



THE HUMAN'S ASPECTS OF



THE GIRLS' EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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In this booklet we present a number of stories that reflect the human aspects of the girl-friendly schools of the Girls' Education Initiative.

We thus offer examples of the characteristic and authentic texture of Egyptian culture. It is women who are the producers of most of these rich Egyptian structures and textures as females constitute half of society and their education raises the worth of the nation and the values on the basis of which it was established.



Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak aspires to empower Egyptian girls so that they would contribute to the development of the country on a valid and strong basis. Her Excellency assigned this task to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) which formed a task force that works diligently under her leadership. Hence the Girls' Education Initiative came into being and entailed the construction of girl0friendly schools which are built in Egypt's villages and hamlets with a new philosophy that enlightens the Egyptian girl so that she can take steady, solid steps forward. She also learns how to think and how to raise a strong future generation for her country.



AN IDEA ABOUT GIRL FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

They are girl-friendly schools as in these schools the factors that lead to the deprivation of girls from education are avoided. Thus, the schools are built in villages and hamlets that are close to the girls' residences so that they are not exposed to the dangers of roads as they walk to school. The schedule of the schools also allows girls to carry out their morning chores at home before going to school.

These schools are also friendly to boys and accept their enrolment in girl-friendly schools as the philosophy of the schools is that boys and girls complement each other and must not be isolated from each other.

They are also family friendly as they take into consideration the social conditions of the families of their students.

They are also friendly to society as the Initiative depends on the participation of the village people in the running of the schools.

They are friendly to the environment as the Initiative uses resources from the surrounding environment to produce educational aides.

These schools are characterized by a new philosophy and methodology that are implemented to help develop the personality and talents of the students so that they can effectively contribute to the development and building up of society. In this sense, these schools are expected to contribute to the

creation of a new generation of leaders for Egypt.

The educational process in these schools depends on transforming the school curriculum into activities by using modern educational methods such as role-playing and conversation. It does not depend on rote learning but on the effective participation between the students and the facilitators. This develops the personality of the student and transforms it into a positive personality that is self-reliant, capable of participating in discussions and of expressing opinions frankly and courageously. This educational process also stimulates the creativity of the new generation.

The task force has been carrying out its role diligently and confidently aspiring to spread and realize this new intellect and this noble endeavor. We were not stopped by the obstacles that we met, among which were the attitudes of the village and hamlet people.

The cruelty of the surrounding physical circumstances was worth putting up with as we managed to win over new advocates of the Girls' Education Initiative from among the peoples of the villages and hamlets we visited. Following are some relevant stories:

THE STORY OF A GIRL

While trying to find suitable locations for the building of the schools according to the selected objective criteria, one of the villagers volunteered to participate in the project. He was one of Egypt's low-income people who owned very little. He submitted a request to accept his donation of a piece of land on which to build a girl-friendly school. When we informed him that this land was not going to be returned to him again, his answer was: "I wish I owned a piece of land in every village and every hamlet. I would have donated all of them to the benefit of this great project!!"

He then burst into tears and continued: "I hope that the fate of none of Egypt's girls will be like that of a ten-year old girl of our village. This girl, one morning, went to her school that is very far from where she lived. She was very enthusiastic that day because she was going to find out her test results, but instead she was raped which cost her her life. When her family and relatives had waited for hours for her return, they went out in search of her in every place inside and outside the village. Their search resulted in their finding her corpse. They were intensely shocked."

With the genuine nature of the Egyptian farmer, he said: "I wish you would thank Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak who thought to protecting our daughters by building a school inside the village."



THE STORY OF EL-HWATA

During one of the meetings of the Technical Secretariat in the Governorate of Assiut, the following story took place.

The area of El-Hawata in the Governorate of Assiut is a far away area characterized by a cruel environment, so much so that every man and every child is armed to defend himself against any of the surrounding of the girl-friendly schools in El-Hawata, there were serious doubts about the possibility of actually building th3e schools because the area was geographically and environmentally dangerous.

The task force, however, persisted because they wanted to prove that they were serious about their work, they were not defeated by obstacles and had the ability to reach their objectives even while working in this dangerous and difficult-to-reach area. Hence, the construction continued in each of the sites originally selected by the project. This was carried on without feelings of fear or hesitation.

The biggest surprise to the people of El-Hawata came when they saw the members of the task force and found among them girls whose ages were only a few years over 20. Yet the members of the task force continued their trip to El-Hawata area courageously and without fear. They started their trip in the afternoon and arrived at night. The task force – including the girls – crossed the River Nile and climbed mountains without any fear of

arms or wolves. The people admired the strong spirit of the task force and their attempts to spread the Initiative. They became fully prepared to protect it and engrave what it stands for in their hearts.



THE STORY OF AN ILL MAN

In another one of Egypt's hamlets, in Bani Suif, there was a sick farmer who suffered from many illnesses. The pain of his illness induced him to think of doing a good deed that would bring him closer to Allah the Almighty and would be beneficial for his children. His decision was to participate in building a girl-friendly school where his daughters would work and where the children of his village would become literate and where they would memorize the Holy Koran. He wanted to gain God's blessings through what each Egyptian girl of his village will learn in the school.



