

The image features a minimalist abstract design. A large blue vertical bar is positioned on the left side. A horizontal grey bar intersects it, containing the text 'Chapter 10' in white. Below this, a horizontal grey bar contains the text 'Villagers meet the professionals' in black. A thin blue vertical line extends downwards from the intersection of the grey bars. A thin grey horizontal bar is also visible below the main grey bar.

Chapter 10

Villagers meet the professionals

Chapter 10: Villagers meet the professionals

It was not a festival in *Qaryat Al-Nasr* but the preparations looked as if one was going to take place. The arrangements were underway for an important session with the Creative Extension Group members who were expected to arrive in about two hours. The day was perfectly sunny and the sky looked beautiful blue, without a shred of cloud. The preparations were made for the session to take place in the open. All the buffaloes and donkeys, normally kept around the surrounding area, had been moved elsewhere, out of sight. A large space on brink of the village had been thoroughly cleaned of debris, and was covered with dozens of small and large *keleems*, patch-worked sheets of cloth and hand-woven mats, displaying a variety of colourful patterns. At one side, about fifteen chairs and one long table were placed to accommodate the honourable guests. Since the invitation to participate in the session was open, a large crowd comprising men, women and, above all, children had already started gathering - all dressed in their native, freshly washed dresses. Some expensive carpets were spread in front of the table and chairs as a token of special honour being given to the guests. Abdallah El Qatri, the *Omda*, had arranged cordless microphones to ensure maximum exchange of views. In an adjacent house of a farmer, arrangements were being made to serve lunch to the guests. A man was shouting instructions on microphone for the parents to keep their children under control so that they would not create any kind of disturbance during the session. There was a lot of noise, including barking dogs and playing children, racing in different directions.

In a small procession, which was impressive to the villagers, the guests arrived at ten in the morning by three government vehicles, all 4-wheel-drive. Abdul Hameed, Director of Agricultural Extension, and two Agricultural Extension Supervisors occupied the first vehicle. The members of the Creative Extension Group, Dr. Abdul Aziz, Zakie Mobarak, Fawzia Sallam and Saeda Alhaj were in the second vehicle, while one Agricultural Extension Supervisor, two Village Extension Workers and two Home Visitors, including Yousef Ali and Om Kalsoom, filled the third vehicle. Totally, besides drivers, twelve visitors got off the vehicles, and as soon as their feet touched the ground, three teenage men, standing not far from them, started playing a loud tune using


rababa, tabla, nai and *riq*. The crowd clapped excitedly, and several women in the background resorted to *zaghrota* - loud traditional guttural voices of joy expressing extreme happiness.

Abdallah El Qatri, the Village *Omda*, and the mosque *Imam*, Hosni El- Masri greeted the guests warmly. Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali also shook hands with them. Soon, the visitors and the village dignitaries took their seats and the vast crowd of farm families settled on the floor or stood behind in a semicircle around the carpets.



The session started with the recitation from the Holy Qur'an by Hosni El - Masri. Then Abdallah El Qatri welcomed the guests, expressing his heartfelt gratitude for the honour that the distinguished guests had brought to *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. He thanked the government for including his village in the new programme, and assured the visitors that he and his fellow villagers, both men and women, will leave no stone unturned in meeting the expectations of the programme organisers.

After that, Director Abdul Hameed introduced the visitors to the audience, one by one, bestowing honours after honours on each guest. He generously




acknowledged the national reputation and great achievements of the Creative Extension Group, reminding the villagers that it was special kindness of *Allah* that the village was being visited by them. While *shai* was being served, Abdul Hameed requested Dr. Abdul Aziz to take the floor.

Using a cordless microphone, Dr. Abdul Aziz thanked the village residents for very warm welcome extended to him and his colleagues and for coming to the session in such a large number, which to him was a clear expression of interest in the forthcoming programme as well as concern with the rapid population growth and environmental pollution. He presented a brief description of the new programme the government was shortly going to launch with the assistance of the United Nations. He explained how Village Extension Workers and Home Visitors would be given necessary training by the trained Master Trainers, how the groups of men and women will be formed in the villages, how the population growth, environment, and agricultural production were interrelated, why the teams of Master Trainers, Village Extension Workers and Home Visitors were in the most suitable position to educate the farmers' groups and rural households in the relevant issues, and how several innovative activities were going to be included in the programme to make learning a fun.

The crowd listened to Dr. Abdul Aziz with full attention. Apart from occasional crying of babies, there was no disturbance and that made the speaker and his colleagues happy. As soon as Dr. Abdul Aziz finished his speech, he was given an enthusiastic applause, which lasted several minutes.

At that point, Abdallah El Qatri, the Village *Omda*, took the lead and presented a written record of the outcome of the preparatory meeting that was earlier hosted by Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali at their house. Dr. Abdul Aziz was delighted to learn about the advance preparation done at the village and shared the written information with his colleagues who were equally impressed by the work done. They felt instantly that this particular village was bound to take the lead in the programme. Highly motivated Ibrahim Hassan, well educated Samia Ali, Village Extension Worker Yousef Ali, Home Visitor Om Kalsoom, several progressive farmers, the genuinely interested Village *Omda*, Abdallah El Qatri, and an enlightened mosque *imam*, Hosni El- Masri, all indeed made an excellent team to run the programme activities in *Qaryat*



Al-Nasr. These people were way ahead of other villages that the Creative Extension Group members had visited in other governorates. The members were pleasantly surprised to notice that the farmers, unlike some agricultural extension staff, showed no reluctance, whatsoever, to the programme. To the contrary, they found great enthusiasm among the young and elderly men and women of this village.

After the programme details were provided, Abdallah El Qatri invited questions from the villagers. After a long silence and some whispering, only one question was raised: how soon the programme was going to start, which was promptly answered by Dr. Abdul Aziz. Some farmers, including Haj Abid Hussein, held the cordless microphone and generously appreciated the initiative. The most convincing part of the programme, according to the Haj, was the interrelationship between environment, population and agricultural production. A good explanation of this interrelationship, and the team work of extension and health staff, was sufficient to indicate why farm families should pay serious attention to these issues and try to improve village situation under the guidance of the technical experts. There was repeated clapping in the crowd.

The entire session took about two hours and it went very smoothly. When the speech part was over, the villagers rushed to shake hands with the members of the Creative Extension Group. They were excited and eager to assure the impressive guests their full cooperation for the programme. The session had given them a deep feeling of being important and special as their village had been chosen from hundreds of other villages in Egypt. As the Village *Omda* escorted the visitors to lunch, the crowd dispersed, people still talking optimistically and excitedly about the forthcoming programme.

During the lunch, the Creative Extension Group members acknowledged the excellent groundwork done by Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali and made a special request to them to get fully involved in the programme activities for *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. The couple assured them that they will devote their time and energy to ensure successful implementation of the programme in their village. The Village *Omda* also provided similar assurance and explained how interested in the programme the farm families were. He was also grateful to the government, which had selected his village thus giving a sense of pride



to its inhabitants.

Loud chanting *aqaan* for afternoon prayer *asr*, coming from the minaret of the village mosque, was interpreted by the nature-dependant and simple-hearted villagers as a good sign from *Allah*.

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Chapter 11

Caring for others

Chapter 11: Caring for others

Several months had passed since Samia Ali visited her parents. The teaching load at school was too much to allow her to take a few days off. However, when Samia Ali received a letter from her father informing that her mother had suddenly fallen sick and had to be admitted to the hospital, she decided to take emergency leave for one week and visit her parents. Ibrahim Hassan said he would go with her but would return to the village within two days in order to perform certain seasonal farming operations, which could not wait.

The bus station was at a distance of half kilometre from *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. Ibrahim Hassan made arrangements with one of the five taxi drivers living in the village to drop them at the bus station next morning. Samia Ali started packing. She had one full day, most of which she wanted to spend on cooking a few days' food and freeze it so that Ibrahim Hassan will not have to go to the village *dokkans* for meals. She remained busy.

In the late afternoon when Ibrahim Hassan was still in the fields, Samia Ali decided to visit her immediate neighbours to inform them about their scheduled absence so that they could keep an eye on her house. She covered herself with a woollen *shaal* and got out of her house. There was no person to be seen in the street. She could see though two buffaloes sprawled on the ground and a donkey standing lazily in front of the owner's house. It was quite windy and cold as well in spite of the fact that it had been a sunny day since morning. She looked around and two rising columns of thick smoke caught her eye. Someone was burning agricultural residues and trash as usual. Hopefully, these ugly scenes and awful odour will disappear when the new programme gets into action, she thought for her comfort.

Samia Ali knocked at the neighbour's door. It was Aisha Badawi, a middle-aged, cheerful woman who opened the door. Her husband's name was Adel Abdul Raheem. They had three children; two girls, twelve and ten, and one boy who had just turned five. Aisha Badawi and Adel Abdul Raheem were very good neighbours and quite close to Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan. Their daughters were students in the same school where Samia Ali used to teach.

Aisha Badawi was very pleased to see Samia Ali, “*Ya marhab, Yanhar abyad!* Very warm welcome to my dear neighbour seeing whom has become rare these days.”

Samia Ali grinned. “How come you have opened the door? Where are the children?” she asked, thanking *Allah* for blessing her with such friendly neighbours.

“The son is asleep and the daughters are here, attending a friend,” Aisha Badawi replied.



