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### The Ford Foundation in Egypt

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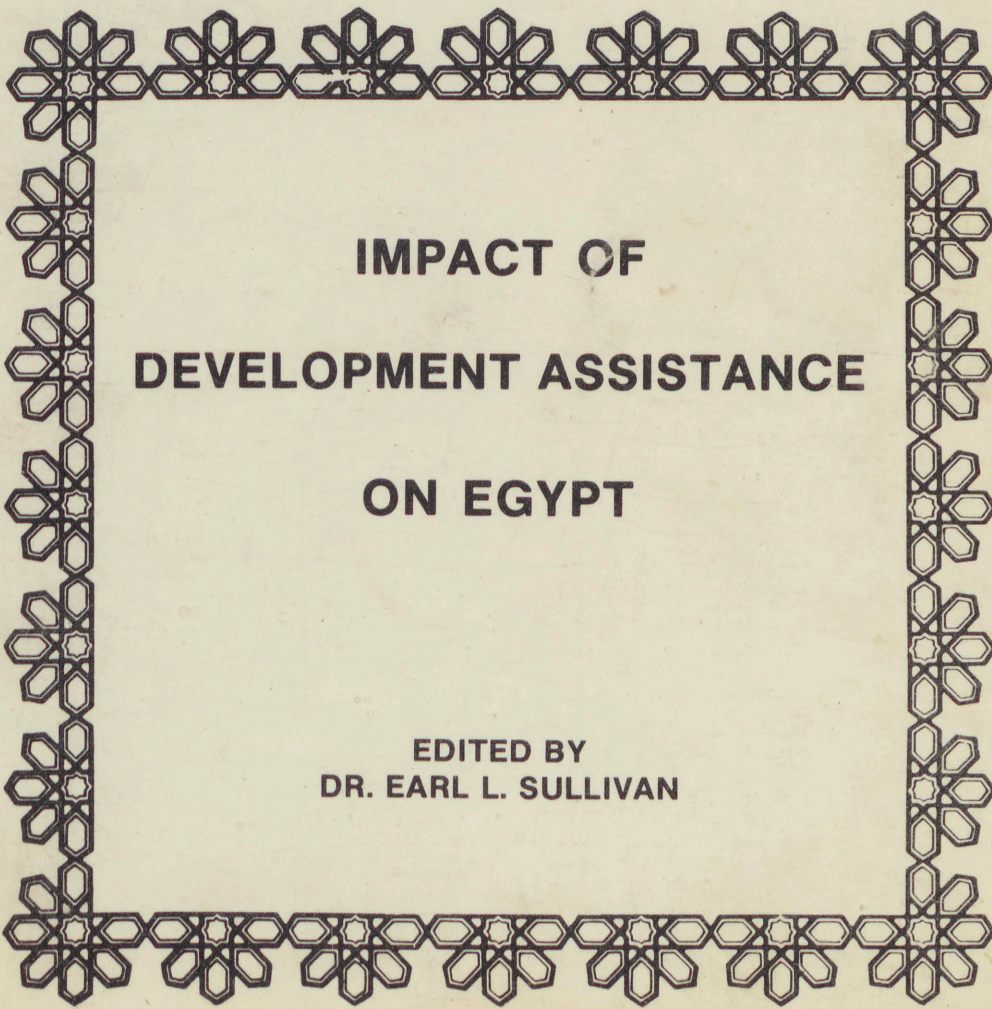
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**CAIRO PAPERS  
IN SOCIAL SCIENCE**



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**IMPACT OF  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE  
ON EGYPT**

**EDITED BY  
DR. EARL L. SULLIVAN**

## The Ford Foundation in Egypt\*

by Ann M. Lesch

The Ford Foundation is a private, nonprofit institution, established in the United States in 1936 in order to fund programs that serve the public welfare. Since the early 1950s, the Foundation has provided grants to institutions and individuals outside the United States--in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. In order to better ensure that this assistance would be provided within the context of the economic and social developmental goals set by each country, the Foundation established field offices in each region. This enables Foundation staff to be in close contact with governments and private citizens and, thus, to try to ensure that the grants reflect the perceived needs in each region. At present, there are nine field offices, and about a third of the Foundation's grants are made overseas.

The Foundation opened an office in Cairo in 1958, although it began making grants here in 1952. Until 1976 the Cairo office was only responsible for grants in Egypt, and came under the jurisdiction of the Middle East regional office, headquartered in Beirut. In 1976, due to the highly dangerous conditions in Lebanon, the regional headquarters was transferred to Cairo. At present, the Cairo office is responsible for grants throughout the Arab countries. In the current fiscal year, the Cairo field office expects to provide nearly \$4 million in grants, of which about two-thirds would be allocated to Egypt and the Sudan, and a third to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the occupied West Bank, and North Yemen.

