planting, which are typically higher paying, were either exclusively or overwhelmingly employing men. As previously explained, in Kafr Sheikh farm labour is mainly provided by the family, additional labour was required only during the peak seasons of planting and harvesting. In Noubariya, on the other hand, there was a higher demand for wage work due to bigger sizes of landholdings and smaller nuclear families of settlers. Furthermore, the landowners, especially investors and some settlers from the Graduate category, were more affluent and were more dependent on hired labour than landowners in Kafr Sheikh. In fact, some investors and Graduates were fully dependent on hired labour.

A general global perception and affirmative gender essentialism that women are more patient and have ‘nimble fingers’ translates into women being predominantly hired for laborious but repetitive tasks such as transplanting rice and harvesting cotton in Kafr Sheikh and harvesting fruits and vegetables in Noubariya, which had different maturing dates throughout the year and provided more regular access to wage opportunities. Since men were perceived to have more physical strength and technological prowess, they were hired for tasks such as *malkh* [the removal of rice seedlings in large batches] in rice production, irrigation, pesticide spraying, spreading fertilizers and pruning.

Women in both regions were paid less than men. The daily wage for women ranged between 30 Egyptian Pounds¹⁸ (EGP) and 50 EGP; for men it was between 60 EGP and 100 EGP. In both

¹⁸ In May 2016, each 10 EGPs are equivalent to 1 USD.

areas, many women only found work on a seasonal basis. The period between harvesting seasons in both areas and the month of July in Kafr Sheikh were identified by many women (12 out of the 12 interviewed) as a lean period during which very few work opportunities were available. Because the tasks performed by men are perceived to be more 'difficult' and tasks performed by women are perceived to be 'easy,' men were paid more than women (often double in Kafr Sheikh) and perceived to be family breadwinners while women were considered to be helpers. Of course, many women were primary or sole breadwinners for their families but this did not in any way help them earn higher wages because the perception of women as 'secondary' wage winners or helpers was so persistent and entrenched. The daily wage rate for tasks common to both men and women is 50 EGP in Noubariya but tasks exclusive to men in both areas are at 100 EGP. Depending on work availability, workers in both areas may choose to work one shift from 8 am to 12 noon for 50 EGP, or a double shift from 8 am to 3 pm for 80 to 100 EGP. There were reports (including by male wage workers themselves) in both areas of men using drugs to enable them to work double shifts. Because of their household maintenance and caregiving responsibilities, women seldom worked double shifts.

In both areas, men and women workers complained of harsh working conditions, such as the heat and the work intensity. In Noubariya, workers identified being impaled with thorns while harvesting of lemons and prickly pear. Thorns of prickly pear can also be problematic and dangerous because they are very fine and can easily enter the eye especially when it is windy. In Kafr Sheikh irrigation water was described as very polluted and full of parasitic worms. Engineers also confirmed the problems with irrigation water quality in Kafr Sheikh. Some people in Kafr Sheikh refuse to eat rice grown there and purchase rice from other areas.

Due to the relative remoteness of the farms, labourers in Noubariya in general, and women in particular, were more dependent on middlemen for finding wage jobs. In contrast to Kafr Sheikh, both men and women were hired for the same tasks in Noubariya such as fruit harvesting, planting and weeding with a hoe. Nonetheless, there was always a certain degree of gendering of different tasks. Not many women, for example, were employed in weeding with a hoe or in planting peanuts because these tasks were considered too laborious and skill-intensive. On the other hand, more women than men were hired in fruit harvesting.

Sometimes middlemen in Noubariya charged women an additional 5 EGP per day for 'protecting' them from harassment and insults and to ensure they get transportation. In a focus group discussion with 6 women wage labourers in Noubariya, they mentioned that transportation was a problem for them: "a man can ride anything, but us women we cannot, and sometimes we have to wait for a long time to get a ride back." Although there was more work available for women in Noubariya, some of their wages were lost for these reasons. On family farms, on the other hand, some employers paid women 10 EGP less per day than men for harvesting or weeding because of the perception that men were faster and 'better' workers. A female wage worker in Noubariya remarked that she always finishes weeding (with a hoe) before her husband, and yet he is consistently paid more than her. The same woman explained that women often work in groups, or with at least one additional woman that they already know, in order to comply with cultural norms that require women to seclude themselves from unrelated men. Similar

findings were reported in Kafr Sheikh. One young female wage worker remarked that wage work is more acceptable for women than selling in a grocery store because the agricultural wage work is performed in groups of women.

In Noubariya, some landowners, especially the affluent ones, and farmers under time constraints preferred to hire workers on a per-task rather than a per-day basis. Many labourers (both men and women) preferred this and explained that per-task wages can sometimes enable them to earn more than 150 EGP a day. Some of the more affluent landowners also often hired a poorer family to stay on the farm and manage it for a monthly salary paid to the 'head of household.' Some also rented their lands out to a family for up to 100,000 EGP per year. Some of such workers end up being able to buy a house or an acre of land in Noubariya even at the current high market prices for land.

The reputations of female wage workers - particularly young single women – in both regions were easily tarnished because of the inevitable interactions between them and unrelated men at work. Young women working in the wage sector complained during focus groups in both regions that people in the community gossip about them being loose and disrespectful. In Noubariya, they stressed that instead of feeling empathy or compassion for young women who must work to support themselves and their families, older people were more likely to tell their sons not to marry girls who are wage workers. When the primary author revisited a young wage worker who got engaged recently in Noubariya, she asked that her work remain a secret from her fiancé. She had chosen not to discuss her wage work history with him in order to appear more appropriately 'marriageable.' Two women in Noubariya explained that young women working in the wage sector often cover their faces because they did not want their identity to be known to others.

The young wage workers in both areas reported giving their incomes to their parents as well as paying for their own marriages. For the youth in both areas, being able to afford their marriages was the primary reason for working. Several in the communities described purchases related to marriage as the most significant expense in a person's life. In both areas, parents tend to pay for weddings in better-off households but young men and women from poorer families often paid for their own weddings through wage work. However, women's participation in wage work even for the poor families in both communities is seen as a last resort. Ideals of women's seclusion prevail in both areas and brothers are expected to take care of their young unmarried sisters when fathers are deceased. Girls working in wage work in both areas along with their families are considered to be in desperate need for work. It was also mentioned by respectable leaders in the community (mainly landowners) that it is more acceptable for married women to work in the wage sector than unmarried young girls as they are more likely to attract sexual harassment. In the focus group discussions in both areas women involved in wage work explained that they lacked the financial capital to open their own poultry or small ruminant rearing business.

Some of the women working in the wage sector in both regions were widows. Other saw themselves as 'assisting' or 'helping' husbands who couldn't earn enough to support their families. Women with young children in both regions (2 women in Kafr Sheikh and one woman in Noubariya) explained that they would stop working if their families did not need their incomes. There were very few nurseries or childcare centres in Noubariya, and for toddlers there

were none at all. In Kafr Sheikh, 2 women employed in the wage sector complained that the cost of daycare was unaffordable. If they had to work due to financial difficulties, they would either take their children to work with them, or leave them with the neighbors and grandparents - if that was an option.

Most notably, some men respondents in both areas (4 in Noubariya and 3 in Kafr Sheikh) were able to use wage work savings as a stepping stone to generate more stable income and livelihoods of higher social status. There seems to be a pattern in the progression from first participating in wage work, then buying a tuk-tuk and finally opening a shop. Some of the wage workers, mostly men, were also able to buy houses and land in the New Lands with income from wage work. Property prices were very low in the early stages of resettlement in the New Lands. Five acres of land and a house in a nearby village were sold for 15,000 EGP (which was equivalent to 3000 USD at the time of purchase).

On the other hand, women in both areas were more likely to get stuck in wage work as a main source of income for their entire lives. Women who became widowed or divorced - with inadequate savings or no agricultural land - were much more likely to enter wage work (such was the case of two women in Kafr Sheikh and two women in Noubariya). Women heads of households were often unable to accumulate assets or savings because they spent all their wages on family subsistence and generated very little surplus. Indeed, some women workers reported also depending on *zaka*, which is money collected by mosques for the disadvantaged, to make ends meet.

Wage workers generally lack health insurance in both areas. Wage workers explained that if a worker got injured at work, others in the shift would cover his or her work so that the worker would not be deprived of their daily wage. One landowner in Noubariya explained that if a wage worker got injured on his farm, he takes care of medical expenses. Provision of health services for wage workers is not mandatory for employers.

The health care infrastructure in Noubariya (and the New Lands more generally) was weak if not almost non-existent. In Kafr Sheikh, they were generally inefficient and dysfunctional. Although there are government-sponsored clinics in which a person only pays 1 EGP to see a physician in Kafr Sheikh, two wage workers (one man and one woman) out of the total 12 wage workers interviewed in Kafr Sheikh) complained that they tend to be treated poorly at such facilities. Wage workers in Noubariya are further disadvantaged by the fact that even this 1 EGP program did not exist in their community. The infrastructure that the government had built more than a decade ago for hospitals in Noubariya were still empty during our fieldwork in 2016.

There were very few washroom facilities on farms in both areas. Since it was considered more socially acceptable for men to relieve themselves in public, women were more inconvenienced by the lack of washroom facilities. Three women emphasized that the lack of washrooms exacerbated the reputational damage for women wage workers. Four women mentioned drinking less water, forcing themselves to wait until they went home, and physically covering one another while they relieved themselves on the farm as strategies they used to deal with the absence of washrooms. Two others complained that in Kafr Sheikh some landowners do have washrooms

but do not allow workers to use them. An export organization called EUREPGAP, that operates in Noubariya region, imposed building washrooms for agricultural labourers as a compliance criterion for investors and farm owners who want to export fruits to Europe. The wider influence such compliance requirements for export have on working conditions and worker safety in Egypt and in the MENA region have not been documented and certainly warrants additional research.