Both women settled on an old but sturdy *kanaba* lying in the porch, it was too cold to sit in the open. They could hear girls’ voices coming from their room.

“Ibrahim and I are leaving for the city tomorrow morning. My mother is in



hospital.” Samia Ali addressed Aisha Badawi.

“What a bad news! I hope she is not too sick,” Aisha Badawi said with emotions of sympathy. “I shall pray for her recovery. How long will you be gone for?”

“Ibrahim will return after two days but I shall stay in the city for one week”. Samia Ali replied. “Kindly, keep an eye on our house.”

“Of course.” Aisha Badawi responded. “Don’t worry, tell brother Ibrahim Hassan to have meals at our house. It will be a pleasure. Besides, Adel and the children also like him so much.”

“Thank you for your generous offer. I have already taken care of meals, but of course he will visit you during my absence. You may, however, ask the children to release the chickens in the morning and put them back in the cage in the evening. Also, the buffalo is to be fed. I shall move it to the compound,” requested Samia Ali.


“No problem. We shall take care of that. Now, tell me what would you like to drink? *Shai* or *hilba*?” Aisha inquired. “*Shai* will be okay, if not too much trouble to you.” Samia Ali replied.

Suddenly, Aisha Badawi’s both daughters dashed out of the room but stopped in their tracks upon seeing their school teacher most unexpectedly in their house. Next moment, their friend followed them. To Samia Ali’s great surprise, she was the same young girl who wore poor clothes and was always shy to come close to her.

“*Asslam- alaikum*, Mrs. Hassan,” Aisha Badawi’s daughters paid their respect in line with traditional values.

The sisters were plump and full of charm. The elder daughter remarkably resembled her mother while the younger one was more after her father.

“*Wa-alaikum-Al-sslaam*,” Samia Ali replied, without taking her eyes off the mysterious girl. “Won’t you introduce me to your friend?” The moment had



come for her to know more about the girl after such a long suspense.

“Of course, Mrs. Hassan,” the elder daughter said cheerfully. “She is Hoda Helmi - lives a few houses away from us.” Today, Hoda Helmi was dressed in a long yellow-coloured robe, with a red scarf around her neck. Her pair of *shipship* was worn out as was evident from part of her toes peeping from the front. This was the first time when she neither gazed at nor ran away from Samia Ali. She was just standing there, with her head bowed down as if her feet were stuck in the ground and could not move in spite of effort.

Samia Ali studied her. Hoda Helmi was far prettier than she looked from distance. She was a tall girl. Her cheeks were bony, complexion exceptionally fair, and the blondish hair reflected beautiful shades due to natural light curls. Her eyes were blue and large, well balanced with sharp but delicate features of the face. Had she been in the western dress, she would look more European than an Egyptian village girl. She wore absolutely no piece of jewellery, as if her natural beauty did not need any.


Samia Ali felt an urge to learn more about her. There was certainly something of importance hidden behind Hoda Helmi’s quiet, gorgeous personality, and she did not want to miss this opportunity to find out what it was.

“Do you know how to speak, Hoda Helmi?” Samia Ali asked, smiling.

Hoda Helmi raised her big eyes in astonishment and giggled as did both of her friends. But then, the next moment she was silent again as if it was not she who had giggled.

“Good! At least you can laugh.” Samia Ali grinned. “I have been trying to reach you every time I saw you hidden behind a tree, or sometimes behind street corner, but you always ran away. Are you afraid of me? I do not think I look that frightening.” She said in polite tone.

Aisha Badawi’s both daughters could not help laughing. Hoda Helmi did not answer, but Aisha Badawi intervened, “Samia, Hoda Helmi is a very good girl, but too shy. It took her a while to start visiting us. Also, her parents do not seem to be that social.”



Samia Ali stood up, reached Hoda Helmi, and held her trembling hand affectionately. “Hoda, please sit here, next to me. I want to talk to you.”

Hoda Helmi did as she was told and sat on a *mastaba*, near the *kanaba*. Aisha Badawi’s daughters sank in the other two cushions, next to their friend. Their mother left for the kitchen.

“Do you go to school Hoda? I have not seen you in my school.” Samia Ali started the conversation she wanted to have for months.

“No. I used to go before you started teaching at the school but now my parents won’t let me.” Hoda Helmi replied in depressed voice.

“Why not?” Samia Ali was surprised.

“My mother says because we are poor”. Hoda replied, with some reluctance. “Also, my mother wants me to work at home. She alone cannot do the chores all by herself.”

“Oh, I see. Is your father a farmer?” Samia Ali enquired.


“Not really. He owns no land, but works on others’ farms.” The girl, who ran so many times away from Samia Ali, now seemed relaxed. Samia Ali could guess that her father was a farm labourer.

“Do you have any brothers or sisters?” Samia Ali asked.

Before Hoda Helmi could answer, Aisha Badawi’s elder daughter spoke loudly, “Plenty, Mrs. Hassan, five sisters and four brothers. Hoda is the eldest.”

Hoda Helmi giggled, looking down at the floor and pressing her index finger between teeth.

“*ya khabar!* That is indeed a large family,” Samia Ali expressed genuine surprise, but she could imagine how poor a rural household could be of a landless farm labourer with a wife and ten children. She wondered how



crammed up will they all be in a small house. No surprise the pretty girl was so timid, reserved and so withdrawn.

“There is nothing to be shy about, Hoda, and don’t be embarrassed. There are many families as large as yours, in this very village. Now I would like to know why did you always gaze at me and then run away from me. I won’t mind your answer whatever the reason.” Samia Ali tried to encourage the girl.

Aisha Badawi’s daughters were trying hard not to laugh as was evident from their faces turned red and teary eyes. To them, the teacher’s question sounded very funny, and they were anxious to know how Hoda was going to respond.


“Because... because I like your personality.” Spoke Hoda Helmi, gathering all her courage.

Her friends listened to her unexpectedly straightforward answer with some surprise and some disappointment.

Hoda Helmi continued, without looking towards her friends. “I know you are a teacher at school. I wanted to be friendly to you because once I too dreamed of becoming a teacher. But since I am not even enrolled in the school, I was afraid that you would reject me. So I kept the distance. Besides, we are really poor, while you are not only educated but a teacher, and wife of a man who tills his own land.” Hoda Helmi spoke out her heart, with tears swimming in her eyes.

Samia Ali, visibly touched and overwhelmed with a flood of emotions, moved close to Hoda Helmi and hugged her. She could hear the girl sobbing. Here was a grown up girl who, in Samia Ali’s thinking, tried to remain away from her, because she hated her. She had no idea that the poor girl in fact respected her due to her being a school teacher. She, as a teacher, was her ideal. How wrong she was. She suddenly felt guilty.

After Hoda Helmi left, having cemented a strong bond of affection with Samia Ali, Aisha Badawi and her daughters told her that Hoda Helmi was forced to leave school just when she was in the final year of the preparatory



school. The family lived in utter poverty without enough to eat or wear. Their main income-generating asset was an old donkey, which Hoda Helmi's father used in labour work.

What else could be the consequences of having so many children with so meagre income, Samia Ali thought. She had judged Hoda Helmi to be an intelligent girl, but suppressed by the poor financial conditions and depressing family atmosphere. She was forced to give up her education even though being a school teacher was her dream. Samia Ali made a mental note that no matter what happens, she will pull Hoda Helmi out of her inferiority complex, which had suppressed her otherwise very attractive personality, and help her in every possible way to make her dream of being a school teacher come true.

Next day, Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali arrived at the city after a two-hour bus journey. Samia Ali was very pleased to see that her mother had been discharged from the hospital just a few hours earlier and looked in much better condition than she had expected. The parents were extremely happy to see their only offspring who was making her second visit after the marriage.

As both Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali had their last medical check-up done quite some time ago, they decided to take benefit of being in the city and to have the physicals done. They also availed the opportunity to go to a cinema house and watch a recently released popular Arabic movie. Samia Ali also did quite a bit of shopping for her and Ibrahim Hassan. An old classfellow of her invited them to dinner. Thus their two days passed swiftly.

When Ibrahim Hassan was about to leave for *Qaryat Al-Nasr*, their family physician called them to report the results of their medical examination. Both husband and wife were in perfect health, but there was an additional joyful announcement by the physician to the delight of Ibrahim Hassan and his in-laws. Samia Ali was in the second month of her pregnancy.