From the 1950s throughout the 1970s, the Foundation provided more than \$100 million in grants in the Middle East and North Africa, of which about \$20 million went to Egypt. The Foundation worked primarily in four fields: agricultural research, family planning, management and development planning, and education. The emphasis in all four was on building the indigenous capacity to conduct research and make policy and, thereby, to enhance the countries' capacities to set national priorities and cope with urgent developmental issues. The Foundation staff worked closely with universities and government research institutes in this effort to train and mobilize talent. It might be useful to give a few examples of grants made in Egypt, to illustrate the Foundation's approach.

In agriculture, the Foundation sought to strengthen the capacity to analyze and deal with agricultural production and policy problems. In particular, research aimed at field testing new techniques and new strains of food grains so as to increase the yield of food crops. If these new methods and strains were then adopted, Egypt might lessen its dependence on foreign grain sources. The Expanded Cereals Improvement Program, launched by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1965, was one component of this program. The Egyptian scientists worked to develop high yielding varieties of wheat, maize and rice, resistant to local diseases and pests. Advised by international research centers, such as CIMMYT, the maize center in Mexico, the Egyptian scientists could benefit from

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the most advanced studies and breakthroughs throughout the world.

A decade later, the Foundation helped the Ministry of Agriculture to conduct a Farm Management Survey, covering 56 villages, that went beyond the study of particular crops to a detailed look at the on-farm practices and cost structures facing individual farmers throughout the country. This baseline study was designed to help the Ministry in its policy deliberations, such as concerning the optimal pricing for cotton and other cash crops. Other grantees include the Institute of Land Reclamation at Alexandria University, for graduate training and technical assistance with special emphasis on the use of High Dam irrigation water in cultivating New Lands; the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries in Alexandria, and the University of Alexandria's studies of the Western desert ecosystem. In addition, the Egyptian Academy of Science and Technology received support for the Nile River project, which monitored the quality and use of Nile waters.

In the second area--family planning-- the Foundation supported training and research programs designed to narrow the gap between the rate of economic growth and the rate of population growth. Starting in 1965, the Foundation provided help to the National Family Planning Board, largely for training programs and evaluative research. The Foundation also began to support training and research in family planning and reproductive biology in several Egyptian universities, through the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology in their Medical Faculties. The principal universities assisted were Cairo, Alexandria, Assiut and Al-Azhar. Funded in conjunction with WHO and the Population Council, these departments have by now developed scientific studies of world-stature, who conduct critically important research on, for example, the effects of bilharzia on pregnant women, the relationship between breastfeeding and fertility, and the effects of the birth-control pill on women's health.

In the third field--management-- the focus was on improving the level and quality of administrative services. Major support was provided to the National Institute of Management Development, the Institute of National Planning, the Aswan Regional Planning Project, and the AUC management program as well as the Social Research Center. In the early 1970s, the Foundation provided a grant to the National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research to study the relationships between legal reform and social change, with special emphasis on the impact of land reform on rural Egypt. In the mid 1970s, the Foundation helped the General Authority for Arab and Foreign Investment, an autonomous subsidiary of the Ministry of Economy, to develop information programs and think through the legal reforms necessary to promote private Egyptian and foreign investment.

Finally, in the field of education, assistance was provided in the 1960s to the Institute of Statistical Studies and Research and the National Scientific Research and Computer Center, both at Cairo University, for major fellowship and library development programs: to the English language teaching unit in the Ministry of Education for refresher courses and workshops for teachers as well as for improvements in the English-language curriculum; and to AUC's English Language Institute, for curriculum development and outreach programs.

In sum, the Foundation helped in a modest way to establish and consolidate national-level teaching, research, and policy-making institutions focusing on fields critical to Egyptian development. The individuals supported through

Foundation fellowships and the institutions assisted play important roles today in setting national development priorities and thereby ensuring that foreign aid -- and relations with external donors -- are managed according to Egyptian national interests and serve to promote self-reliance, not dependency.

While the basic philosophy and goals of the Foundation programs remain the same today, there have been notable changes in the fields in which we work and in the style of operation. Certain fields have been entirely phased out: notably, development planning and management, research in reproductive biology and family planning, and language and science education. This phasing-out reflects in part the success of prior efforts at staff training and institution building. It also reflects the entry of other more substantial donors in those fields -- notably USAID and U.N. agencies. Moreover, it reflects changes in the priorities of the Foundation as a whole; these include a growing concern for equity issues, such as the rights of women and minorities, and a greater interest in supporting local level initiatives. The Foundation sees a complementarity between human rights and development issues: by seeking to alleviate rural and urban poverty, we seek to help build the basis for viable communities which can define their own needs, and protect their own rights.