All wage workers, when asked, emphasized that they did not have any opportunities for further education or training in their jobs. In both areas there was a completely undemonstrated but widespread perception that men were ‘better’ at wage work than women and employers used it to justify preferentially hiring men on their farms. Women wage workers in Kafr Sheikh were particularly affected by such men-biased perceptions. Large numbers of men who had migrated from Kafr Sheikh to Libya in earlier years recently returned home and were trying to re-enter agricultural work. The decline of the tourism industry in Egypt and increased mechanization in agriculture also meant that larger numbers of men were now competing with women for agricultural work (such as transplanting rice) that they would not have accepted in more prosperous times. In both regions, the mechanization agriculture, (for example the use of peanut cleaner in Noubariya and pumpkin pulp hachers in Kafr Sheikh) is also displacing waged work opportunities for men and women (who are employed in larger numbers for these cleaning tasks).

Table 2. Summary of wage workers working conditions in the two areas.

Empowering components	Gendered employment disadvantages	Noubariya	Kafr Sheikh
Social and Economic Advancement	Gender Wage Gap	-About 10 EGP difference for same tasks to the advantage of men on family-owned farms -Same pay for gender-mixed tasks but a 50% increase in pay for men-exclusive tasks	-In general men are hired for what is perceived to be physically strenuous and women are hired for what is perceived as ‘light’ tasks with a 50% wage gap

<p>Access to credit and accumulation of capital and assets</p>	<p>-Little surplus money for women who spend their funds on household consumption</p> <p>- Limited ability for women to access funds for opening a business</p> <p>-Men are more likely to accumulate funds and even buy property during the early stages of resettlement in Noubariya</p>	<p>-Little surplus money for women who spend their funds on household consumption</p> <p>-Limited ability for women to access funds for opening a business</p> <p>-Men are more likely to accumulate funds and even buy property</p>
<p>Access to social protection, health insurance and health care</p>	<p>-Workers lack health insurance, vacation pay or sick leave</p> <p>-Workers have limited access to health care services more broadly</p>	<p>-Workers lack health insurance, vacation pay or sick leave</p> <p>-Workers have better access to health care and at subsidized rates</p>
<p>Access to childcare</p>	<p>-Women have no access to childcare for children below two years of age</p> <p>-Women have limited access to childcare above two years of age</p>	<p>-There are childcare facilities in the areas for all ages but they are cost-prohibitive</p>

Power and Agency	Control over own assets and income	<p>-Women, in general, controlled income coming from their wage work. However, they often spent it in on household food items and necessities.</p> <p>-Young girls had to work when their families were very poor and had limited number of male members. Some did not control their income and gave it to their parents, while others used it to buy their trousseau.</p>	<p>-Women, in general, controlled income coming from their wage work. However, especially in Kafr Sheikh where wage work opportunities are not as common, they often spent it in on household food items and necessities.</p> <p>-Young girls had to work when their families were very poor and had limited number of male members. Some did not control their income and gave it to their parents, while others used it to buy their trousseau.</p>
Dignity and Value	Children work's prevalence	<p>-About 6 out of ten workers are below the age of 15</p> <p>-Girls seek employment in agriculture as a last resort</p>	<p>-About 4 out of ten workers are below the age of 15</p> <p>-Girls seek employment in agriculture as a last resort</p>
	Workers' Satisfaction and Social perceptions of women's work in the wage sector	<p>-Women who work in the wage sector earn a bad reputation for association with unrelated men</p> <p>-More acceptable for married women</p> <p>-Both men and women feel humiliated at work and prefer alternative employment</p>	<p>-Women who work in the wage sector earn a bad reputation for association with unrelated men</p> <p>-More acceptable for married women</p> <p>-Both men and women feel humiliated at work and prefer alternative employment</p>

Contributing family workers

Official ILO definition of contributing family workers refers to people who hold self-employed jobs in an establishment operated by a related person, with too limited a degree of involvement in its operation to be considered a partner. In terms of working time or other factors, a contributing family worker is not at a level comparable to that of the head of the enterprise.¹⁹ Yet, on the ground in the study areas of Egypt, rural women were considered as “helpers” and “contributing family workers” even if they run family farms or businesses. This is due to prevailing socio-cultural norms and the value of women’s work being attributed by their immediate family or wider society.

Women in this category were mainly focused on subsistence farming (in Kafr Sheikh) and meat production (in Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh). All women interviewed (5 in Noubariya and 5 in Kafr Sheikh) reared poultry, small ruminants and livestock (mainly for daily products). One common source of income that women in this category depended upon is *jam’iyat*, a revolving fund for generating income. Some women were simultaneously involved in two or three *jam’iyat*, borrowing anywhere between 50 EGP (5 USD) and 15,000 EGP (1500 USD). They contributed money to these rotating credit groups from occasional poultry or livestock sales as well as husbands’ and children’s income. Women in the ‘contributing family worker’ category owned poultry, gold and small ruminants. They were generally better off than wage workers because they were able to accumulate assets which they can sell in times of crisis and then rebuy when money is available (Najjar et al. forthcoming). However, the lack of economic autonomy and decision-making power is definitely a concern for this group of women. In the assets study, many women explained that they could be obliged to sell their livestock or gold against their wishes due to pressure from in-laws or husbands.

In Kafr Sheikh, women far outnumber men in this category. Although in many cases women were managing farms, especially if their husbands were involved in other income-generating activities or had migrated to other areas for work, women were never considered farm managers. In conducting a survey in the area in 2014, we found that 20 out of 50 women interviewed who identified themselves as helpers were in fact managing the farms. They were always described - and even described themselves - as helpers to their husbands (see Pini 2005 for more on the global ‘helper’ stereotype). Women in both areas often performed some of the most labor-intensive tasks on farms. Especially in Kafr Sheikh, where farming is not very profitable and men work off-farms, women frequently completed tasks on their farms that are typically labeled as men’s tasks in the wage sector and for which women are almost never hired. This includes tasks such as *malkh* [the removal of rice seedlings in large batches]; cleaning drainage canals; and irrigating fields, a task which is considered unacceptable for women. We even found women in Kafr Sheikh irrigating their fields at night, an activity considered particularly taboo and off-limits for women. Especially during the early stages of resettlement when the children were young and hired labour was scarce, women in Noubariya were also performing non-traditional roles such as land preparation and irrigation.

¹⁹ ILO ICSE-93 Classification.

In Kafr Sheikh, women (3 out of 5 interviewed) in this category also often practiced *zamala* or reciprocated labour. *Zamala* typically involved time-intensive tasks. More women participated in it than men. Renters were required to provide all the land-related labour in *zamala* schemes. This obviously dramatically increased the workloads of the women in such renter families. Families often preferred *zamala* to other arrangements that required hiring labour. Families that are unable to provide all or most of the reciprocal labour do sometimes end up having to hire additional labourers to complete the work they had agreed to perform. The demand on women's participation in *zamala* increased due to Law 1992, which deregularized land prices and reduced government spending on subsidies, which made agricultural production less profitable. This increased the need for 'free labour' in the form of women's *zamala*.

Despite having financial resources and contributing to family income, few women (1 out of the 5 interviewed in Kafr Sheikh and 1 out of 5 interviewed in Noubariya) in this category were able to acquire immovable assets like land and homes in their names. Property ownership influences women's experiences of work because it gives them stronger bargaining power at work. It also influences decision-making power in the family and community and the ability to generate independent income. Research conducted in South Asia and Egypt reveals that women who own property gain opportunities to participate in public life, access knowledge only available to men and gain increased decision-making power in their households (Agarwal 1994, 2003; Datta 2006; Najjar 2013). Furthermore, upon internal threats to family security such as death, divorce, separation or abandonment, a woman's wellbeing is likely to depend much more significantly on whether or not she was able to exercise ownership and control over assets.

Property is increasingly expensive and unaffordable for both men and women in Kafr Shiekh and Noubariya. Women who are considered contributing family workers often also do not acquire assets through inheritance from parents. Inheritance is governed by *Sharia* law, which stipulates that women earn half the share of their brothers. Most women tend to not even receive this smaller share. Some get a share of the harvest from their brothers, others get rent money, while others get monetary compensation, which is often much lower than the market value of their shares of property. A village engineer explained that about 80 percent of women in Kafr Sheikh do not get their inheritance. In Noubariya, the issue is complicated further by the fact that the land was quite barren and uninhabitable when it was initially distributed. It was perceived to have been made productive through the efforts and exertions of men. This perception - erroneous though it is - further marginalized women's efforts to secure inheritance rights. Even when women get a share of parental property, they are given cash equal to the value of their shares when the land was initially settled and uncultivated. We discovered that the price of land in Noubariya has increased 35 times since the area was initially settled. Women overwhelmingly get the short end of the stick when it comes to inheritance. Often many women do not receive any natal property at all.

In Kafr Sheikh, women who receive inheritance are often from more affluent families and even then they tend not to get their full shares. "It is always the case here that women do not get their full inheritance shares. Women can get only 50% of their shares," explained the son of a woman who got one acre instead of two which is rightfully hers by *Sharia*. Other women from affluent

families are given a sum of money which they may use to buy land in their own names in their husband's community. Because land was initially quite inexpensive in Noubariya, many women from relatively better-off families in the Old Lands bought land in the New Lands with their inheritance money.

Women in this category were able to access health care through their husbands, if they were employed. Men who owned expensive agricultural equipment machine were also often able to secure health insurance and other social protection benefits for themselves and their families. The majority of women (for example, all ten out of ten women interviewed in both areas) in this category did not have access to health care and paid out of pocket for all health-related expenses.

Table 3. Summary of contributing family workers working conditions in the two areas.