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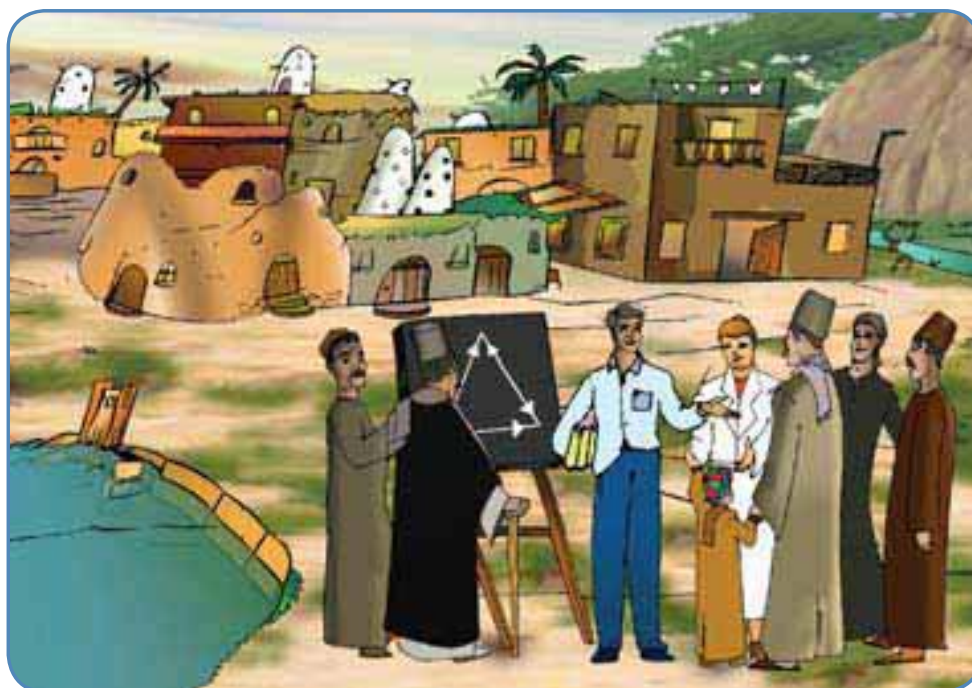
Chapter 12

The new programme takes off

Chapter 12: The new programme takes off

The programme on integration of population and environment education into agricultural extension messages and non-formal education of men and women farmers in the interrelationship between food security, population growth and environment pollution, had started in full swing. A United Nations advisor had arrived to provide technical assistance to the Creative Extension Group, and the team of national consultants had begun their field activities.

Various categories of the staff, ranging from national policy-level to the village, were provided with orientation or training. The newly developed training modules, training strategy, innovative training methodologies, and extension and training audio-visual aids were used for this purpose. Some training sessions were held indoor, but the bulk of training was conducted in the field. Selected persons from amongst the Agricultural Extension Supervisors were given trainers' training to function as Master Trainers. These trained Master Trainers, who included men and women, provided training to the Village





Extension Workers and the Home Visitors. The formal and informal leaders of villages were also given briefings.

Dozens of men and women farmers' groups were formed in the selected villages. The joint teams of Master Trainers, Village Extension Workers, and Home Visitors started visiting farmers' groups. The meetings were held at Agricultural Extension Centres, Health Units, Rural Youth Clubs and in the farmers' fields. The information, education and communication materials were distributed and displayed at key public locations in the rural areas. The technical personnel provided on-the-job, on-the-spot guidance to the field staff, who had already received formal training. The National Steering Committee, and informal steering committees, created at the governorate level, started meeting regularly to discuss progress and planned activities of the programme.

Within the National Directorate of Agricultural Extension of the Ministry of Agriculture, a special unit was created to run the programme. For the Creative Extension Group members, there could not be any better sight than seeing the senior representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Environment, coming to attend the meetings of the national level steering committee. The myth that ministries cannot work together towards a common goal was dissipated. The representatives of the two United Nations agencies involved in the programme also attended meetings.

As the years passed and more field experience was gained, the Creative Extension Group added a number of activities and events that made learning a fun for farming communities. The extension messages, delivered and discussed by integrated gender-sensitive teams in participatory manner, were reaching the hearts and minds of the farmers in true sense. There was evidence that knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the villagers in terms of population control, environment protection and food production had started changing positively.

The members of the Creative Extension Group were busy day and night in pushing the programme forward. Full use was made of the national consultants and of occasional visits by the United Nations advisor. The group members periodically monitored and reviewed the programme progress through field observations and discussions with the staff involved at various levels.



Rapid evaluation surveys were conducted, and the required technical and administrative documents were also produced. It was a time of great excitement for the inhabitants of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* men, women, young and old. Several active groups of men and women farmers had come to life. They were periodically visited by various project personnel including Yousef Ali and Om Kalsoom. Children helped them in putting project-related posters at all key locations in the village. Some of the colourful posters depicting caricature characters, conveying certain educational messages on population, environment and agricultural production were so funny that the villagers laughed no matter how many times they saw them. The learning was taking place almost all the time without any formal classroom type of training.

The programme had brought a fresh wave of excitement and pleasure in the stereotype pattern of village life. An occasional scene to be watched was the debates that raged between some sceptical elderly persons and relatively young villagers on various topics related to the programme. Such debates took place inside the mosque, especially upon conclusion of the *Jumma* prayers, Agricultural Extension Centres, Agricultural Cooperatives, in the fields and even during travel on the back of donkeys. Some of the debates lasted till midnight. The sceptical individuals almost always had to give in.

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Chapter 13


Extension knowledge contest

Chapter 13: Extension knowledge contest

The first thing Samia Ali had done upon returning to *Qaryat Al-Nasr* from the city was to visit Hoda Helmi's parents, along with her husband, Aisha Badawi and her husband Adel Abdul Raheem. After considerable discussion, they were able to convince Hoda Helmi's parents that their daughter can be readmitted to school. No tuition fee will be charged and the cost of books will be borne by Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan. Expecting resistance or trouble from Hoda Helmi's father Helmi Salah El Din, Samia Ali preferred not to go alone, but she confronted no trouble. Salah El Din, surprisingly, was quite courteous as well as regretful that his eldest daughter had to be pulled out of the school prematurely. He proudly showed excellent old academic records of Hoda Helmi to the visitors and thanked Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan for their thoughtfulness and generosity. Samia Ali announced that since she had no sister, from now onward she would consider Hoda as her younger sister. Hoda Helmi, in turn, could not be happier; she hugged Samia Ali, with tears of gratitude dropping from her blue eyes.

As the new programme activities had already started in *Qaryat Al-Nasr*, Ibrahim Hassan invited Salah El Din to join one of the farmers' groups. Samia Ali extended a similar invitation to Hoda's mother Zainab Mahir to become member of a women's group. Both Helmi Salah El Din and Zainab Mahir made perfect clientele of the programme.

Within a few weeks of re-entering the school, Hoda Helmi was showing above average performance in her studies, and her parents had become active members of their respective groups in the village. These both developments were source of great satisfaction for Samia Ali. She had successfully put a poor but talented young woman back on the right track. There was no doubt in her mind that relatively soon Hoda Helmi would be able to achieve her goal. On the other side, her parents were already giving an impression that the long overdue extension advice they were getting under the programme, would be of great help in improving the livelihoods of their children. Salah El Din also joined a small cooperative, which was active in identifying opportunities for trained farm labourers to work as tenant on the pieces of land leased by the cooperative. This arrangement was excellent in the sense that it made use of




skilled farm labourers in raising agricultural production and at the same time giving them the dignity of working as tenants on a piece of land exclusively leased to them.

The time kept racing and Samia Ali's pregnancy progressed satisfactorily. As a soon-would-be mother, she was now respected by the village community even more. Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan kept playing with their imagination about their yet to be born baby. Ibrahim Hassan was taking care of his loving wife in every way. He won't allow her to lift any heavy weight, or climb the stairs, or walk alone in the market. He was counting every day before he would declare himself as a proud father. He kept thinking that there could be no better gift in the world than what his wife was going to give him. Samia Ali's mother had visited her daughter twice to make sure that all was well. Both times, she had brought many toys and some pink and some blue clothes, not knowing whether she would have a grandson or granddaughter. In fact, the whole village was waiting for the good news.

The residents of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* had heard of extension knowledge contests taking place in some villages, but there was none as yet organized in their own village. But then the day came when men and women groups of the village, who had been part of the programme since its start, were told by Yousef Ali, the Village Extension Worker, and Om Kalsoom, the Home Visitor, that after ten days, separate knowledge contests will be held for men and women in the village. The contest for men was to take place at the local Agricultural Extension Centre while that for women at the house of the Village *Omda*.

Announcing the rules of the contest in a village meeting, Yousef Ali and Om Kalsoom explained that the male and female groups could form two teams of five members each who will be asked questions by the Master Trainers of the programme. The questions will be based on the extension messages on population and environment within the context of food security, which had been delivered to the groups by the Village Extension Workers and Home Visitors since the start of the programme. Other villagers could observe the contest but they will not be allowed to help any team in answering the questions. The duration of the contest will be about ninety minutes. At the end, the winner team will be given non-monetary rewards. If the groups would like to refresh their learning on population and environment issues



before the contest, both Yousef Ali and Om Kalsoom would be more than happy to provide assistance.