As mentioned earlier, the Foundation expects to program nearly \$4 million this fiscal year in Arab countries, of which about one-third (\$1.3 million) would be spent in Egypt. The fields in which we are currently most active in Egypt are urban employment and services, rural poverty and natural resources, human rights and legal aid, and international relations. We have a very small staff in our office -- only five professionals. This small size of staff and funds provides both constraints and opportunities; it limits the number of fields in which we can become involved, but it also compels us to operate as efficiently as possible and with a major emphasis on the leveraging and demonstration effects of grants.

The fields of legal aid, human rights and international relations involve the smallest sums of money and are particularly experimental:

(1) We are helping two private agencies in Cairo to introduce specialized free legal aid as part of their on-going social assistance programs. The Center for Egyptian Civilization Studies is providing legal counsel to tenants largely in the Gamaliyya district who have lost their apartments, either due to eviction by the landlord or to the demolition or collapse of the building. The Center's lawyers try to have the tenant reinstated in the apartment or, failing that, seek the best possible compensation and alternative housing. The second organization, the Family Solidarity Association, already provides social aid and counselling to poor families and seeks, with our support, to provide legal advice on family and labor laws to its clients. Both of these micro-projects are experimenting with concepts and methods of legal aid that have been institutionalized in countries as diverse as India, Indonesia, and the U.S. It will be some time, however, before we can have an idea as to whether they can be adopted more broadly and systematically in Egypt.

(2) Support for human rights is centering on academic programs. A small grant to the Law Faculty at Assiut, for example, enabled a professor of international law to hold essay-writing competitions among his students on the theme of human rights. More systematically, the Foundation is helping the Law Faculty at Zagazig University to establish a Center for International Legal and Economic Studies. This Center will conduct research and hold seminars on the right to development, political rights, and social justice; the Center hopes to hold an inaugural international conference this spring on the subject of the human

rights charter that is being drafted by the Organization for African Unity, to which it will invite prominent African, European and American jurists and scholars.

(3) Grants have been made in international relations to AUC, the Political Science Department at Cairo University, and the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. "Cairo Papers" -- which is hosting this seminar -- has been the primary grantee at AUC. Studies by young Egyptian scholars at Cairo University include a group-project on Egypt's foreign policy options in the 1980s, and a forthcoming interdisciplinary study of the impact of income-transfers on income-distribution in Egypt, with special emphasis on the effects of remittances. The Al-Ahram center is now completing a major study of the attitudes of government bureaucrats toward the development process. Opportunities remain limited, however, for grant-making in the field of international relations, particularly because the fear of foreign influence and of misuse of information is greatest in this area.

The main fields of activity are in urban and rural poverty. Given the massive scale of these problems, the Foundation has decided to use its limited resources to emphasize equity and opportunity, focusing on community development efforts, on upgrading informal neighborhoods, and on improving the employment opportunities and conditions for women.

The Muqattam Zabaleen Association, founded in 1975, is the first effort to organize the impoverished families who collect Cairo's household wastes. The zabaleen live in settlements on the fringes of Cairo, where they lack basic health and educational services. Modest financial support from the Foundation -- together with Oxfam and other donors -- is helping to train members of the community in financial management, the driving and maintenance of trucks, and helping them with the establishment of a revolving capital credit fund to buy trucks and improve services. In a short time, the zabaleen have begun to renovate their carts, extend their collection routes, and purchase trucks to replace carts on some routes. As this community organization gains experience and self-confidence, it plans to reach out to other zabaleen communities on the outskirts of Cairo. The experience is already being studied by urban planners in North Yemen, as a possible model for upgrading the conditions of garbage collectors in San'a.

A second example of a community development project is the Integrated Social Services Center in Tanta. Established with USAID support in 1979, this Center is intended as a resource and training center for non-governmental voluntary organizations and for the more than 80 Community Development Associations in Gharbiyya, which is the largest rural governorate in Egypt. Local organizations are poorly developed in general in Egypt and lack skills, management capacity, and innovative program ideas. An intermediary and training organization such as the Center in Tanta could help to upgrade such community associations, by providing staff training, stimulating project ideas, and helping to articulate and respond to local village priorities. The Foundation is interested in helping the Tanta Center develop such a capacity.

In upgrading informal neighborhoods, in addition to helping the Zabaleen Association, the Foundation is helping an Egyptian consulting firm undertake a social and health survey of Manshiet Nasser, an area with 50,000 residents which is slated for upgrading through a World Bank program and the Joint Housing Projects Agency of Cairo. The government proposes to provide housing tenure to these residents, help them with loans so that they can improve their

dwellings, and introduce basic sanitation and social services. Drawing on a pioneering survey of health conditions in squatter areas of Jordan, the Egyptian study will help the physical planners assess the social impact of the upgrading project. The study sees improved mother and child health as both an objective and an indicator of the effectiveness of policies to upgrade communities in informal housing areas.