The decision was not an easy one, as children do not always appreciate how their parents feel. This man's sons were dead set against his participation in building the girl-friendly school.

We are still awaiting this man from Upper Egypt and pray for him to recover and succeed in convincing his sons to let him contribute to Girls' Education Initiative by building a girl-friendly school.



THE STORY OF A WOMAN FARMER

In another one of the hamlets of Bani Suif there was yet another story. However, involved the element of greed that controls the spirits of some human beings. In this hamlet, near the site that was chosen to build a girl-friendly school and during evaluating it according to the criteria set for selection... a group of ill-intentioned people of the mallet made their appearance.

They started by insulting us, waving wooden sticks and getting ready to attach and beat us!

The shock was so great that we re paralyzed in our places, not believing what was happening. There were engineers among the accompanying construction group who asked us to climb in their car for protection, but we refused to retreat or to be frightened by threats.

When the people of the hamlet saw this situation, each one of them stood steadfastly in his place and stared at us. Among them was a mother surrounded by her elder and younger sons. She addressed us saying: "We don't want to hurt anybody... It's just that we don't want anyone to take our land." We asked her if this land belonged to her. She replied: "No it doesn't belong to anyone in particular" We repeated the question of w3hetehr the land belonged to her. She replied: "No it doesn't belong to me... but we have been using this land all our lives and we use it for our livestock and poultry."

We gently explained to her that all the land was Egypt's land and that Egypt had given her and her children a piece of land on which to build a home but the remainder of the land belonged to other surrounding villagers. We stressed that as all the land belonged to Egypt, it belonged to all the Egyptians. We added that we must all benefit from the land and it was inconceivable that she would take it all. Besides, we went on, we were there to help her in raising her children. We then posed this question to her: "Do your children go to school? She replied: "No... the school is far away. Besides, our children help me with the chores at home and help their father in the field."

We explained to her that we will build a school next to her home and that the school schedule will start in the morning after the girls have finished helping their family at home and in the field. We added that we would give their daughters books and copybooks, and that we will offer them a small meal during the school day.

We concluded by saying: "We will also help you start a small project whose profit you and your husband so that you can depend on yourselves in making a living. This way your children will have time to study and to obtain an education. We will also offer the young women of the village the chance to work as facilitators."

Finally, and after several visits, the woman became convinced of the new ideas she was hearing for the first time. She brought her children to us and asked that they become

enrolled in the school and also asked that her husband work as a guard in it.



A STORY OF STEADFASTNESS

A site was selected to build a girl-friendly school in still another one of the hamlets of Egypt, this time in the reclaimed state-owned lands in remote villages of Bani Suef. The digging commenced, the foundations were laid and the building emerged with its strong walls in the midst of the desert land of the hamlet. When we went to visit the site for follow-up purposes, a team from the Investment Bank, who acted as the financial controllers for the funds spent to cover the costs of these buildings, accompanied us.

What the members of this team saw amazed them as the site was in a very far away area. They wanted to know how we had gotten that far, what difficulties had we put up with using roads that were more often than not unpaved? They were also impressed by the perseverance and steadfastness of the team of the Technical Secretariat who were working in very hot areas and were wading through and crossing harsh water canals.

Above all they were impressed by our relationship with the residents of the hamlet who surrounded us amicably, i.e., the women who asked us to help them to connect water to their homes and fields as the area was arid and water was a rare resource. In return, they were going to give us a helping hand in the schools, will enroll their children in them, will let their daughters work as facilitators and let their husbands participate in the education committees and work as liaison officers in the schools.



The children themselves, who knew nothing except the dust in which they played and were afraid of anyone who approached them, they too surrounded us. But we were patient and were nice to them until they felt close to us, trusted us and gave us their names.

We were very happy with this successful meeting with residents of the two villages, Sadamant El-Gabal and Khorshid. What's more important was the admiration of the members of the team of the Investment Bank who had come to monitor us and follow up on our work. We saw in their eyes appreciation and admiration for us for our belief in the objectives of the initiative. At the end of the trip and as a way of teasing us, we heard the head of the team tell one of his colleagues: "After I've seen the effort exerted by the members of the Technical Secretariat, how they wear their overalls and boots, cross unpaved and difficult roads, treat all without resentment, deal closely with children who show no sign of cleanliness, and wade through these tough voyages all day, I will not grant any holidays to our colleagues nor will I accept any excuses ever again."



THE STORY OF NEW YOUTH

We also visited newly reclaimed lands in Abu El Mattamir District, Beheira Governorate to become acquainted with the places of residence of young graduates and other areas resided by those harmed by the law of owners and tenants. The former areas will need schools in the coming years as the children are still too young since the residents are mostly newly-weds. As to the latter areas, they are resided by families that have numerous daughters who are in a pressing need for and education. We undertook preliminary selection of sites for building schools in these areas.