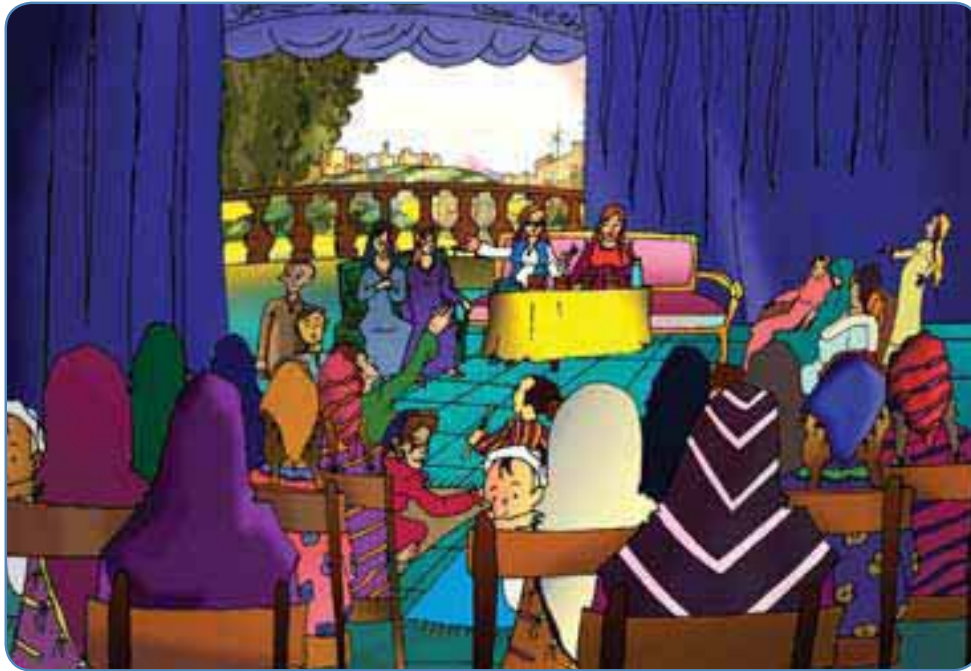
By the end of the day when the announcement for the contest was made, almost every family was feverishly talking about the forthcoming event. Although the Village Extension Workers, Home Visitors and Master Trainers were already visiting the men and the women's groups on regular basis, the excitement of the male and female teams for preparing to win the competition made them even more busy in refreshing the knowledge of the teams.

The day of the contest came amidst plenty of enthusiasm. It seemed as if restlessness and suspense had taken the village in their grip. It was *Jumma*, and the contest was to start at three o'clock. It was convenient time for people as they could take care of their farms in the morning, have lunch and perform the *Jumma* prayers before the contest starts.

Starting just before the first spectator arrived at the contest place, a young, bearded man wrapped up in a green robe, sitting on a sick looking donkey, had started beating a *tabla*, and kept beating it until men, women and children filled in the small building of the Agricultural Extension Centre. In the opposite corners of the largest room of the centre, chairs were placed to accommodate the five members of each team. A separate table and four chairs were placed in the middle. The central chair was reserved for the Village *Omda* Abdallah El Qatri, while two chairs were to be occupied by the two Master Trainers, and the remaining chair was to be taken by Yousef Ali, the Village Extension Worker. The table contained a variety of rewards for the winners, including plastic bags full of quality crop seed, cups, jugs and some books published by the programme. As expected, the place was terribly noisy.

Soon, the teams came and took their places. It was obvious that members of the teams had taken special care about their appearance. They had taken bath and had put on clean, freshly washed, perfume sprinkled *galabia*. Their faces were beaming with excitement in anticipation of competing against their opponents.

Yousef Ali had arrived early but Abdallah El Qatri came just before four, along with the two Master Trainers. Among the crowd of spectators, Ibrahim



Hassan and his neighbour Adel Abdul Raheem were also present; they had intentionally decided to exclude themselves from the first contest.

The scene at the house of the Village *Omda* was no less noisy and chaotic. About fifty women of varying ages had gathered for the occasion, along with a large number of children who were chasing chickens and one another.

As at the Agricultural Extension Centre, places in opposite corners were reserved for the two teams, who were sitting on *kanaba* covered with *keleem*. Two female Master Trainers, Om Kalsoom, the Home Visitor and one female Village Extension Worker constituted the judges' panel, sitting in chairs between the two teams. Several awards were placed at the table, in front of them. The side of the room, which had the entry door, was fully occupied by women and children.

The members of the competing teams comprised teenagers and middle-aged women, derived from the women's groups formed in *Qaryat Al-Nasr* for the programme activities. Samia Ali, who was sitting next to the wife of the Village *Omda*, was delighted to see Zainab Mahir, Hoda Helmi's mother,




in one team and Aisha Badawi in the other. She also noticed Hoda Helmi standing in the crowd with her five younger sisters. She guessed that her brothers must have joined other boys at the men's contest.

In the men's contest, the Master Trainers asked questions like, "Is it safe to use the roof of the house as a storage of farm remnants and residues? What are harmful effects of bathing in the village *Tera'ah*? How is human health affected by burning trash and agricultural residue in the open?"

Every time a question was put to a team, its members first consulted in whispers among themselves and then one of them answered loudly. If the answer was correct, that team was given points, and if the team could not answer or gave wrong answer, the same question was directed to the other team. The correct answer was repeated aloud by the Master Trainers for the benefit of audience.

Even though the organizers had advised the audience to observe silence yet



it was very difficult to keep them quiet. At times, when any team could not answer the question, some persons standing in the crowd will voluntarily shout certain hints to help the team with possible answers. Thus, in a way, the entire crowd participated in the contest and learned through the exercise. When the answer suggested by any team was incorrect or only partially correct, the Master Trainers explained the correct answer in detail for the benefit of all participants.

At the end of the contest, the winner team was given awards by the Village *Omda*. The team that could not win was given programme publications as consolation prize.

The women's contest was equally exciting, with more children to make noise. In spite of repeated calls to remain silent, the women standing in the crowd tried to help their friends in the teams with possible answers to the questions asked.

Some of the questions included were, "What are disadvantages of very early marriage of girls? What are advantages of proper spacing between births? What could be possible consequences of washing clothes and bathing children in the *Tera'ah*?"

Just as was done in the men's competition, non-cash prizes comprising soap powder and cooking oil bottles were awarded to the winner team while publications of women interest were given to the other team. The wife of the Village *Omda* distributed the prizes.

After most of the spectators left and the hostess was left with some of the closely acquainted women, including Samia Ali, two young maids served the guests with warm *hilba* drink. The group continued discussing the event until the *azaan* for *asr* prayer reached their ears.



Chapter 14


Intensive extension campaign

Chapter 14: Intensive extension campaign

The first extension knowledge contest was an instant hit in *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. Men, women and children kept talking about it for days. Every body loved it because it was a useful source of knowledge for all the villagers irrespective of their participation as team members or spectators. In addition, it was a pleasant experience in learning useful things through a lot of fun. The programme organizers were aware of the fact that no amount of formal lecturing would have taught the farmers what they had learnt through the knowledge contest. This was true for men, women and even children. It, therefore, was not a surprise for them when the people of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* demanded that such extension knowledge contests be organized more frequently.

Soon, the extension knowledge contests, separate for men and women, became a regular and popular feature, held at the end of every month. The organizers formulated the questions, keeping in view the current farming operations in line with the agricultural calendar of the area. According to the Creative Extension Group, the contest was mainly for two purposes. First, to verify whether the extension messages were received by the farmers with the same interpretation and comprehension as intended, and second, the provision of further learning opportunity for the participants including the Master Trainers, Village Extension Workers, Home Visitors, competing teams' members and the spectators. If there was no Agricultural Extension Centre in a village, the contests were organized at the Rural Youth Club facilities or at Health Units of the Ministry of Health.

Samia Ali was so impressed with the educational power of the contests that she decided to introduce the exercise in her school. Her fears of the polluted environment harming her pregnancy started to subside after observing the impact of the knowledge contests. She noticed that the sight of billowing smoke from the burning of trash and crop residues had suddenly become less frequent because the people had started using crop stalks as fodder and organic manure. The crowd of women for washing laundry in the village *Tera'ah* started thinning, as did the number of children fond of swimming in the unclean water. The practice of dumping garbage started dying as criticism against it mounted among the villagers. Samia Ali could breathe and feel with



immense comfort that the foul odour in the air was indeed disappearing fast.

That was an environmental aspect. In terms of population, the village women were consulting the Home Visitor more often for advice on planning the right number of children at right intervals, and on proper nutrition during pregnancy. The practice of marrying girls at very young age was visibly on decline, and, interestingly, the number of girl students had started rising in the school. Debates on environment, population and food security had started everywhere - in the school, in the mosque, at *qahawy*, farms and *dakakin* in the village.

In addition, there was general feeling among the Village Extension Workers that farmers were gladly applying several improved farming practices, which they resisted in the past. Interestingly, the trend towards organic farming was increasing, which was evident from recent popularity of using crop residues as farmyard manure and more biological control of pests than through the usual practice of spraying chemical pesticides excessively.

Most households had given up the practice of using their roofs as storage, resulting in the reduction of house rats as well as fire risk. The life was vividly changing in *Qaryat Al-Nasr* for the better and Samia Ali's dream of a green village with fresh air now seemed to be coming true. This pleasant change in living environment could not have come at a better time, because her pregnancy had reached the final stage and she was expecting delivery in a month time.


Then, the programme organizers launched an intensive extension campaign. The residents of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* and all other relevant villages suddenly noticed a remarkable surge in the activities of the field staff. The teams of the Village Extension Workers and Home Visitors made more frequent personal visits to individual farmers as well as to farmers' groups. Both male and female members of the households were contacted more often for delivery of integrated extension messages on increasing yields, family planning and environment protection. The frequency of extension symposia increased tremendously. There were occasions when mixed meetings of men and women were held in *Qaryat Al-Nasr* to discuss those topics, which were of interest to both genders, such as nutrition topics. Along with the extension knowledge

contests, rural theatres were initiated for both entertainment and educational purposes.



