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## **Socio-Economic Development in Marginalized Rural Communities: The Serendipitous Success of a Tourism Destination**

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### **Abstract**

Destination success factors have been identified and widely researched. Tourism destinations to a lesser extent have also been subject to success factor research. However, heritage tourism destination success remains often elusive. This paper investigates the success of Evelyne Porret, a Swiss potter, in her adopted village of Tunis in The Fayoum, an Egyptian Governorate, south-west of Cairo. Ecotour guides who accompany visitors to Tunis Village are always confronted by the questions of: Why this specific Egyptian village is economically, culturally, social, and environmentally successful? How villagers reached 0% unemployment rate? How and who utilized its unique natural heritage to overcome the enduring challenges facing other Egyptian villages? How villagers keep success sustainability? How one person, Evelyne Porret, helped achieving socio-economic development in this marginalized village?

To answer these questions, this study unpicks her story over four decades to highlight the success factors - small and large, minor and important - which impacted on her leading the transformation of her village into a world-class center for pottery making and a tourism destination *par excellence* offering socio-economic development opportunities for youth in Tunis village and their families. Her extraordinary success was serendipitous as she did not have socio-economic development in mind from the beginning, but she acted as a transformational leader to her students/children. This paper emphasizes the lessons in the form of a model that may lead marginalized rural communities towards successful socio-economic development.

### **Keywords**

Socio-Economic Development, Marginalized Rural Communities, The Fayoum.