Empowering components	Gendered employment disadvantages	Noubariya	Kafr Sheikh
Social and Economic Advancement	Access to credit and accumulation of capital and assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to money through <i>Jam'iyat</i>, occasional sales, children's and husbands' income -Women can own gold, poultry and small ruminants in this category - Limited ability for women to own landed property through purchase and inheritance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to money through <i>Jam'iyat</i>, occasional sales, children's and husbands' income -Women can own gold, poultry and small ruminants in this category - Limited ability for women to own landed property through purchase and inheritance
	Access to health insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some gain access to health insurance through their husbands' work -The majority, however, pay for healthcare services out of pocket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some gain access to health insurance through their husbands' work -The majority, however, pay for healthcare services out of pocket

Power and Agency	Control over own assets and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assets of gold and livestock were easily alienable from women by other household members -Women controlled income coming from certain entrepreneurial activities (milk production, poultry and Jam'iyat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assets of gold and livestock were easily alienable from women by other household members -Women controlled income coming from certain entrepreneurial activities (milk production, poultry and Jam'iyat)
Dignity and Value	Perceptions of women's work in the "contributing family workers" category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Their assets were taken for granted and sold by others in the household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Their assets were taken for granted and sold by others in the household -Women were identified as helpers even if they were managing the farms almost exclusively with husbands doing irrigation at night and cleaning drainage canals -Demand on women's reciprocated labour (<i>zamala</i>) increased with reduced subsidies on inputs and deregularization of land rentals (Law 1992)

Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers)

The ILO defines own-account workers as those workers who hold a self-employed job and do not hire or retain 'employees' on a continuous basis²⁰. In the study areas in Egypt, this category, as indicated in Table 1, includes women and men who do recruit labourers on an occasional basis during peak agricultural seasons. This category includes women and men who farm small parcels of land (either owned and/or rented), have small businesses (shops, cows, poultry, tuk tuk, nursery etc.) or are labour lords who hire labourers during wage work seasons.

²⁰ ILO ICSE-93 Classification.

Renting land is a prominent type of livelihood for this category in both areas but with differing arrangements and gender composition. According to one large landowner in Kafr Shiekh, one-third of land is cultivated through sharecropping, a rental type in which the landowner retains control over farming the land by paying for the majority of inputs required in farming. The same landowner explained that women account for one third of the rentals in Kafr Sheikh. In Noubariya, on the other hand, women seldom rented land. During the first author's stay in the community over a total of 4 months in 2010 and 2011 and fieldwork in 2016, none of the renters encountered were women.

Since farming is not a very profitable enterprise in Kafr Sheikh, men farmers who own small parcels of land are likely to also be involved in off-farm income generation (in nearby towns or in the same area, as, for example, drivers and construction workers). They also often rent additional land. Some 5 out of the total 9 renter respondents in Kafr Sheikh also had small parcels of family land (less than an acre) which they explained is not enough to farm on and therefore they rented additional land. In most cases, the wives farm both the owned and rented land. Two women farmers who rent land in Kafr Sheikh explained that they had far greater knowledge about farming than their husbands. Some engineers (3) explained that women constitute one-third of such de facto farmers in Kafr Sheikh. Often women focus on meeting their household consumption needs of wheat and rice as well as corn and *berseem* (alfalfa fodder) for their poultry and livestock. Some women explained that livestock rearing is the most profitable enterprise in agriculture. One woman, for example, rented 26 (see footnote 7) kirats of land to cultivate *berseem* and raise cattle for milk production. This enterprise is lucrative enough to allow her to pay for university fees for all her children.

In Kafr Sheikh, there were different types of rental agreements and the conditions differed between villages. There is the one-fourth rental and the one-third rental, as well as the less common *ard samra* (the land is rented for 300 EGP per year per kirat). In the one-third rental, the renter pays for one-third of the inputs and in return takes one-third of the produce. The owner pays for two-thirds of the inputs and takes two-thirds of the produce. Rental agreements in Noubariya, on the other hand, are of a different nature, and the renter typically has far more control over the land. The most common rental type in Noubariya was the 5-year rental of 5 acres of fruit trees for 45,000-100,000 EGP per year, depending on the fruit type and the location of the farm (some villages had better access to water).

In Kafr Sheikh, the one-fourth rental arrangement (in which the renter pays one fourth the costs of inputs, is often responsible for all the labour needed, and gets one fourth of the produce) is the most common type. This is, according to the 9 renter respondents, because farmers could not afford to pay larger amounts for the one third and *ard samra* rental arrangements. All 9 (6 men and 3 women) respondents in Kafr Sheikh who were renters in our study had one-fourth rental arrangements. About 3 out of the 6 men renter farmers complained that the owner should also be assisting in labour costs instead of just paying for the inputs. In some villages of Kafr Sheikh, renters did not pay for any inputs in return for providing all the labour, and in some other villages renters paid for one-fourth the inputs while also providing all the labour.

Another point of contestation in Kafr Sheikh between renters and owners in sharecropping is decision-making about which crops to grow. Two men renters reported that some renters did not like to plant sugarbeet, which is both input- and labour-intensive. To illustrate, corn requires two bags of fertilizer per acre while sugarbeet requires six bags of fertilizer per acre. Men and women who use the one-fourth rental approach tend to focus both on family subsistence and income generation. As such, they did not favour planting sugarbeets. Furthermore, in some cases, the renters had to hire labourers to harvest sugar beet, and many owners do not pay for the hired labour. Another issue of contestation is ability to grow fodder for reduced rental prices. Many renters owned livestock and needed to cultivate fodder. Landowners tended to impose a differing rental arrangement (the *ard samra*) for fodder cultivation on small parcels of land (in kirats).

The rental arrangements are the same for men and women in both areas. However, a woman renter in Kafr Sheikh explained that women can have a much harder time finding land to rent since landowners prefer to rent their lands to men - often because it is also more socially acceptable for men to perform tasks like cleaning canals and irrigating. Landowners in Kafr Sheikh did express a preference in our interviews to rent to men sharecroppers. "I prefer to hire a man. Maybe his wife will be the person farming, but I prefer a man. A man can clean the canals and keep your land in proper shape," explained a landowner with multiple parcels of land. Women renters, in particular, rarely cultivated sugarbeet in Kafr Sheikh. They were more focused on subsistence food crops and crops (typically corn) for livestock rearing. This might be another reason why landowners preferred renting to men.

Both men and women renters in both areas and owners of small parcels of land in Kafr Sheikh had limited opportunities for training. The agricultural extension system, village engineers (4) explained, is not replacing older generations of retirees. In sharp contradiction to the literature, which emphasizes that women farmers do not seek out or meet extension agents, in the gender and innovations study we found that women in Kafr Sheikh were more likely to meet with extension agents than men. This is because women tend to work on farms on a more permanent basis than men who often have day jobs elsewhere.

Interviewees in this category had similar access to healthcare as wage workers. However, in 2016, farmers with land registered in their names, were asked by the LACs to apply for health care provision for themselves and their families. Landowners and their families have recently become eligible for health care coverage, regardless of the size of their landholdings. Landowners, farmers and renters can also purchase fertilizers, pesticides and seeds of 'strategic crops' (wheat, cotton, corn, rice) at subsidized prices from the LACs. The LAC services were far better established in the Old Lands. For example, pesticides were not offered at the New Lands and fewer types of fertilizer were available for sale.

In Kafr Sheikh, 2 LAC engineers felt that women asking rightfully for services from the LAC (such as fertilizer and water access) were too aggressive and demanding. Although the engineers interviewed in the Old Lands explained that there are no women as board members in the LACs, such attitudes would prevent women from being voted in and taken seriously during public meetings.

Also similar to contributing family workers, assets owned by women in this category include small ruminants, gold, and access to credit through *jam'iyat*.

The own-account women workers in both areas in this category were involved on a continuous basis in selling either fish, dairy, poultry or vegetables. The most vulnerable in this group were the women who have no support from their families. A widowed woman who sells fish in Kafr Sheikh explained what her typical day was like. She wakes up at dawn to take a bus to the fish market and sells fish all day but can barely make ends meet. She explains that she has to work because the widow pension provided by the government is not enough (about 400 EGP per month, equivalent to 40USD). A number of people in her village mentioned that they buy fish only from her because they know how difficult her circumstances are.

Most of the women who sell vegetables and fruits in Kafr Sheikh were also de jure or de facto heads of households (necessity entrepreneurs). They explained that they learned how to do business from other traders (both men and women). Women (3) in this category had access to credit through what were called “businessmen loans” and often used credit to build their business or to pay for their families’ needs. Many were able to educate their children and pay for their weddings. Women in this category were generally better off than wage workers whose children in both areas often left school early and paid for their own weddings. One woman had a married daughter who was diagnosed with cancer. She was paying for her daughter’s treatment. For these women, networks with traders and access to microcredit was deemed key to succeeding in business and supporting their families.

Women in Noubariya interviewed for this category were mostly focused on milk production. There is a French project in the area which collects milk from farmers and also provides farmers with access to large livestock from multiple sources. Swiss cows were distributed in Noubariya by the United Arab Emirates as part of an aid package to Egypt. Buffaloes, which cannot tolerate the heat as well and produces half the amount of milk as cows, were sold to farmers by the livestock department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation. Farmers also had the option of purchasing a buffalo by paying loan instalments over two years. People did consume buffalo milk and dairy products so there was a local market for these products. Cow milk produced in the community, on the other hand, was sold to the milk collection project. Several women complained that the milk collection project decides upon and imposes the price of milk which affects their profit levels. They also reported that the project often refused to buy milk from them citing quality concerns such as rancid smell or taste even when the milk was seemed completely fine to them. The milk project also cited quality concerns for paying different prices for milk at different times of year - 3 EGP per litre in the winter and 2 EGP in the summer, ostensibly because the milk was more ‘watery’ during summer months. Such capricious and unpredictable pricing obviously made it difficult for milk producers to calculate and manage both expenses and profit more predictably. Because milk production is considered more of a “woman’s job” and most of the marketing was done from home, all 4 women in Noubariya interviewed for milk production explained that they had total control over income from milk sales and used it mostly to meet household expenses.