Then the mass media joined the campaign in a big way. The residents of *Qaryat Al-Nasr*, like residents of other villages, watched on television short humorous feature programmes, the main objective of which was to create awareness among the public about worsening population and environmental situation and what people should do about it. Similarly, the villagers listened to the radio, which broadcast several episodes on these issues. Famous actors, comedians and other personalities made these television and radio programmes more attractive, entertaining and educational. There was a fresh display of colourful posters at key places in the village, and relevant literature on population, environment and food security topics was distributed widely among people.

The campaign left a distinct impact on the residents of *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. No matter where they were, both men and women talked about controlling rapid growth in population and cleaning the polluted environment for the main



reason that ignoring these aspects will adversely affect their food security situation. After all, they all worked so hard, sometimes in freezing mornings and sometimes in scorching heat of noon, just to ensure food availability for their families.

There was no doubt that the extension messages convincingly demonstrating close interrelationship among agriculture, population and environment had indeed touched the hearts and minds of the farm families. And this is exactly what the Creative Extension Group wanted to achieve through their unique strategy.



Chapter 15

Rural folk theatre



Chapter 15: Rural folk theatre

As the programme progressed, two memorable events took place in Samia Ali's life. First, she became mother after giving birth to a healthy baby boy, who was named Muhammad. Second, Hoda Helmi graduated from the secondary division in school and joined college in a nearby city. The newborn Muhammad brought joy not only to his young parents but also to their neighbours, girls' school students and to the entire village population in general.

Samia Ali's very active and leading role in the programme on population, environment and food production earned her a distinguished place in the village. There was almost no programme-related meeting in *Qaryat Al-Nasr* where she was not invited. Her views and advice on programme matters did not only receive attention but were also respected and followed. Whenever any senior government officials or the members of the Creative Extension Group visited *Qaryat Al-Nasr*, it became a matter of routine for them to include in their programme one meeting with her. Although she was not a formal member of any women's group, her leadership skills benefited all the groups of women. Like Samia Ali, her husband Ibrahim Hassan also participated actively in the programme events.

Muhammad grew up under the watchful eyes of his parents and surrounded by the love and affection of the entire village. After all, he was the son of a couple who had contributed a lot to the development of *Qaryat Al-Nasr*.

Samia Ali was able to arrange a scholarship for Hoda Helmi at the college because of her excellent academic record and also on the basis of poor economic conditions of her parents. Whenever Hoda Helmi visited *Qaryat Al-Nasr* from her college, she spent most of the time at Samia Ali's house playing with Muhammad. Hoda Helmi's parents, sisters and brothers always talked in public good things about Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan for taking care of Hoda just like their own family member.

By the time Muhammad celebrated his second birthday, Hoda Helmi had finished the two-year college. She needed less than two years to obtain a


teacher diploma, which will enable her to teach at the girls' preparatory school in *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. Thanks due to Samia Ali, she had come so close to fulfilling her ambition of becoming a teacher.

The programme activities were in full swing and *Qaryat Al-Nasr's* life style had already changed significantly. Just like the extension knowledge contest, the rural folk theatre, another popular activity introduced under the programme, had made solid contribution to bringing positive behavioural change among *Qaryat Al-Nasr's* residents in the matters of population and environment. The main reason was that just like the extension knowledge contests, the rural folk theatre also was entertainment as well as an effective educational activity.



It had been almost a year since Ibrahim Hassan and Samia Ali last saw a play at the rural folk theatre. Hoda Helmi was visiting *Qaryat Al-Nasr* on a weakened and the next evening a play was to be staged. Ibrahim Hassan, Samia Ali, Hoda Helmi, and her family, all decided to watch the play. Muhammad was now three years old and could enjoy the show in his own way.

When Ibrahim Hassan, Samia Ali and others arrived at the folk theatre, the place was already crowded. Ibrahim Hassan estimated the number of the




audience to be at least one hundred-fifty. There were elders, young men and women, and children of all ages. Most spectators were *Qaryat Al-Nasr's* families. As usual on such occasions, there was so much noise that one had to shout in the next person's ear to make oneself heard. When the organizers saw Samia Ali approaching with her small group, they guided them to the seats in the front row. There, they met Abdallah El Qatri, the Village *Omda*, his family, and Yousef Ali, the Village Extension Worker.

The theatre was a makeshift sort of structure, surrounded on two sides by high mud walls. On one side against the wall, a stage had been set, without a curtain. There was no music, just noise of the crowd. The actors and actresses were busy doing rudimentary make-up and putting on costumes inside a farmer's house, adjacent to the stage. Both mud walls, the roofs of the nearby houses, and a huge tree's trunk, all were occupied by the people, eagerly waiting for the play to start. The organizers had hung light bulbs on top of the stage and at other appropriate locations.

Suddenly, two of the organizers from the local Rural Youth Club appeared with a stack of leaflets and started distributing them among the persons sitting in the first few rows. Ibrahim Hassan glanced at the leaflet. It contained information about the two-episode play. The title of the first episode was, "Proper Spacing between Children Brings Happiness," and of the second one, "Recycling of Crop Residues is Better than Burning." The names of all actors were listed. The cast, the director and the scriptwriter, all were from *Qaryat Al-Nasr*.

The organizers appealed repeatedly on the microphone to the audience to keep silent so that the play could be started. A wave of excitement ran through the crowd and there was more movement and noise. Finally, the silence fell to a reasonable extent, and the first episode of the play started.

A farmer in a ragged *galabia*, with a torn down *taqia* on his head and a rotten *talfeeha* around his neck, appeared at one end of the stage walking with staggering steps to the other end. Someone among the audience instantly recognized him and shouted his name, followed by louder voices commanding all to keep quiet. The poor and sick looking farmer walked across the stage. An apparently pregnant woman dressed in a shabby black *abaya*, followed him,




walking with obvious difficulty and moaning aloud. Some of the spectators chuckled. The woman was quickly followed by a boy of about thirteen years, nearly dressed in rags, who walked in a crooked manner, looking around nervously. Right behind him was a girl, hardly one year younger, and then a long queue of eight children, boys and girls, in the order of their ages ranging between eleven years and six months. The six-month old baby was carried by a four years old girl, the last in the row. The entire queue gradually disappeared as the family members walking crookedly entered from one corner of the stage and walked out of the stage one by one, without uttering a single word, but throwing the audience in a fit of laughter.

Then the scene changed, and the poor husband and his pregnant wife reappeared on the stage, the husband carrying in his lap the baby. First, the husband spoke about the misery he was facing owing to so many children. Hitting his head with both hands, he almost cried, showing his worn out dress and empty pockets, and then started blaming his wife for this problem. The wife responded by hurling curses and shouting at her husband that when other farmers were working in the fields, he preferred to stay in bed. After a heated exchange of blames and insults, the husband said that he forgot to tell her that his close friend and his family were going to visit them from the city for one day. This announcement doubled the wrath of the wife, and she wailed painfully that there was neither enough food nor money to entertain his friend.

In the next scene, the husband's friend and his wife arrived with two children, a girl and a boy, with a difference of four years in their ages. The neatly dressed and well mannered guests had brought gifts for the hosts. The friend said that both of his children were students at a private school. He also told the hosts how he took his family to Cairo on vacation, which they enjoyed very much. The visiting children, in a joyous mood, said a few sentences to express their pleasure on seeing the very high Pyramids, the Egyptian museum, which was full of ancient mummies, and the perfect dinner at a floating boat restaurant in the Nile.

The host husband, his wife and their children, all started arguing among themselves in front of the guests. The wife wailed and scolded her husband for not taking her on any vacation since their marriage. The husband expressed



anger and frustration on having too small amount of income to entertain his large family. And the children shouted at full pitch at their parents for having no comfort in life.

The final scene showed the husband and wife confessing that they both were responsible for producing so many children without sufficient gap between the births. The husband declared what miseries their ignorance of family planning had brought to the family, such as occasional starving because of lack of food and money, children could not get education, and none in the family could enjoy life. The wife cried out of fear that no suitable men were going to ask for her daughters' hands. Then both, husband and wife, with face towards the audience, shouted out a piece of advice that those wanting to have more children should first consult the Home Visitor, otherwise they will also suffer as their family had suffered. At this point, all their children entered the stage from different directions, shouting demands for food, clothes, toys and bicycles, while parents were crying, bringing the play to its end.

Suddenly, by very strange coincidence, no sooner did the play end than, precisely at that very moment, a donkey somewhere far brayed as if giving the finishing touch to the show. This was so hilarious that the people went into frenzy of uncontrollable laughter, with tears glittering in their eyes.

Constant clapping by the audience was an evidence of the fact that the play was greatly enjoyed. The message of the first episode of the play was loud and clear and the people instantly started talking about the real life situations where the couples with too many children were facing enormous problems. They also talked about the superb acting skills of the actors, and felt proud of having such a treasure of talents in their village, which was not discovered until now. Praise was bestowed on the programme for bringing out such talents in open.

The second episode of the play was about burning the crop residues, its ill effects on the household economy and human health, and how substantial amount of money could be saved by recycling the crop residue as livestock fodder and organic manure. This episode was less humorous than the first one but equally useful for the audience in terms of technical message. The audience listened to the dialogues seriously and tried to extrapolate the hidden



educational messages in them.

At the end of both episodes, the organizers of the play, the director and the scriptwriter, came on the stage along with the cast. They introduced each actor and actress to the audience, who clapped and shouted in appreciation. The organizers and actors bowed in front of the audience, acknowledging the honour that was extended to them by the people.