THE STORY OF A STRONG GIRL

Elwani is one of the hamlets of Egypt on the far off borders of Bani Suef. We moved across vastly long distances by car. We left greenery areas and moved across the yellow sands of the desert until we reached the hamlet of Elwani. We found out from the residents that they used to live in the mountains and then they had moved towards the desert, reclaiming its land.

Then we saw something that was very strange and, we felt, very cruel too. We saw children going to school in a line across a long road with nothing to keep them company except the burning sun and the yellow sand! We just couldn't believe the perseverance and steadfastness of these children in their insistence to go to their schools.

When we sat amongst the residents of this hamlet, the children too surrounded us with love and hope in their eyes. Amongst them there was a dark-skinned girl. She said: "I want to be educated! I want to be educated! Please take me to school."

We were very surprised by this perseverance and we insisted on knowing the circumstances of this girl. We asked about her family and we found out why this innocent girl insisted on getting an education. She was challenging the people of her village to prove to them that God, the Almighty Creator, is fair in everything He does.

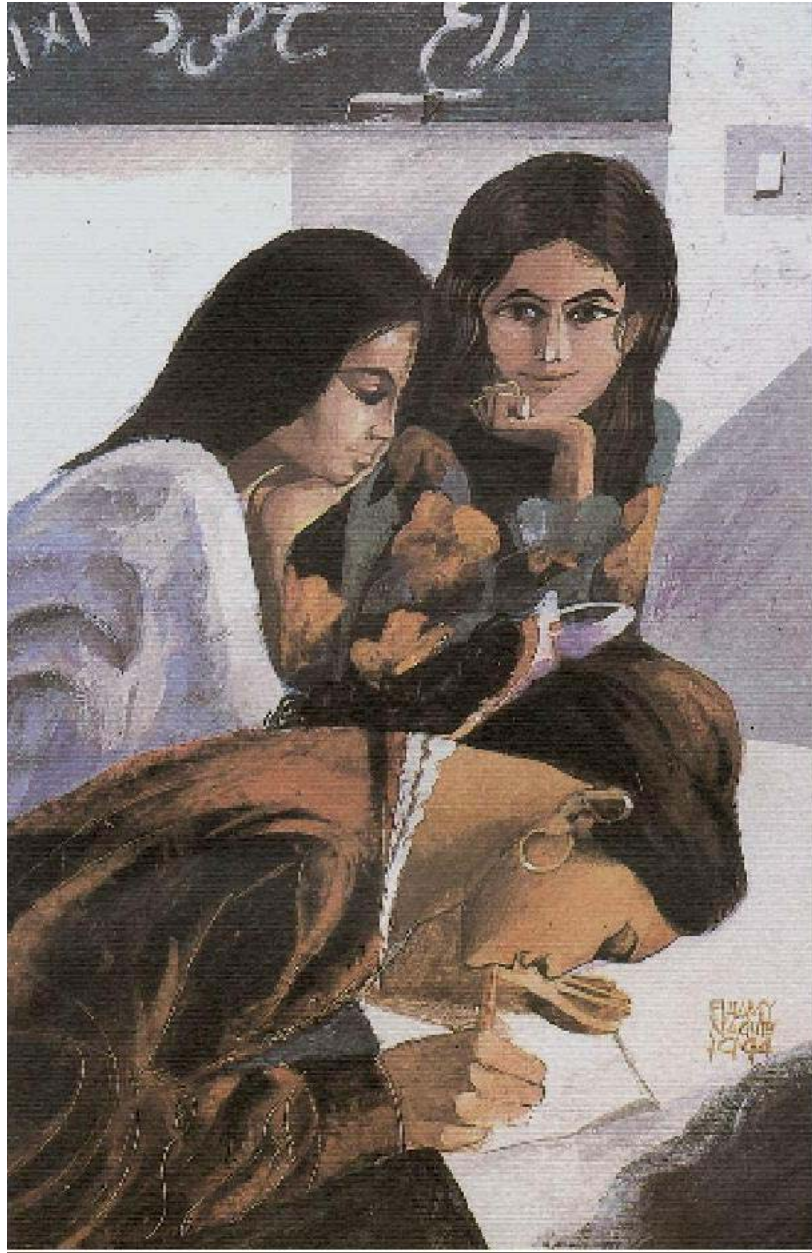
God had given her the brains and had given her twin sister the looks. God the Almighty

had created her twin sister beautiful by all measures and she wanted to show that the Great Creator had favored her too with a blessing that is just as valuable and this is a brain.

We were very happy to have met this girl but we were faced by one other problem: Her age! which was higher than the age bracket set by the Initiative. But we will not desert her and we will present her case to the officials to resolve it, Inshallah!

This Girls'Education Initiative is based on a new, strong and rich vision. It is set out to contribute to the enhancement of the lives of girls in the villages and hamlets of Egypt.





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