Because supervising labourers is considered a leadership position in both areas, most of the middlemen were men, even the groups of labourers were gender-mixed. However, some women-exclusive working groups in Kafr Sheikh did have women as middlemen. One of the few middle-women in Noubariya explained that she learned how to do her job by paying close attention to and emulating male middlemen.

In both Noubariya and Kafr Sheikh, small-scale producers had limited access to training since they were invisible as a worker category to the state and development agencies. Some learned by interacting with others in the aspired profession. Because of their lower social status and weaker bargaining ability, women tended to be even more invisible.

Youth in this category had some notable experiences. We encountered a young female graduate in Noubariya with a degree in surveying who could not find a job despite her good grades. Opening a small business is a common practice for female graduates who do not find employment commensurate with their education, especially since they often had to compete for jobs with large numbers of men with degrees, who were always prioritized for jobs before women. In order to earn a living, this particular young woman decided to open a nursery in an empty house in the village. She complained that the *Moraqba* (the governmental institution, which oversees all the LACs in the settlement) refused to rent the house to her even though it was empty, and still had childcare equipment, books and toys in it since it had previously been a nursery.

Young men in both areas, especially those coming from landless families or from big families with small parcels of land, preferred to buy tuk-tuks as their main source of income. They used money from savings generated by wage labour and credit from *jam'iyat* and other sources to purchase the vehicles. A tuk-tuk costs between 10,000-20,000 EGP depending on the year and model. The 4 young men interviewed in this category all complained that interest rates for purchasing tuk-tuks were often as high as 40 percent. Owning a tuk-tuk was a very desirable enterprise for young men even though many struggled to repay the debts they incurred from purchasing them.

Other young men from disadvantaged families leave school at a young age and may join an apprenticeship in a workshop for carpentry, blacksmithing or vehicle repair for a nominal wage. When they are older, they tend to open their own shops. We noted that some men are also disadvantaged by local inheritance practices, especially if they have older male siblings. To start businesses, many men also depended on their wives' abilities to save money from different sources, including selling their gold jewelry. We met a couple who started out selling fava beans and *ta'miya* (deep fried patty made from fava beans) on a street corner and eventually progressed to opening a restaurant.

Table 4. Summary of own account workers working conditions in the two areas.

Empowering components	Gendered employment disadvantages	Noubariya	Kafr Sheikh
Social and Economic Advancement	Access to credit and accumulation of capital and assets	-Same as contributing family workers	-Same as contributing family workers -Women and men have access to “businessmen loans”
	Access to training	-Limited because invisible category -Limited because more broadly the extension system is deteriorated in Egypt -Apprenticeships are available for men at a young age in carpentry, blacksmith and mechanic shops	-Limited because invisible category -Limited because more broadly the extension system is deteriorated in Egypt -Women tend to meet with extension agents more than men due to men’s greater involvement in off-farm occupations -Apprenticeships are available for men at a young age in carpentry, blacksmith and mechanic shops
	Access to agricultural inputs	-Fertilizers and seeds of strategic crops are sold for slightly subsidized rates in the LACs	-Fertilizers and seeds of strategic crops are sold for slightly subsidized rates in the LACs
	Access to health insurance	-Same as contributing family workers -Those who own land are now asked to apply for health insurance	-Same as contributing family workers -Those who own land are now asked to apply for health insurance

Power and Agency	Control over own assets and income	-Assets of gold and livestock were alienated from women by other household members -Women controlled income coming from certain entrepreneurial activities (milk production, poultry and Jam'iyat)	-Assets of gold and livestock were alienated from women by other household members -Women controlled income coming from certain entrepreneurial activities (milk production, poultry and Jam'iyat)
Dignity and Value	Workers' satisfaction with work and perceptions of women's contributions	-The male youth felt that interest rates on tuk tuk loans are very high -Female youth were frustrated with lack of permanent employment opportunities and having to resort to opening businesses or informal economic activities.	- The male youth felt that interest rates on tuk tuk loans are very high

Members of cooperatives and producer organizations

Members of cooperatives are self-employed workers who hold jobs in a co-operative producing goods and services, where the members take part on an equal footing in making major decisions concerning the cooperative.²¹

Membership in cooperatives and producer organizations in both areas was largely limited to men. In both areas women were more likely to develop individual small-scale operations than to be members of producer groups. In general, however, cooperatives and producer's organizations were not common because it was not the norm for people to work in groups. In Noubariya, local people explained that in the New Lands people come from different provinces, families and villages. As such, they were less likely to trust each other, an essential component, they explained, for forming a collective business. Indeed, the one group which we could find in Noubariya had a membership of 15 landholders who were from the same area. One woman

²¹ ILO, ICSE-93 Classification.

initially joined but then was left out “because she speaks too much and she had family problems and could not keep up,” explained the president of the group. The group planted different crops and were able to get better access to markets, particularly through contract farming. The president explained that this arrangement was useful because LACs were too bureaucratic, corrupt, and provided limited marketing services. Each member can contribute with work, land, and capital, each accounting for one-third of the requirement for collaboration. Those who had no capital can meet their collaboration requirement by working more hours. Those who did not have time can meet their requirement by providing more capital. Leadership and transparency was described as key for the success of this group.

In Kafr Sheikh, a group of young men (5) explained that they work together to sell seeds. Each person is responsible for different tasks, and they get the seeds from all over Egypt. Because they were formally registered as a group, they were able to import materials and access marketing spaces for free in expos. This group emphasized earned trust and clear division of tasks as key for the group’s success.

In both areas, this category did not offer members access to training, health insurance or social security. As a registered and formal group, the groups mentioned gaining access to marketing venues and importing licenses.

Table 5. Summary of cooperatives and producer’s organizations working conditions in the two areas.

Empowering components	Gendered employment disadvantages	Noubariya	Kafr Sheikh
Social and Economic Advancement	Access to credit and accumulation of capital and assets	-Women are largely missing from this category of work -Not a very common category	-Women are largely missing from this category of work -Men identified trust and clear task division as important for the sustainability of the cooperative or group
	Access to health insurance	-Same as own-account workers	-Same as own-account workers

	Access to other services	-Access to marketing venues (contract farming)	-Access to marketing venues (regional government-sponsored expos) -Access to importing license
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Employers and entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs and employers comprise a category of workers who operate their own economic enterprise, or engage independently in a profession or trade, and hire one or more employees²².

Men were more prominent in this category, especially in Kafr Sheikh. They had more time, money, higher social status, access to trainings and credit than women. Landowners in this category, like the small-scale producers, had access to fertilizers and pesticides, especially in the Old Lands, as well as extension services through the LACs. However, unlike the small-scale producers who owned land, these men were much more likely to be members and board members on the LACs. In addition to owning relatively large parcels of land, some men in this category owned other businesses. A men landowner who had a dairy business in Kafr Sheikh explained that he hired different specialists for various tasks in order to be able to produce milk that meets the standards of dairy processing factories. He obtained the money through profits from other businesses. It is important to note here that statistics and titles in the names of women can be misleading. This owner put the dairy enterprise under his wife’s name because as a government employee (he was a school principal) he is not allowed to also own a business. His wife effectively had no say in the business she ‘owned.’ He noted that this is a common strategy used by entrepreneurs and employers who are also government workers. Another owner of a blacksmithing workshop in Kafr Sheikh explained that he opened his business through savings from working in the tourism industry and gaining microcredit through the “businessmen loans”. He also mentioned that training provided by a company in Cairo was key for his success.

The Graduate women landholders in Noubariya, who were provided with 5 acres of land and a homestead in a nearby village, featured prominently in this category. Furthermore, as participants in the MRS, these women, and other Graduates, were also entitled to other things such as a greenhouse, a shop, or residential land and as such were able to accumulate assets (Najjar 2013). As opposed to women in the Old Lands of Kafr Sheikh who may also be de facto or de jure land owners, women in Noubariya not only had land titles but also effective, enforceable land rights (ibid). Agarwal (1994) differentiates between land rights, whereby women gain land but not necessarily control over it, and effective land rights, whereby women gain both land and control. Effective land rights are legally and socially recognizable and enforceable (ibid).

²² ILO, ICSE-93 Classification.

Women landowners in Noubariya, particularly in the Graduate category, were able to exercise control over their land and gain voice in decision-making because they were given the space to participate in rigorous agricultural trainings during the early stages of resettlement and as board members on LACs and WAUs. With the knowledge they acquired about desert farming, they were able to manage the day-to-day activities of their landholdings and participate in informed ways in local governance committees. They were also able to apply for and secure microcredit loans between 5000 and 15000 EGP from the agricultural bank, and buy additional assets from the profits generated, particularly vehicles and apartments in the Olds Lands. A woman landowner in Noubariya, for example, is the president of the marketing cooperative. Engineers call her for marketing prices and networks.

This is in sharp contrast to Kafr Sheikh, where there are no women board members in the local LACs (only members at large) or in WUAs (these findings were also confirmed in the gender and innovation adoption study). The three women landowners in Kafr Shiekh were typically from more affluent families and they usually handed over operations of their lands to their husbands or sons²³. One landowner explained that she does not even know where her land is since her husband takes care of everything related to the land. Other decisions related to farming (such as crop selection and fertilizer purchase) were also often made by male relatives even when women owned the land. The land provided status for such women and was often the reason they were able to cloister themselves from unrelated men. Earning a livelihood from the land was typically the responsibility of husbands, sons and other male relatives. One of these women, however, did mention selling her gold and raising money to buy additional kirats of land. Women in this category in Kafr Sheikh did report generating income through home-based sales of poultry.