While going home, Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan talked about the play, with Muhammad following them closely. In Ibrahim Hassan's opinion, some educational messages on sensitive issues, such as number of children, could be delivered in readily acceptable way through the folk theatre. People usually did not like to discuss such topics in public even though they were suffering. Making people learn something useful on sensitive topics through educational entertainment approach such as theatre plays and extension knowledge contests was really an ingenious extension strategy, according to Ibrahim Hassan. Samia Ali agreed wholeheartedly.



Chapter 16

Rewards, lessons and
recommendations


Chapter 16: Rewards, lessons and recommendations

Four years had passed, and the programme on the integration of population and environment education messages into ongoing agricultural extension activities was being wrapped up.

The Creative Extension Group members were engaged in preparing final reports for the government and the United Nations agencies. There is no doubt that the programme was a stunning success. The results spoke for themselves.

In a special ceremony held in Cairo, and nationally covered by the media, the Minister of Agriculture, heading the lead ministry for the programme, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Environment, jointly presented awards to the staff and rural community members whose cooperation, commitment and dedication to the programme had been exemplary.





Qaryat Al-Nasr was rated as the leading successful village amongst all the villages covered by the programme. Its residents Ibrahim Hassan, his wife Samia Ali, the Village *Omda* Abdallah El Qatri, the Village Extension Worker Yousef Ali and the Home Visitor Om Kalsoom, all received awards for their distinguished performance.

When the award winners of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* returned to their village from Cairo, the villagers welcomed them with flowers, music, dances, feast and, of course, untiring speeches of appreciation for the honour they had brought to the village. Some young men of the village displayed a remarkable show of singing, dancing and fireworks at night. Because of wide media coverage, *Qaryat Al-Nasr* became famous nationwide.

All four members of the Creative Extension Group received awards and certificates of appreciation from the government. Their unique strategy of educating the farmers in population and environment issues by demonstrating these two components' relationship with agricultural production and food security was a source of inspiration for all the extension and health field staff. The government received requests from other governorates for initiating the programme in their villages also.

Both United Nations agencies were very pleased with the success of the programme. They promised to consider favourably any request received from the government for assistance in expanding the programme to other governorates.

It was an early April morning filled with sweet essence of spring. Dr. Abdul Aziz, Zakie Mobarak, Fawzia Sallam and Saeda Alhaj were enjoying breakfast at a garden restaurant. They had wrapped up the programme activities, but were anxious to discuss the best practices and the lessons learnt from the programme, which could be applied to the preparation of similar activities in the future. As soon as the breakfast was over, and the waiter removed the crockery from their table, they settled the bill, and took out notebooks and pencils from their bags.

Dr. Abdul Aziz took a few puffs from his pipe and opened the session, "Let us brainstorm. Whoever comes up with the best practice or lesson learnt from the programme, should speak out. If the suggestion is not clear then we shall

discuss, otherwise it will be added to the list we are going to make.”

His colleagues agreed to the proposal.


“Lesson one!” Fawzia Sallam announced cheerfully. “The educational messages for farmers in the subjects other than agriculture will have very high chances of being received or even accepted if those messages are offered within the context of agricultural operations which the farmers are very familiar with.” Fawzia Sallam finished the long sentence in one breath, making others giggle.

“Agreed?” asked Dr. Abdul Aziz. Zakie Mobarak and Saeda Alhaj nodded.



“Me too,” Dr. Abdul Aziz said. “What else?”

“Lesson two!” Zakie Mobarak grinned. “The entertainment and fun activities



such as rural folk theatre and extension knowledge contests are powerful means of learning and spreading the educational messages related to rural and agricultural development.”

Dr. Abdul Aziz glanced at the two female colleagues with a question mark in his look. Both Fawzia Sallam and Saeda Alhaj indicated their consent, as did Dr. Abdul Aziz himself.

“Lesson three!” This was Saeda Alhaj. “The educational messages on any topic should preferably be delivered to the person in the family who makes decisions concerning the matters related to that particular topic. If the entire family is involved in making decisions on a certain topic, the target group for any educational messages on that topic should be the entire family.” She concluded.


No one raised objection and they moved forward.

“One more lesson,” Dr. Abdul Aziz announced. “A multi-disciplinary extension team such as comprising Village Extension Workers and Home Visitors, has more appeal to the farmers than if only one representative of any discipline contacts the farmers.”

“Well done!” Expressed Dr. Abdul Aziz’s colleagues.

“And closely related to that lesson is another lesson. Some of the individuals, men and women, are more motivated and of progressive minds than others, such as noticed in case of *Qaryat Al-Nasr*. The organizers of similar programmes should identify such individuals and use them as facilitators, motivators, and resource persons in implementing the programmes.” Saeda Alhaj offered, and others accepted.

“I think I have identified yet another lesson,” Zakie Mobarak spoke, smiling. “In the interest of sustainability of the interventions introduced by the programme, the programme design from the very beginning should include a firm commitment from the government to provide funds to the relevant governorates for continuation of the activities. Otherwise, the good things started under the programme will soon disappear after the programme ends.”



“You are essentially suggesting an appropriate exit strategy which could guarantee the sustainability of the programme achievements. Aren’t you?” Saeda Alhaj asked, and then added. “The United Nations and other donor agencies are going to like that.”

“Absolutely,” Zakie Mobarak agreed. “This is exactly what I am aiming at.”

“I can identify one more lesson.” Fawzia Sallam said scratching her head. “The involvement of farmers in the preparation of the agenda on various topics to be discussed in the coming months, as has been done under the programme, is good but it does not really empower them.” She looked around for endorsement.


“Well, partially,” intervened Dr. Abdul Aziz. “I shall go further and say, the preparation of extension plans by the farmers with the assistance of extension agents empowers the farmers. Basically, the empowerment occurs through the bottom-up, grassroots, rural community based decision-making process during preparation of the plans.”

“I agree, what you just said is certainly more plausible as an empowerment strategy,” Fawzia Sallam said and others agreed.

“Allow me to add just one more lesson learnt, which I believe is in line with the reforms that are being introduced globally in the national agricultural extension systems.” Dr. Abdul Aziz pointed out. “Through this programme, we have succeeded in broadening the technical mandate of agricultural extension service of Egypt, that is, beyond its old, conventional and passive function of transferring improved agricultural technology. As we saw, the Village Extension Workers were seriously engaged in promoting population and environment education which was wonderful, especially given their initial reluctance.”

“So, what is the lesson?” Zakie Mobarak asked.

“It is more meaningful for extension services to broaden their technical mandate if they want to promote sustainable rural and agricultural development,” summarized Dr. Abdul Aziz, making Fawzia Sallam and Saeda Alhaj smile.




“Any thing learnt about the institutional arrangements?” Zakie Mobarak asked, clasping his both hands behind his head.

“Yes, thanks for reminding.” Dr. Abdul Aziz responded. “Although we created the steering committees at the national and governorate levels, they really did not go beyond hearing the programme progress reports once in a while. Moreover, their meetings, which were on regular basis initially, later became more of a formality, or a routine matter. The cooperation of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment is greatly appreciated. However, although they sent their representatives to the steering committee meetings yet it was not done on regular basis. In addition, recognizing an excellent role played by Health Visitors, I feel that the staff of both these ministries could have engaged in the programme even more substantially. The same is more or less true for the governorate level committees. The village level arrangements were the weakest. I am convinced that the institutional arrangements need to be seriously reviewed in the light of our observations, in case the programme is to be extended to other governorates.”

Dr. Abdul Aziz stopped for his colleagues’ reaction. He ignited the tobacco once more in his pipe and took a couple of puffs, spreading aroma around him.

“So, basically, the lesson is to involve all the relevant national level institutions in a substantive and substantial way and make such institutional arrangements from the governorate to the village level, which will give more ownership to the stakeholders at these levels. And such arrangements will contribute to the success of the programme. Did I summarize it well?” Fawzia Sallam asked anticipating at least some degree of appreciation from her most senior colleague.

“Superb indeed, and I thank you for that,” Dr. Abdul Aziz responded grinning. Then he quickly added, “I think we have identified sufficient number of good practices and lessons. How about some key recommendations that we can make to the government? I am sure the government is very pleased with the results of the programme even though the post-programme impact survey is yet to be conducted. My hunch is that having received positive signals from the United Nations agencies, we are going to have a second phase of



the programme, and may be more. In such a case, the best practices and the lessons learnt that we have just identified, plus a set of recommendations, will be very useful for formulating the future phases. The recommendations may be drawn from the good practices and lessons learned.” Dr. Abdul Aziz concluded.

“Good idea!” Spoke Saeda Alhaj. “The first recommendation I would like to make is that the government should ensure the continuation of the activities introduced under the programme by allocating sufficient budget for this purpose. This recommendation is aimed at sustainability of the programme gains.”

“The second recommendation should be that the technical mandate of agricultural extension services should be made broader. This could be done through revision of curricula of extension programmes at agricultural academic institutions as well as through the provision of necessary training to the extension staff already in service. The revision in the curricula and the preparation of the training programmes should be based on the concept of sustainable rural and agricultural development.” This recommendation was presented by Fawzia Sallam and quickly endorsed by her colleagues.

“Zakie, I am glad to see that the girls are taking lead on making recommendations.” Dr. Abdul Aziz grinned, with the pipe clutched in one corner of his mouth.

