

## From Depression to Hope

Martha Mikhail, a 29-year-old widow, lives in Sharona. Martha has three children under the age of 12 - Sarah, Yostina and Philopater. Martha's loss of her husband Eshak was exceptionally heartbreaking. She internalized her grief, went into isolation and became depressed.

Martha continued to live in her husband's family home. She did not own any appliances nor furniture. They slept on the floor. She washed clothes by hand which affected her back. Martha had nothing to offer and no hope to find work. Determined to provide the best education for her children, she borrowed money to pay for tutoring fees. Soon she was indebted to loan sharks and tutors.

Without a support system to help, Martha's depression deepened. She became isolated and her behavior to everyone was detrimental. The ideal solution would have been to seek professional involvement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the severity of depression when it is not addressed. "There is a real and dire need to determine ways in which to combat depression in the developing world." WHO's plan is to provide training to health providers to assist those in depression. This solution, while a start, does nothing to educate the sufferer to seek services. In addition, access to such healthcare would be expensive and most likely require travel which the poor could not afford.

When Finding Freedom through Friendship (FFF) and the Council of Services and Development (CSD) met Martha, she expressed her inspiration of opening a sewing shop. Soon, with a grant of 6,000 EGP (\$310), an industrial sewing machine, fabric and tools were delivered to Martha. Another 6,000 EGP (\$310) obtained beds, bedding and a washing machine. Finally, FFF and CSD secured private tutoring for the children.

FFF & CSD believe in the holistic approach to restore both the emotional and physical state so the individual can live to their utmost potential. Marian Gamal, the team facilitator, listened without judgement and guided Martha to regain hope and heal emotionally and spiritually. Today Martha's successful tailoring shop provides a stable income to afford food, healthcare and education. The children are excelling in school. Martha is expanding her business. She said: ***"I gain 400 EGP (\$20) per month. I use part of the money to buy fabric and the rest I spend on my children."*** Martha has ceased borrowing money and has paid off her debts.



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