

CHILD WELFARE IN EGYPT

COOPERATION YIELDS GOOD RESULTS

The following is a summary of a talk given by Mrs. Saneya Saleh, researcher at the American University Social Studies Center, Cairo, at the Social Welfare Conference held on December 27 – December 31, 1978.

This talk reports on a pioneer project planned by a group of women volunteers interested in child welfare, successfully carried out with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and the American University of Cairo.

The project was started in June 1977. Its aim was to provide elementary school students in the needy and overpopulated quarters of Cairo with adequate means of improving their social, hygienic, cultural and educational conditions.

A preliminary step taken by the initiators of the project was to hold at the school selected for the experiment (The Salam School in Bulaq), periodic meetings with the parents and teaching staff for the purpose of studying the problems on hand and finding out the best way to tackle them.

The project aroused unusual enthusiasm and response among the various groups. The success it achieved during the first year of its implementation convinced everyone of the fruitfulness of joint action between government authorities and volunteers from the people.

Here are the chief results achieved after one year of cooperative work:

1. Providing each of the 2500 students of the Salam School with a daily meal.
2. Keeping the school and its environment clean and tidy.
3. Giving all students a medical exam which showed their physical needs.
4. Encouraging sports activities and providing adequate space for them.
5. Organizing cultural trips.
6. Creating a children's library and a music room.
7. Creating summer camps for children and parents and giving them opportunities to perform recreational activities and learn certain manual works and crafts.
8. Studying the social needs of the children by making field visits to their parents.
9. Organizing entertainment programs and sports contests.
10. Arranging evening study hours for students who lack a quiet place at home and for those in need of help in their school work.

While performing their activities, the workers were careful to carry out studies aiming at the evaluation of the work and finding out the best methods to improve it.

The project is expected to serve as a model for other schools to follow. Already another school in Bulaq, where the project was started, has taken the necessary steps to adopt it in 1979.

"This is a small beginning, of course, but it carries a great significance, because we expect it to spread and cover within a short time the whole Bulaq area and, in the year 2000, all the schools of the unprivileged quarters of Egypt. 'The 1000 miles' trip begins with one step', says a Chinese proverb. Our women have already performed several steps."