Community health is, thus, a key component of both the housing upgrading program and the community development approach. This will also be addressed in part through a program planned by the Medical Faculty of Assiut University to help the medical staff undertake community-based research and action programs, working with both doctors and dayas (midwives) on such issues as complications in pregnancy, improved nutrition and sanitation practices, and prevention and simple cures for children's diseases.

Finally, an important component of the equity thrust of our program involves improving the employment opportunities and conditions for women, particularly in non-traditional job areas. So far, we have concentrated on applied research in this area. CAPMAS -- the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics -- for example, has reviewed with Foundation support the procedures for measuring female economic activity and has assessed the causes for underreporting of female activity in the annual labor force sample survey. This intensive review led to implementation of improvements in the survey; this is making it possible for Egypt to have a more accurate picture of the number of women employed and the kinds of income-generating activities in which they engage. Such information is critically important in economic planning, the providing of appropriate technical education, and the tailoring of social services to women's needs. In the latter area, we have helped with a pilot effort in Cairo to improve home-based child care for working mothers, through the Family Solidarity Association and its network of neighborhood voluntary associations. Special training programs help those home baby-sitters improve the quality of their services -- by learning play activities appropriate for small children as well as first aid, nutrition and hygiene. We are also about to support an evaluation by staff of the Faculty of Social Work at Helwan University of a successful experiment in training and placing women in woodworking and furniture-making shops. This evaluation is intended to lead to training for women in other non-traditional employment fields. In the countryside, we are beginning to support studies on women's roles in dairy production, with an eye to enhancing female participation in modern milk and cheese processing and marketing. But these projects remain at an experimental stage.

Our urban programs thus concentrate on community development and women's employment. While these themes do run through the rural program as well, the main organizing principle is now a concern for improved management and conservation of water and land resources. The Egyptian economy depends overwhelmingly on Nile Water. Egyptians estimate that the current surplus of water will be exhausted in the early 1990s. Various programs are being recommended to increase the reuse of drainage water, utilize the stores of groundwater underlying the Nile Valley, and make water usage more efficient on both Old and New Lands. The Foundation is attempting to contribute to these efforts, in part through supporting analyses of the possibilities of using groundwater in conjunction with surface supplies to improve distributional flexibility and increase the amount of water available for irrigation. A Foundation grant to the Water Research Center of the Ministry of Irrigation is

bringing together a team of engineers, agriculturalists and economists to test and evaluate the design and operation of an experimental project to use groundwater in Upper Egypt. Complementing this study by the Ministry of Irrigation is an indepth analysis by a team of AUC's Social Research Center on the interaction of social and technical factors in the allocation of water and the maintenance of the canals. Looking at four canal systems in Upper Egypt and the Delta, the team is assessing the equity of water sharing among farmers and the relationship between the farmers and government officials.

Finally, the Foundation's water management program is helping two different analyses of the problems of New Lands. The reclamation of desert land for agriculture has been viewed as critically important by Egyptians but, in practice, has been plagued by long gestation periods, massive cost over-runs, and the selection of inappropriate crops and irrigation technologies. Newly reclaimed lands have contributed little to agricultural output or to the provision of livelihoods for landless farmers. The AUC Desert Development Program is trying to assess the current constraints and opportunities, particularly by testing production technologies that minimize water and energy requirements for desert agriculture. The Foundation has provided support to assist this program to assess the viability of recommended technologies and to identify and solve constraints facing farmers in new lands areas. A similar program is being planned with the University of Minya, which has started to work with both university graduates and formerly landless farmers who are cultivating five hectare plots in a newly reclaimed area just west of Minya. These farmers have difficulty adapting their methods from the rich alluvial soil of the Valley to the sandy soil in the desert. The Foundation hopes to help the university's Soil Sciences Department to research and develop an extension program that will help the farmers select the optimal mix of crops and livestock, taking into account the poor soils and the dangers of water-logging and salinity.

The Foundation's resources are modest in comparison to the developmental needs of Egypt and the Middle East. We cannot operate a large-scale aid program; nor have we attempted to do so. Rather, we look for areas of critical need in which the introduction of small sums, in conjunction with indigenous expertise and institutions can lead, over time, to more profound changes. As a donor with a limited but long-standing program in Egypt, we share Egyptians' concern that research and development be in the hands of Egyptians themselves. Cooperation with external donors and agencies need not lead to dependency, so long as Egyptians have the confidence and capacity to draw up a strategy to address development and equity concerns, at both the national and community levels. Then Egyptians can benefit from methods and experience abroad -- being open to the world intellectually while increasingly self-reliant and secure.