However, in Noubariya nowadays, both men and women felt reluctant to participate in local governance structures such as the LACs and WUAs. One man and two women landowners explained that membership in these organizations was more valuable in the early stages of settlement when they provided services and benefits to local farmers. With the withdrawal of IFAD and WFP from the area in recent years, there are very limited services that these organizations provide.

It is widely reported in research and policy circles that rural youth do not aspire to farm (see, for example, White 2012). We found that farming, particularly of sizable lands (of at least 3 acres in Kafr Sheikh and 5 acres in Noubariya), was considered an attractive option by some young men. Young male university graduates in both areas reported being proud of farming their land and generating an income.

Their access to health care was similar to the own-account workers. Similar to own account workers, entrepreneurs and employers' access to training is limited due to lack of new hires as agricultural extension agents. Women in Noubariya who were also tied to the Old Lands, often due to access to schools for their children were innovative in opting to cultivate cactus which required very minimal inputs and labour in order to avoid having their lands taken over by

²³ Arguably these women thus do not fit into the entrepreneur category because they do not oversee the management of the land themselves.

squatters (access to land was conditional upon farming it). However, they were not supported by extension programs and most of the training programs, apart from livestock production, were tailored to men's needs (Najjar 2013, 2015).

Table 6. Summary of entrepreneurs and employers' working conditions in the two areas.

Empowering components	Gendered employment disadvantages	Noubariya	Kafr Sheikh
Social and Economic Advancement	Access to credit and accumulation of capital and assets	-Women Graduates had access to credit through agricultural banks -Women Graduates purchased additional property over and above the land that they acquired through the MRS	-Women with land came from more affluent families but had limited control over their lands
	Access to health insurance	-Same as own-account workers	-Same as own-account workers
	Access to training	-Women had rigorous access to agricultural training on various subjects due to international pressure and involvement of organizations which were keen on involving women -Cactus (a woman-designated crop) was never included in extension programs	-Women in this category were typically cloistered
Power and Agency	Participation in public life	-Women Graduates were members on LACs, WUAs and marketing cooperatives	-Women were seldom represented in land-related committees or local agricultural governance institutions more broadly

Dignity and value	Perceptions of women's work	-Women were recognized as community leaders (especially on land-related committees)	-Women themselves idealized cloistering and were able to afford it -Women opted for home-based entrepreneurial activities which are in line with own-account workers
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Empowerment of different women workers' categories

In this section we examine the extent of empowerment for women in different categories of work. In order to achieve increased empowerment in agricultural work for rural women in the social²⁴, economic²⁵ and political²⁶ spheres, we identify challenges and opportunities for women in the three empowerment components: social and economic advancement, agency and power dynamics, and dignity and value. These components are mutually reinforcing. For example, accumulation of assets under the name of women can contribute to increasing their decision-making power in their households and communities. Asset accumulation also has positive implications for improved bargaining power and better working conditions at work.

Gender inequalities in the world of work may occur at three interrelated levels: a) at the individual level, b) at the level of household and individuals' immediate community level, and c) at the level of the institutions and markets (de Pryck and Termine 2014). In the context of rural women's work as well as their access and utilization of productive assets, social resources and governance as well as their ability to govern their own decisions is accounted for (FAO Forthcoming).

As with the previous section, we organize our findings by the different kind of workers (wage workers, contributing family workers, own-account workers, members of cooperatives and entrepreneurs and employers) that were included in the study. Some relevant findings will be reiterated and summarized from the previous section while other new findings will be presented below. We will situate our findings within the global literature.

²⁴ Social empowerment are social changes which enable "the respect and recognition of one's own place within the society on their own terms how they want to live and not on terms dictated by others." This is strongly influenced by individual and collective assets (e.g., land, housing, livestock etc.) (FAO Forthcoming).

²⁵ Economic empowerment entails simultaneously an increased ability to access economic opportunities as well as the power to make strategic decisions (FAO Forthcoming).

²⁶ Political empowerment entails gaining the capacity for "equitable participation and representation in political institutions and democratic processes" (FAO Forthcoming).

Social and Economic Advancement

Social and economic advancement pertains to time use; education and vocational training; decent work conditions, including social protection mechanisms such as health insurance; access to health care and child care facilities; equal pay; income sources; ownership of productive resources; asset and capital accumulation and credit access (FAO Forthcoming). ILO identifies this component of decent work as related to employment creation, enterprise development and social protection (Decent Work Agenda Pillars I and II).

Wage workers. The expansion of irrigation to the New Lands made agriculture possible in the desert. It has created wage opportunities for men and women. Women, in particular, have benefited from settlement in the New Lands but also continue to face constraints on many levels. Our interviewees suggest that the majority of wage workers in Noubariya are women. These findings are certainly congruent with other places in the world where agricultural commercialization is dependent on cheap women's labour (Razavi 2007). Despite these new sources of employment, women in both areas had limited opportunities to acquire training, credit, or to earn wages that were high enough to allow them to accumulate savings or assets. Many girls in both areas continue to leave school while they were very young in order to work in agriculture. They were also less likely to earn more by working double or triple shifts as men did, and less likely to work more generally when they had small children. In both areas, women contend with erratic incomes, insecure work, lean seasons, work-related injuries, lack of health insurance, health care more broadly and other benefits (such as affordable and even available child care). Increased mechanization in both areas of harvesting processes for many crops is leading to job losses for women. Women's loss of agricultural wage work through mechanization and time poverty being an obstacle to their economic advancement are findings reported in many other parts of the world (see for example de Pryck and Termine 2014; Elson 1999). In the absence of adequate social security nets, in both areas women must work well into old age just to support themselves.

Our findings attest that women who are wage workers, especially in Kafr Sheikh, spend most of their income on subsistence needs. This is true for women in both female- and male-maintained households. Their wages were so low and work availability so erratic that although women wage workers controlled their own income, they were rarely able to accumulate the types of independent savings and assets that would allow them to assert themselves on an equal footing with men in their families.

In Noubariya, on the other hand, wage workers, particularly during the early stages of resettlement (in the 1990s) when land prices were cheap, were able to buy property, albeit often in the name of husbands despite significant financial contributions from wives. In these cases, women often bore the brunt of not having assets in their own names in the event of a divorce or separation. One divorcee in Noubariya worked in the wage sector alongside her husband and generated enough cash to purchase seven acres of land in the initial stages of settlement in the New Lands, when land was very inexpensive. She was left with no assets after the divorce and forced to re-enter wage work in her late 40s.

Although low payments were reported more frequently as a problem by men (mentioned during focus groups in both areas) our interviews with employers and officials revealed that women were more likely to experience late and reduced payments. Women's tasks were also valued at half the value of men's tasks, especially in Kafr Sheikh where sex-segregation in tasks was more prominent. Women are perceived to be secondary breadwinners (even when they are not) and have less bargaining power than men, and are therefore more likely to receive late and/or reduced pay. The landowners in turn attributed late payments to the government's delayed payment for purchase of strategic crops such as wheat and cotton.

Contributing family workers. The contributing family workers were not visible, recognized or appreciated in their roles as farm managers, and as such had no access to formal or informal avenues to challenge their invisibility. As such, they were excluded from extension programs and social protection through agricultural cooperatives and other government programs. Even if they were able to accumulate movable assets, particularly livestock and gold, they often have limited control over its use and liquidation. They become even more vulnerable and marginalized after divorce or widowhood. In such cases, with no or limited assets to fall back upon and very weak access to pensions, which are meagre to begin with, they are forced back into the wage sector even at much older ages.

Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers). New opportunities have been created in Noubariya in the small-scale producer category through the creation of a milk market and livestock provision. These women in Noubariya, however, experienced losses due to the vagaries of milk pricing. We also found that women in this category in both regions lacked access to training, and were never recognized as farmers.

More generally, we found that neither men nor women farmers in both areas were currently served well by the agricultural extension system, which was in desperate need of an overhaul and reinforcement in both areas. Men renters in Kafr Sheikh repeatedly reinforced that landowners should also pay for the wages of hired workers. Their refusal to do so had placed significant demand on women's collective reciprocated labour in the community, as many considered it to be "free."

Contrary to what is reported in other studies (see, for example, Larson 1991) and despite their ability to own assets (gold, cash and livestock), we found that workers in this category in both areas were also very likely to lose control over their income and assets. Goats, sheep, gold and cash generated through sales or *jam'iyat* are highly alienable resources. Men often pooled household resources to purchase property but the titles in both areas were always solely in their names. Married women were rarely able to secure titles in their own names. We encountered only one married woman in Noubariya and another in Kafr Sheikh who had secured property titles in their own names. In both cases, the women had equal or greater incomes than their husbands. In Noubariya, the couple had already bought one acre of land in the husband's name. The wife insisted that she have sole title of the second acre. Several men (2 men in Noubariya and 2 in Kafr Sheikh) we interviewed mentioned that they did not want their wives to own property because it would make them too independent and disobedient. "If a woman had a horse

saddle in the house, throw it away,” commented a renter in Noubariya whose wife worked the farm with him.

Members of cooperatives. Members of cooperatives were largely dominated by men as women were more likely to cloister themselves and work from their homes. This category had limited access to training, social protection and benefits but they were able to access markets and import licenses through their participation in cooperatives. The socio-economic advancement of rural women through access to cooperatives and producer organizations was minimal in both areas given that this type of employment is not a prominent option.