“Is that so? Then let me quickly make one recommendation before any of them speaks again,” Zakie Mobarak said raising his right hand finger and making his female colleagues chuckle. “What we have been observing for years is that agricultural extension colleagues have very limited opportunities for career development, I mean, as compared to the other staff, with more or less same basic qualifications and years of experience, but working in other agricultural disciplines.”

“Like research!” Fawzia Sallam suggested.

“Correct,” Zakie Mobarak continued. “That is one main reason why many bright young men and women, even though they like extension work, do not



select agricultural extension as their career profession.”

“Of course,” Saeda Alhaj intervened, “Their salaries and benefits are far lower than others although they have to work under physically harsh conditions in the field let alone engagement in the difficult task of changing human behaviour.”

“I understand the point, Zakie,” spoke Dr. Abdul Aziz, “but then, what is your recommendation?”

“Very simple. The government should bring the salary, benefits, opportunities for in-country and overseas training, and career development path in agricultural extension at par with other agricultural professions.” Zakie Mobarak concluded.

“I shall endorse that recommendation wholeheartedly especially because given the latest developments like globalization, decentralization, privatization and market liberalization, not to mention sustainable rural and agricultural development for food security and alleviation of rural poverty, extension will certainly play an increasingly important role, more than ever.” Dr. Abdul Aziz said. Then, he looked at the two women, seeking their views. Both Fawzia Sallam and Saeda Alhaj agreed that this particular recommendation should be presented in a strong way.

Dr. Abdul Aziz gazed into space for a moment and then spoke, “Can’t we make another recommendation that from now on, the organization of rural folk theatres and extension knowledge contests be made an integral part of extension programme?”

“Definitely!” All three members endorsed. They had clearly seen the demonstrated powerful potential of these methods in extending educational messages to the rural people. This was a novelty, introduced by the new programme, but making it a regular feature of extension fieldwork will be greatly appreciated by the village folk.

Zakie Mobarak presented one more recommendation. “Since the villages covered by the programme now have many men and women interested in



promoting population and environment education, the agricultural extension service should support these lobby groups in each village.”

None of the colleagues objected to the idea.

“Let us have just one more, last recommendation, and that is related to what Zakie just said,” Dr. Abdul Aziz spoke, glancing at his wristwatch. “The recommendation is based on what Fawzia summarized so well a short while ago.” He looked towards Fawzia Sallam, “I mean about involving national institutions.”

“Oh, yes,” Fawzia Sallam recalled happily. “Measures should be taken by the government to involve all relevant institutions from national to governorate to village level, with the aim to give more ownership of such programmes to the stakeholders, including farming men and women.”

“Allow me to add a final recommendation,” said Fawzia Sallam thoughtfully. “Differences in local traditions, geographic and agricultural activities must be taken into account in designing and executing information, education and communication materials. In particular, age differences and gender sensitivities must be seriously considered in the design of educational messages and production of audio-visual materials.”

“Good!” Dr. Abdul Aziz said, collecting his papers. “My dear colleagues, the brainstorming session is over. Who will take the responsibility of writing the lessons learnt and recommendations to be presented to the government?”

Zakie Mobarak raised his hand, and the session concluded.

The image features a minimalist abstract design. A large blue vertical rectangle is positioned on the left side. A horizontal grey bar overlaps the bottom of this blue rectangle. Below the grey bar, a thin blue horizontal line is visible. A vertical blue line extends downwards from the bottom of the grey bar. The text 'Chapter 17' is written in white on the blue rectangle, and 'Most beautiful sight' is written in black on the grey bar.

Chapter 17

Most beautiful sight



Chapter 17: Most beautiful sight

The sun of this spring morning is bright but mild in warmth. Samia Ali, Ibrahim Hassan, six-year old Muhammad and two-year old Mariam, while returning from an early morning visit to their fields have stopped just outside *Qaryat Al-Nasr* to appreciate a very attractive rose flower garden.

The full-bloomed dark red roses seem to be dancing in the soft morning breeze, mingling fantastic rose fragrance in the air. One of the farmers of *Qaryat Al-Nasr*, who had started cut-flowers business some time ago, has converted a part of his field into a rose garden.

A long queue of men and women farm labourers, with several buffaloes and donkeys is walking at a distance on a narrow path passing through green fields. The labourers are carrying on their shoulders different types of farming tools, and humming an Arabic song as they take long steps towards work.

Muhammad now goes to school. Four years after Muhammad was born, Samia Ali and Ibrahim Hassan had their second child, a very pretty girl Mariam, who now is sitting on the broad shoulders of her father.

This day is very special for the family, because Hoda Helmi's wedding party is to be attended. Hoda Helmi, who has been teaching for two years at the same girl's school, where Samia Ali is now headmistress, is being married to a handsome army officer and this is an occasion of great joy, especially for Samia Ali.

Standing in the middle of the rose garden, Samia Ali glances at the horizon, where the well-maintained houses of *Qaryat Al-Nasr* are visible, surrounded by lines of lush green trees. The programme on population, environment and agricultural production has ended about three years ago, but it has transformed *Qaryat Al-Nasr* from a polluted and overcrowded village into a beautiful and healthy living place. The ugly pillars of billowing smoke have become a story of the past, and the village's *Tera'ah* of dirty water has been dried up and converted into a green park, which the children and the elderly enjoy equally. The irrigation system has been modernised and the traditional irrigation methods


have been replaced by modern ones such as sprinkle and drip irrigation systems and covered pipes. The park is also used for special gatherings such as for village annual fair and *Eid* prayers.

The population of the village has gone down considerably as many families, having learnt about government's settlement programme on the newly reclaimed lands, have migrated to those areas in search of better opportunities. In addition, there is clear acceptance among the residents that blind race to increase the number of children in families, especially those with limited means, is not wise. It is evident from the increasing number of young wives going to the Home Visitor's office for consultation, a practice which was considered as taboo not long ago.

“This is the most beautiful sight of the village I have seen so far,” Samia Ali

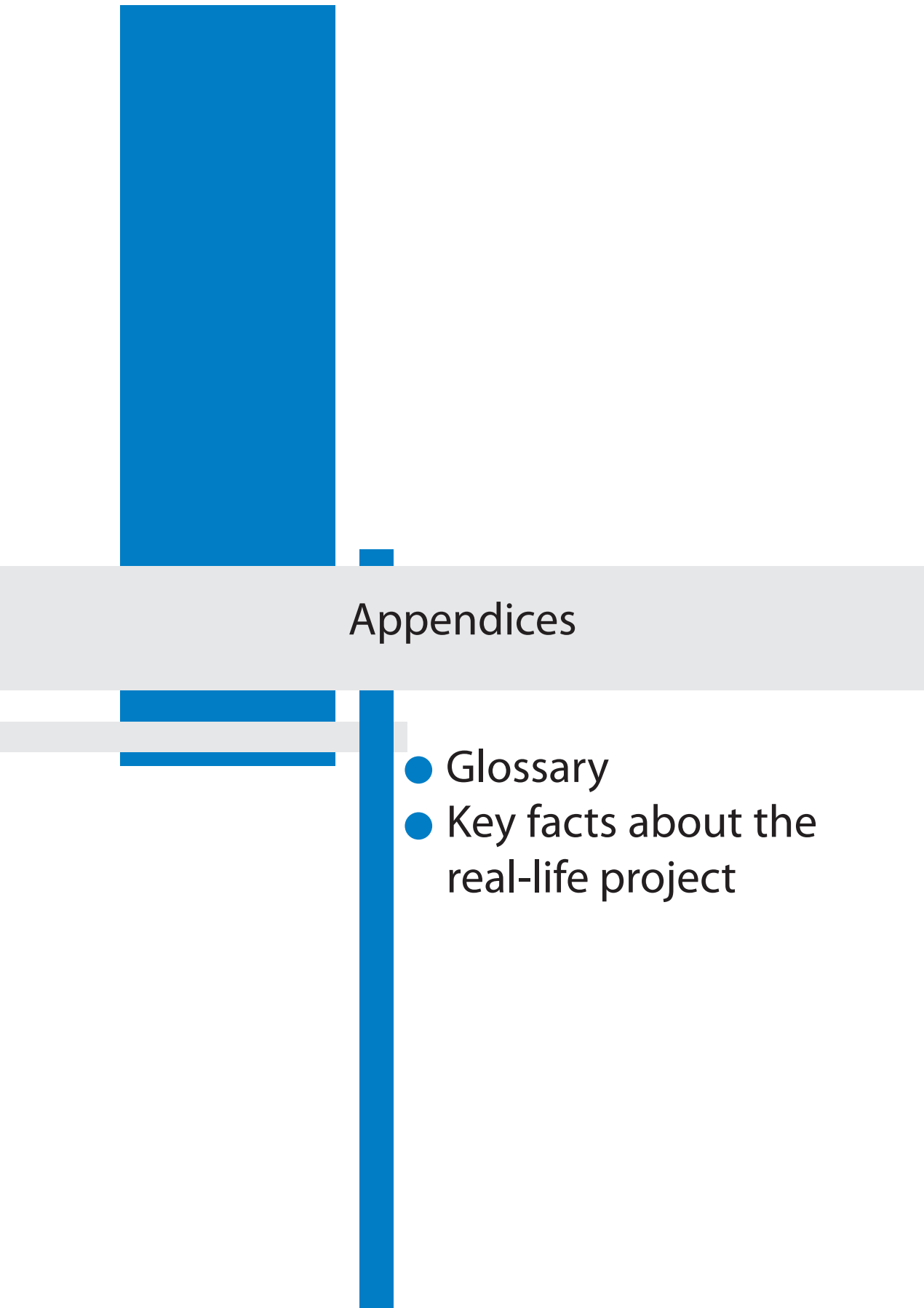


holds her husband's hand affectionately. “Thank you for bringing me to this paradise. I wish all villages in Egypt become like *Qaryat Al-Nasr*.”