Entrepreneurs and employers. In Kafr Sheikh, women were only nominally entrepreneurs and employers and chose to pass on the control of their lands (more than two acres of size) to their male kin. They were able to afford the cloistering ideal and some (2 out of the 3 interviewed in Kefr Shiekh) operated small businesses from their homes. Research conducted on women in South Asia similarly reports that women’s seclusion is common and broken only in times of despair (De Pryck and Termine 2014). Women entrepreneurs and employers in Noubariya, on the other hand, had adequate access to training and assets for the expansion of their enterprises. The training they received included best practices in veterinary services, modern irrigation techniques, horticultural production and field crop production. Women landholders in Noubariya also had opportunities to access larger amounts of credit (especially compared to women in the Old Lands and other categories or workers in both the Old and New Lands) and to acquire new property linked to their status as Graduate settlers in the MRS project.

It is important to note, though, that even these women have decided to pass on their lands to their sons and not their daughters. Women rarely inherited land from their mothers in either community. We found that most of the land distributed to women in Noubariya had already reverted, or would eventually revert, to sons and not to daughters upon inheritance (Najjar et al. forthcoming). This resonates with other researchers’ findings (see, for example, Baruah 2010) who emphasize that even when women are potentially able to acquire land and property through either inheritance, purchase in the market, or distribution by the state, they are unwilling or hesitant to assert the equal inheritance rights of sons and daughters. Most women in Noubariya expressed a clear preference for sons as inheritors, employing the entrenched logic that a son would support them in their old age while a daughter would leave the family after marriage.

Authors like Manimala (1983), Jacobs (1998) and Rao (2002) have also expressed dismay over how embedded and widespread such attitudes are in other settings in Asia and Africa. For example, in her landmark account of the Bodhgaya movement in India, Manimala (1983) documents how land rights for women emerged out of mobilization around a number of other issues such as domestic violence, alcohol abuse, education, and land distribution to landless men from a large land holding. She writes that the demand for separate titles for women surfaced only when landless men given title to land became drunken and violent, provoking their wives to demand titles in their own names. However, women who received land said that they would leave it to their sons, thus confirming that land ownership would eventually revert to men’s control. Researchers working in the sub-Saharan African context have also pointed out that the simple targeting of resources to women does not always ensure equitable outcomes since

resources may then be allocated in biased ways to children under conditions of strong son preference (Haddad and Hoddinott 1995; Wanyeki 2003).

Agency and Power Dynamics

This section explores whether, how and why different categories of workers challenge or comply with existing working conditions and institutions. We will explore the extent of individual and collective agency - both formal and informal - that women have to make decisions about their own working conditions as well as control over returns of their work, assets and resources. This component is related to governance and social dialogue (Pillar IV of decent work).

Wage workers. Jensen (1994) argues that women who are wage workers can negotiate gender equality more effectively in their households if they control the income they earn. She simultaneously argues that this group are unable to leverage much bargaining power in their households because their wages are so low that they barely cover subsistence needs and do not accrue any surplus. Women wage workers had limited ability to negotiate higher wages and better working conditions because they were poor, women, lacked assets and had no access to alternatives by which they may consider earning a livelihood. They had limited avenues to challenge unequal pay, late and reduced payments, and the absence of social protection. They resort to informal means to challenge such inequities. The wages on large farms in Noubariya were fixed and non-negotiable. Women's lack of both alternatives for livelihood generation as well as assets to fall back upon combines with high labour availability to ensure that wage workers have very low bargaining power and often feel completely disposable. All of these factors limited women's ability to challenge inequality at home and at work.

The farmers' union (which has been dismantled since the appointment of the new government) has, even when it existed, always only symbolically represented this category of workers. Interviews conducted with syndicate representatives in both the Old and New Lands confirmed that its primary focus has always been on improving access to subsidized fertilizer and water rights, not on worker's rights including fair wages for all or decent working conditions.

Because wage labourers did not have a union or other body representing their interests, their ability to improve their wages or working conditions depended on informal strategies. Of course it is worth mentioning that even landed farmers who were represented by unions felt that their interests were not well looked after by the syndicates that were supposed to represent them. As mentioned earlier, middlemen and middlewomen played an important role in negotiating pay and working conditions for wage workers. In Kafr Sheikh, for example, middlewomen organized as a group to bargain for an increase in the wages for transplanting rice by 25 percent (from 40 EGP to 50 EGP). The next season the wage labour for transplanting rice also went up in other communities in the Old Lands. Because middlemen and middlewomen were often themselves labourers, or had previously been labourers, they seemed to understand the challenges and frustrations of agricultural wage work quite well. Wage workers in both communities relied more on middlemen and women than any other individual or group to negotiate their wages. Wage workers who did not work through middlemen or women were unable to negotiate the wages or working conditions with landowners. The large supply of labour meant that landowners could

always find someone else to hire. This also significantly limits workers' bargaining power in both the New and Old Lands.

Wage workers do occasionally succeed in negotiating better terms for themselves even without the support of middlemen or women. One woman explained that women often perform the same tasks as men even though they are hired and paid for women-only tasks. For example, in sugarbeet farming both the harvesting and the cutting of leaves is done by women even though the former is considered a man's task and the latter a woman's task. She explained that once she became aware of this she decided that she would not harvest beet unless the landowner agreed to pay her the wage he paid men. It is important to emphasize, though, that examples of women wage workers being able to advocate for themselves in this way are extremely rare. Furthermore, men's higher pay was justified because they were assumed to be primary breadwinners. In reality, women's wages were expended much more often on household food items and men's wages were more likely to become savings.

Some young wage workers (both women (6) and men (4)) explained that they did not have much control over their income because they were expected to give their wages to their parents to meet family expenses. In many cases, if the head of household (most often men) is also participating in wage work, he is paid for the work of all his family members. "It is considered an insult not to pay the head of household directly," explained a middleman in Kafr Sheikh.

Contributing family workers. Women who substantially contributed to income for purchase of assets in their families had higher bargaining power to register immovable property (house, land) in their own names. In general, however, the assets which women who were considered contributing family workers owned were very liquefiable. For example, gold owned by women is often sold (and occasionally bought back) multiple times not just by the women themselves but also by their husbands, sons and in-laws. One man landowner in Kafr Sheikh told us that his mother's earrings do not stay with her for longer than a week. She is constantly selling or using them as collateral to enable the family to manage various cash flow problems and other crises. Similarly, in Noubariya, the husband of a woman landowner told us that his wife had sold and bought back her jewelry dozens of times in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

In-laws are also socially entitled to use and sell their daughters-in-law's jewelry. In the first few years after marriage, a woman is often unwilling to give away 'her' gold but when children are born and time passes, the in-laws and even husband can ask her for her gold and she is more likely to say yes. Many young and middle-aged women expressed anger and frustration about the gold that had been taken away by parents-in-law years ago and never returned: "They told me 'we will return it when the apple harvest is sold.' The apple harvest was sold and I did not get the gold. Then they told me 'we will return it once we marry off our son.' They married off their son and I still did not get my gold back." Since gold is much more expensive now than it was a few decades ago (in the 1970s, for example), jewelry is often loaned for the bride to wear and returned to the jeweler after the ceremony. Given such changes, the future use and value of gold as an asset for women is difficult to predict.

Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers). Men renters and small landowners in Kafr Sheikh felt that landowners were the group they struggled against the most particularly since the liberalization of rental contracts in 1997 (through 'Law 1992'). Renters unanimously agreed that landowners were exploiting them by not paying for all the expenses for farming and hiring labour. By removing subsidies on inputs such as pesticides and fertilizers and setting volatile crop prices, renters also agreed that the government was exploiting them. Village engineers, who upheld a no-interference policy with regard to renter-owner agreements were also widely thought to be complicit in the marginalization of renters. All men renter farmers (the 6 interviewed) were outspoken about their feelings but simultaneously felt that it was futile trying to change working conditions in their favor. "An entire revolution did not change anything. We have no hope that things will change and this is why we do not work on changing anything," explained a renter farmer in Kafr Sheikh. Women were less likely to mention problems with landowners or the government (none of the three women renters interviewed did), probably due more to their lower social status and bargaining power rather than because they did not face the same problems.

As mentioned earlier, farm renters and small scale owners in Kafr Sheikh were rarely board members in the LACs. In Noubariya, the LAC had a few seats reserved solely for 'evicted tenants,' and a few men did become board members. These men play a role in deciding how to use space in the village; they also succeeded in putting pressure on the LACs to market their wheat. Nonetheless, compared to the Graduate villages in the New Lands, the 'evicted tenants' in the Old Lands were more marginalized in their access to training and development projects. The MRS was tailored to suit the needs of the unemployed Graduates and as such most of the trainings and projects were also designed to suit them. The 'evicted tenants,' on the other hand, were often perceived to be illiterate and therefore less deserving of training. Women evicted tenants had the fewest opportunities for training, public participation and political engagement.

In Noubariya, the prices for milk intended for export, or sale in other parts of Egypt, were set by the collectors. Women who reared cows felt that they did not have any power to influence them. The prices of buffalo products such as cheese and ghee, on the other hand, were more likely to be controlled by women because the market for these products was local. Women did have decision-making power over income generated from buffalo rearing but almost all of it was used for subsistence purposes. If married women did generate surpluses, their husbands used them to acquire assets in their names. Because female household heads were poorer to begin with, they were rarely able to generate savings and surpluses from their economic activities.

Some women explained that they could not ask for property to be put in their names because they worried that it would seem as though they did not trust their husbands, or that their marriages were not secure or happy. As long as women were happy in their marriages, they were not willing to rock the boat. If threats to a family's wellbeing and security are external to the household, it may be less important whether a woman has independent ownership of and control over an asset – be it land, houses, livestock or jewelry. The entire household may be protected as long as someone within it owns and controls the asset. However, a very different scenario may present itself upon internal threats to family security such as death, divorce, separation or abandonment. In the latter scenario, a woman's wellbeing is likely to depend much more

significantly on whether or not she was able to exercise ownership and control over assets. Our findings point to land and homes as the most economically and socially valuable assets for men and women. Livestock and gold are also certainly useful assets for women, especially because they can be sold easily for cash. Because these latter assets are highly liquefiable, it is important for women to have control over their sale and use.