“My love, this is the paradise I promised you at the time of our wedding,” Ibrahim Hassan responds gleefully. “And as far as other villages are concerned, I have no doubt that with proper extension education programmes, like we had, they can also turn themselves into a sight that will be pleasing to the eye.”

Mariam gets off her father’s shoulder and starts running after her brother Muhammad who is chasing a fluttering colourful butterfly. The innocent laughter of the children fills the atmosphere with a serene feeling of peace and tranquillity.

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping rectangular bars in blue and light grey. A large blue vertical bar is on the left. A grey horizontal bar is in the middle, containing the text 'Appendices'. Below it, another grey horizontal bar is partially visible. A blue vertical bar extends downwards from the middle of the grey bar. A blue horizontal bar is also visible below the middle grey bar.

Appendices


- Glossary
- Key facts about the real-life project

Glossary

Meanings of the Arabic words used in the book (in alphabetical order)

<i>Abaaya</i>	Expensive, decorated long robe used by men on special occasions
<i>Ahlan</i>	Greetings
<i>Aish</i>	Flat wheat flour bread, used commonly
<i>Allah</i>	God
<i>Allah yarhamo</i>	May God bless him
<i>Asr</i>	Prayer said between noon and sunset
<i>Asslamo-alaikum</i>	Daily greeting, meaning peace be upon you
<i>Azaan</i>	Call for prayer
<i>Bulgha</i>	Men's shoes that are low healed
<i>Dukkan</i>	Any kind of shop
<i>Eid</i>	An important Muslim annual festival
<i>Faas</i>	Farming tool for digging and hoeing
<i>Fajr</i>	Early morning prayer said before sunrise
<i>Fool-Middamis</i>	Common dish made of beans
<i>Galabia</i>	Long robe, used by women and men
<i>Ghurza</i>	Small tea stall, normally used by poor persons

<i>Ghuwasha</i>	Bangles made of precious metal worn around wrists by women
<i>Gibna kareesh</i>	Type of cheese used at breakfast and dinner
<i>Halak</i>	Jewellery piece; earring for women
<i>Haseera</i>	Straw mat used to cover stools for sitting
<i>Hijab</i>	Scarf fully covering head, neck and parts around face, used by women
<i>Hilba</i>	Hot drink made of fenugreek grains
<i>Imam</i>	The man who leads prayer
<i>Jumma</i>	Friday
<i>Keleem</i>	Sheet, made of wool or other material, used to cover floor
<i>Kanaba</i>	Long, low height chair, covered by heavy cotton cushion
<i>Khudaar</i>	A dish; cooked vegetables with meat pieces
<i>Kirdan</i>	Necklace made of precious metal like gold, worn by women
<i>Kubaya</i>	Small glass used for drinking tea
<i>Kuskusi</i>	Flour and sugar powder dish for special occasions such as wedding
<i>Lihaf</i>	Quilt
<i>Lahma</i>	Cooked meat



<i>Malas</i>	Expensive, decorated long robe, used by women on special occasions
<i>Man'ara</i>	Small size axe used in farming
<i>Mastaba</i>	Stone stool
<i>Mekhhadda</i>	Pillow for bed
<i>Naai</i>	Flute
<i>Omda</i>	Head of the village
<i>Qahwa</i>	Big tea stall
<i>Qidra</i>	Porcelain pot used for storing butter and other fat
<i>Qullah</i>	Pot for drinking water
<i>Rababa</i>	A violin like musical instrument
<i>Riq</i>	A musical instrument comprising metal plates
<i>Ruz</i>	Cooked rice
<i>Ruz bil laban</i>	Rice with milk and sugar; a dish used on wedding occasions
<i>Sederi</i>	Small jacket worn by men under the robe
<i>Shaal</i>	Scarf like piece of cloth wrapped around neck by women
<i>Shafshaq</i>	Glass jar; a kitchen item
<i>Shai</i>	Tea; generally with sugar but without milk
<i>Sheesha</i>	A pipe for smoking tobacco that has a long tube which

	pulls the smoke through water in a small container
<i>Shipship</i>	Women shoes (slippers)
<i>Silsila</i>	Gold chain put around the neck
<i>Sreer</i>	Sleeping bed
<i>Taamia</i>	Common dish
<i>Taba'a - sahn</i>	Kitchen plates
<i>Tabla</i>	Drum; a musical instrument
<i>Talfeeha</i>	Muffler for wrapping around neck
<i>Taqia</i>	Head-cover worn by men
<i>Tarha</i>	Head-cover, used by women
<i>Tekaya</i>	Big cushion used to put against back while sitting on floor
<i>Tera'ah</i>	Canal
<i>W'Allah</i>	Swearing in the name of God
<i>Wa-alaikum Al-sslaam</i>	Reply to Asslama-alaikum, meaning peace be upon you also
<i>Ya khabar</i>	Expression of surprise
<i>Yanhar abyad</i>	Expression of happiness
<i>Zaghrota</i>	Loud guttural voice produced by women to express joy
<i>Zeer</i>	Small water tank made of pottery
<i>Zohr</i>	Prayer said shortly after noon



Key facts about the real-life project

The project which inspired the writing of this book comprised two phases. The key facts of each phase are as follows:

PHASE I

Title: Integrating population and family life education in agricultural extension

Symbol: FPA/EGY/316/FPA

Period: 4 years; 1995-1998

Financing: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) contribution: US\$ 458,985; Government contribution: LE 2,138,800

Technical backstopping and project implementation: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Project execution responsibility: Central Administration for Agricultural Extension Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Government of Egypt

Other ministries involved: Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Environment.

Objective: To enable the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation to play its legitimate role in the implementation of the national population policy based on a well-defined, long term sectorial strategy for integrating population education in its regular extension programmes in harmony with the national strategy and the indicative plan to be devised by the National Population Council.

Governorates covered: Behira, Fayoum, Gharbia, Beni-Suef, Sohag and Aswan.



Number of villages covered: 30

Number of male and female group meetings organized: Two female group meetings/month for each village and two male group meetings/month for each village.

Main outputs: (a) 60 Master Trainers trained; (b) 600 male and female Village Extension Workers trained; (c) Information, education and communication materials produced including six booklets 5,000 copies each, two leaflets 5,000 copies each, six posters 3,000 copies each, 11 television spots of five minutes each, audio, radio programmes of two hours; (d) 200 brief-cases for the field workers; (e) Intensive extension campaigns involving eight to ten home and field visits by each Village Extension Worker; (f) Four symposia per month in each village; (g) Five opinion leaders for each village were identified and 150 opinion leaders were trained.

National Project Director: Dr. Ahmed G. Wahba

National consultants:

Dr. Khairy Hassan Abo El-Soud	Curriculum Development
Dr. Mohamed Fathy El-Shazly	Training
Dr. Abd El-Hamid Ibrahim Ahmed	Material Development

External Evaluator: Dr. Mohamed Hassan AbdelAal, Vice Dean, Environment & Community Service Affairs, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo University.

FAO Technical Officer: Dr. M. Kalim Qamar, Senior Officer (Agricultural Training & Extension), FAO Headquarter, Rome, Italy.

UNFPA Programme Officer: Ms. Mona Mostafa



PHASE II

Title: Integration of population and environment education into ongoing agricultural extension programmes

Symbol: FPA/EGY/902/FPA

Period: 4 years; 1999-2002

Financing: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) contribution: US\$ 308,000; Government contribution: LE 2,000,000

Technical backstopping and project implementation: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Project execution responsibility: Central Administration for Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR), Government of Egypt

Other ministries involved: Ministry of Health and Population; Ministry of Environment

Objective: Strengthening the newly established institutional capacity of MALR to plan, coordinate and implement a multi-disciplinary strategy for integrating population and environment education messages into ongoing agriculture extension programmes for sustainable rural and agricultural development and food security.


Governorates covered: Kalyoubia, Kafr El-Sheikh, Menia and Assuit

Number of villages covered: 20

Number of male and female group meetings organized:

440 Female

440 Male



Main outputs: (a) 40 Master Trainers trained; (b) 100 male and female Village Extension Workers trained; (c) 60 Home Visitors trained; (d) Information, education and communication materials produced including six booklets 1,500 copies each, two double-faced leaflets 1,000 copies each, six posters 1,000 copies each, calendar cards 3,000 copies, large-sized educational loose-leaf booklets, guide 3,500 copies, four television spots of five minutes each, five radio episodes of 15 minutes each; (e) 200 brief cases for the field workers; (f) 14,080 home and field visits; (g) 880 symposia; (h) 440 extension knowledge contests; (i) 170 rural theatre plays; (j) Five opinion leaders from each village were identified and trained.

National Project Director: Dr. Ahmed G. Wahba

National consultants:

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Dr. Mohamed Fathy El-Shazly	Training
Dr. Abd El-Hamid Ibrahim Ahmed	Material Development
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