It is more common for women in difficult financial circumstances to get some financial compensation from their brothers in lieu of land, especially if they have small children (Moors 1996). On the other hand, women with young children often feel more vulnerable and are afraid, especially if they do not have a husband, to ask their brothers for their share of the inheritance. The fear of losing the affection or goodwill of their brothers often prevents women from asking for their share of natal property even if they are living in poverty. A woman in Kafr Sheikh who was abandoned by her husband explains that she was worked as a wage labourer in order to support her son when he was young. It was only when her son grew up that she gained the courage to ask for her share of natal property. Even though she only received less than half the share of her brothers, she was happy to have it because it provided her and her son with a source of sustenance. A woman's agency is often strengthened at a later stage in life, as this woman's was, especially if she has adult sons who can also offer support. Regardless of how one looks at it, the fact that women's entitlement to natal property is often dependent on the goodwill and benevolence of their brothers obviously also erodes their agency and autonomy.

Members of cooperatives. Research has shown that women are able to increase their social capital through memberships in social groups and networks are enabled to mobilize resources and affect change (De Pryck and Termine 2014). However, our findings suggest that women were rarely able to join cooperatives in rural areas in Egypt. Women's only cooperatives are known to empower women on social, economic and political fronts (the Self-Employed Women's Association in India is a good example) but did not exist in Egypt.

Entrepreneurs and employers. Of all the different types of workers included in this study, women in this category in Noubariya had the most agency and autonomy. They were the most politically, socially and economically empowered. They were able to enter economic and political spaces which are usually only available to men. These women were described by many as 'men.' They held positions that were not available to women in the Old Lands. They were elected by their colleagues and frequently recognized for their leadership, accessed credit on a regular basis, exercised control over resources in their households, and had a meaningful voice in the broader community. They were able to achieve this through rigorous training as well as through a quota imposed by WFP and IFAD on land-related organizations (WUAs and LACs).

Dignity and Value

This component of empowerment relates to the respect and value of women's contribution derived from their work as perceived by themselves and their surrounding environment (FAO Forthcoming). This component is related to assured freedom of association; the right to collective bargaining; child labour occurrence; worker's rights. In ILO's definition, this component is related to standards and rights at work (Pillar III of decent work).

Wage workers. As mentioned earlier women's participation in agricultural work led to reputational damage and often rendered younger women unmarriageable. Women themselves were ashamed about working in the wage sector and lamented lack of other opportunities. Men also found agricultural wage work demeaning and humiliating due to power abuse and little bargaining power at work. As such, it was also an employment of last resort for men.

Women wage workers face additional challenges. Men who work in the wage sector are labeled as agricultural workers on their national IDs. Women in this category, on the other hand, have their occupations listed as "housewife" on their national IDs. This incorrect, regressive and outdated labeling prevents women from being recognized, and often even recognizing themselves, as workers who make significant contributions to the national economy. This, in turn, affects their ability to mobilize for increased bargaining power and social change.

Furthermore, women's income was perceived as secondary and supportive to the household (even when it was indeed the main income in the household). The gender wage gap was not justifiable but widely used as justification for paying women less.

Contributing family workers. It was more socially acceptable and appropriate for women to be seen as contributing family workers. However, it meant that women were assumed to be 'helpers' although some were managing family farms on a permanent or continuous basis. Some women themselves also internalized these beliefs and thought of themselves as helpers to their husbands. We met a woman who was laboring in the rice fields alongside with her family who stated without irony that a "woman's work is half that of a man."

Own account workers. Contributions made by women in this type of work were expected to be used solely and largely on household expenditures, and women themselves complied with this expectation. A woman renter in Kafr Sheikh explained to us that her husband refused to give her money to spend on the household-related expenses. "He tells me 'I give you all the financial freedom to work and make money in livestock rearing and farming. Do not ask me for money. You know where to get it from.'"

Members of Cooperatives. We were not able to find women in this category.

Entrepreneurs and employers. Women in this category had the most status and received the most appreciation for their work in agriculture. As mentioned earlier, they were often referred to as "men" by local community members (men and women) for their visible roles in local committees and in training sessions. These women's ability to take on what was considered men's work had essentially elevated their status to that of honorary men in their communities. This example brings into sharp focus not just the fact that what is considered women's work is valued less highly than what is considered men's work but also that these gendered hierarchies and binaries are dynamic and negotiable under certain conditions.

Moving Forward and Policy Implications

In this section we will outline recommendations which may contribute to the empowerment of different categories of rural women workers in the three domains of social and economic advancement; power and agency; and dignity and value - all in the context of achieving gender equality in access to better quality jobs and decent work for women in rural areas. Decent work promotes “rights at work, decent and productive employment and income for women and men, social protection for all, and social dialogue, with gender equality and nondiscrimination as cross-cutting priorities” (De Pryck and Termine 2014, p. 344). Our recommendations simultaneously target the necessary changes needed at the structural level (transformations in institutions and markers) and bottom-up changes (individual, household and community levels).

Wage workers

Egypt has both signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Therefore, it is required to enforce equal pay and anti-discrimination policies in the wage sector. Such enforcement should also be combined with awareness-raising campaigns about the economic, political and social benefits of women’s empowerment and gender equality. Landowners, investors, middlemen and middlewomen, and wage workers themselves would benefit from such consciousness-raising. Wage workers are also in need of social protection. Increased access to income, better working conditions and political awareness raising must be complemented with adequate social security floors to protect against seasonal and other vagaries in agriculture, illness, injury, maternity, old age and other risks to people’s well-being. There have been significant advancements in strengthening social protection floors in many countries in Asia and Latin America recently, including both conditional and unconditional cash transfer programs that enable poor women to make priority decisions for themselves and their dependents (see, for example, Bolsa Familia in Brazil and Oportunidades/ Prospera in Mexico). Structural inequality constrains individual ability to exercise rights and demand entitlements. The benefits women derive from income-generating and job-creation initiatives can only find optimal traction within the context of a wider and more comprehensive social security infrastructure. Egypt and other countries in the MENA region are well-advised to try to introduce and expand the types of social protection programs that are already in place in some other countries.

Gendered socio-cultural norms and prejudices were major obstacles for women’s advancement through work. Albeit women could achieve some empowerment in the socio-economic domain, especially in Noubariya, their decision-making power as well as self-perceived or imposed value of their work and them as workers are obstructing it. Hence, much needs to be done to challenge these perceptions on the ground and change the way women workers are perceived and treated in their immediate and wider society.

Women wage workers are an important part of the rural economic structure. To be empowered, they need access to permanent or long-term full employment, to higher quality jobs and higher value-added activities, to fair representation in worker’s unions and associations as well as they need to be entitled to equal pay and be aware about their rights as workers. Positive social and cultural change towards this type of work and the value of wage workers themselves, particularly

in the Old Lands, is required. Access to reliable and quality child care facilities nearby the woman's place of work is equally important. Also, official venues, such as unions and organizations, for bargaining for better wages and working conditions for different groups of workers are needed for this group.

Contributing family workers

Women in the contributing family workers' category make important contributions to the household and national food security more broadly. Yet, their contributions are rendered invisible due to their status as helpers (which they themselves identify with). Gendered socio-cultural norms and prejudices were also major obstacles for the advancement of women in this category. Limited official definitions and categorizations of agricultural activities, which excludes some of their agricultural contributions, such as storage and post-harvest activities, also renders these workers less visible compared to others (Doss 2014; Larson 1991; Jensen 1994). It is vital that national statistics bodies become aware of these biases when collecting data and that they design questions which allow for the identification of the specific needs and priorities of this group of workers. More specifically, designing questions to identify gender-specific needs and priorities of women in this category would also render them more visible, enable more effective policy formulation, and improve monitoring and evaluation of policy interventions designed to benefit them.

Raising the widow/ widower pension, which currently does not even cover the most basic necessities of life, is one of the clearest recommendations for improving the quality of life of older women and widows in this category, especially those who receive limited support from their families.

In contrast to Agarwal (1994) who identifies independent titles, even for married women, as the optimal solution for improving women's access to rural land, this research recommends joint titles to marital property as the most practical strategy to increase married women's access to and control over landed assets. It is important to acknowledge that the concept of joint ownership excludes large numbers of women who may not be able to prove any relationship with a man. This gap is a major challenge for single women, widows, deserted women and elderly women. Since daughters are often excluded from inheriting or staking a claim to parental property, they may not benefit directly from joint titling initiatives. Therefore, enhancing women's ability to secure independent titles to land and housing is certainly a worthy long-term goal for women's organizations and development agencies but joint titles also represent a realistic and effective strategy to enable large numbers of married women to gain greater access to landed resources. The two strategies do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Joint titles to marital property will also relieve divorced or widowed women of some of the pressure to ask brothers for their share of natal property. Findings from this study and those of others (see, for example, Baruah, 2010) indicates that women's well-documented aversion to stake claims to natal property was less a consequence of their ignorance of the law or their inability to appreciate the economic benefits of landed property ownership and more an outcome of a profound desire to stay connected with and feel loved by their natal families. Declining

shares of parental property in favor of brothers similarly represents less a mindless subscription to traditional gender ideologies and more an intricate negotiation of kinship that alienates women from natal property, but also ensures economic and emotional support from brothers in times of crisis. Like the findings of several others, this research endorses the view that legal literacy and consciousness-raising initiatives that raise awareness among women as well as men about the benefits of greater equity and address fears about undoing customary male privileges are as crucial as policy reforms and state actions that protect women's interests and facilitate their agency. In terms of empowerment of women contributing family workers, it is also crucial to make their contribution to agriculture and rural economy visible and valued. Therefore, scaling up consciousness-raising efforts to educate both men and women about their equal entitlements to landed property comprise one of the other major recommendations emerging from this research. These efforts need to be complemented with women contributing family workers greater access to social protection and formalisation of their work. Women contributing family workers' bargaining and decision-making power in relation to productive assets and financial issues within household and community need to be enhanced. Prevention and reduction of hidden labour of the rural girl child needs to be addressed.

Own account workers (small-scale producers and subsistence farmers)

Creating employment opportunities for women is not enough. More attention needs to be paid to creating optimal policy frameworks to enable their success and enhance their bargaining power. This became particularly clear from our findings on milk producers. Although women gained increased access to income-generation opportunities through milk sales, they were unable to negotiate milk prices, which were set by the buyer, and price fluctuation throughout the year rendered their profits or losses unpredictable.

Some of the recommendations laid out for previous groups of workers (for example the importance of recognizing women as workers rather than as helpers or "free" labourers, complementing law and policies with political awareness-raising at all levels, and increasing women workers' decision-making power and facilitating access to productive assets on an equal basis as men) apply as empowering elements just as well to this group. Equal access to vocational training, credit, and markets are also recommended to enable women workers in this category to expand businesses and overcome barriers in production. Access to reliable and quality child care facilities is equally important for this group of workers.

There is also a need to reframe and regulate the renter-owner arrangements in the Old Lands to make it more just for renters and for women workers, whose time and labour are perceived to be free and limitless. As with the other groups of workers, the ability to mobilize, organize and bargain collectively for health care and social protection benefits will be especially helpful for this group of women. Farmers unions that do exist in these areas are currently mostly focused on securing lower prices for, and better supply of, fertilizers and water for landowners. They should be encouraged to expand their agendas to advocate for the needs of own-account workers who are also largely involved in agriculture.

Entrepreneurs and employers

Because graduate women landholders in Noubariya owned large areas of land and had a public presence through their positions on boards, they enjoyed positions of comparable power and status with men in their communities. This particular group had access to economic and social advancement opportunities (such as additional property acquisition and training). They were also better able to assert their own agency in influencing the working conditions than women workers in any other category. Yet, women in both areas tend to be overrepresented in micro- and small enterprises²⁷ that often operate in the informal economy which leaves them outside of the realm of labour-related laws and regulatory mechanisms. In order to increase their empowerment, increased integration of rural women into local markets and marketing channels under fair and non-discriminatory conditions and enhanced possibilities for them to engage directly with different stakeholders for financial gain without dependency on intermediaries. Likewise, lessening rural women's time poverty related to their triple work burden and provision of reliable and quality child care facilities is of utmost importance for this type of rural women workers.

Notwithstanding these gains, access to agricultural training, health insurance and occupational health and safety measures needs to be strengthened in both study areas. Yet, these considerations are more important for the sustainability of the New Lands' economy. It is the case that the younger generations in the New Lands are increasingly leaving for the Old Lands in order to access better health care and schooling. Because the health and education infrastructure in the Old Lands is much better than that in the New Lands, some of the second generation women settlers in the New Lands are less educated than their mothers, who are graduates from a high school, technical training or university.

The outcomes of providing women with land are difficult to predict for their daughters. In addition to limited schooling options for their daughters in the New Lands none of the interviewed rural women entrepreneurs and employers intended to pass on their property to their daughters. Researchers working in other contexts have also pointed out that the simple targeting of resources to women does not always ensure equitable outcomes since resources may then be allocated in biased ways to children under conditions of strong son preference. The need for more critical awareness-raising and political conscientization about gender equality is as important for this group of most "empowered" women workers. Women landowners in the Old Lands who currently assert that they have chosen to cloister themselves in their homes may also find that they want to be more economically and politically active if they are exposed to more critical and political awareness-raising about women's empowerment and gender equality.

²⁷ This is symptomatic since in developing economies globally, women own approximately 8 to 10 million small and medium enterprises, which accounts for 31 to 38 percent of all SMEs in emerging markets. Source: ILO, 2014.

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Appendix I

Figure 1. Transformational change process: conceptual framework of rural women’s empowerment through decent work and employment

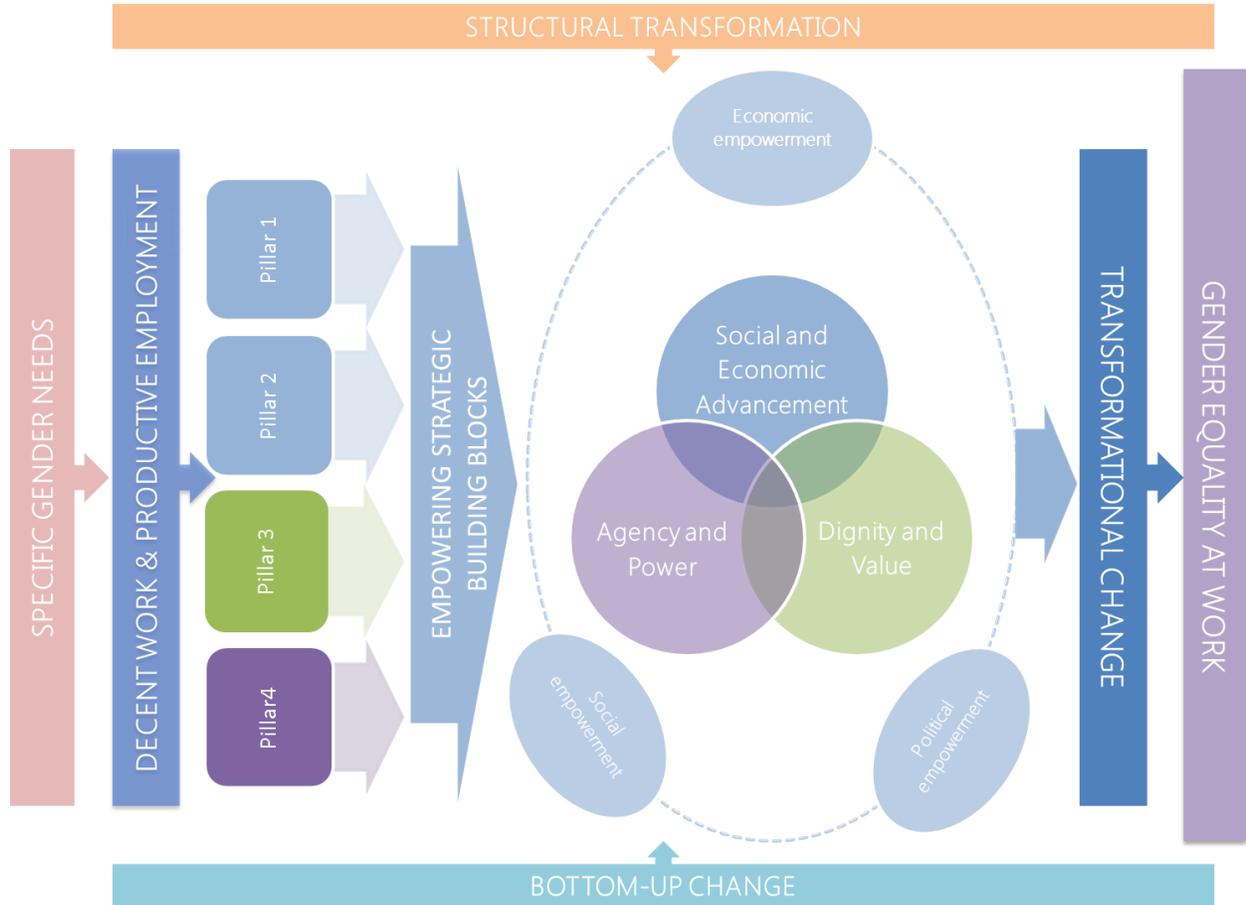


Table 1. Key focal areas for GEDW/RWE (per FAO empowerment and ILO DW pillars)²⁸

Rural women's empowerment within the context of decent work			
Social and Economic Advancement		Dignity and Value	Power and Agency
DW PILLAR 1	DW PILLAR 2	DW PILLAR 3	DW PILLAR 4
Equal access to gainful and productive employment and decent work opportunities in rural areas	Equal access to social protection that covers also women small-scale producers & rural women informal workers	Enhanced awareness raising among rural women of all ages, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, on their rights as workers	Promoting an enabling environment for rural women's active participation in and full access to representative bodies
Equal access to vocational education, training and skills development	Equal access to occupational safety and health measures adapted to the needs of rural women	Preventing & reducing girl child labour in rural economy, with particular attention to "hidden" domestic work	Assured freedom of association & the right to collective bargaining for rural women
Lessening rural women's time poverty related to their triple work burden	Equal access to decent working conditions in rural economy (i.e. maternity protection, adequate living wages, equal pay)	Gender-sensitive enforcement of International Labour Standards in rural areas, with particular attention to rural women working in agriculture and in informal economy	Enhanced rural women's bargaining and decision-making power, including related to productive assets and financial issues within household, community and the work place
Equal access and gender-responsive integration in profitable markets and productive VCs for rural women	Equal access to productivity-enhancing social insurance schemes (i.e. focus on health and unemployment) and labor market interventions for rural women	Reducing gender- and age-based discrimination in the world of work	Enhanced participation of rural women in social and policy dialogue
Equal access to productive resources, modern biofuel and water supply as well as gender-sensitive rural advisory services	Equal access to reliable child care facilities	Conducive and targeted gender-sensitive employment related policy and regulatory frameworks	Positive social change regarding discriminatory gender-biased practices and traditional gender roles

²⁸ Table adapted to the Egyptian context.