

A Livestock Grain Seller

Mariam Atya Hakim, 41, is from El Kom El Akhder, a poor rural region in the South of Egypt. Mariam and her husband, Samuel, had four children, Ramy, Amged, Fady and Youstina, ages 12 to 22 years old. Samuel worked as a doorman with a monthly salary of 1,000 EGP (~\$60/month; ~\$2/day), not enough for even one meal a day. In 2008, Samuel died of a heart attack.

Mariam has an entrepreneurial spirit. She borrowed a microloan from a humanitarian group to open a small home-based kiosk of vegetables and animal grain. Unfortunately, after several months, the project was not profitable. The family started to suffer financially, psychologically and socially. The children were unable to attend school, and Mariam could not afford private tutoring.

The Egyptian public educational system collopsed several years back. To mitigate for the low quality of public education, private tutoring has become the fundamental track for instruction. Incidentally, the same individuals who teach in the public school are those that tutor! Naturally, teachers focus their efforts on private tutoring over public school because of the higher financial profit. Due to this collapse of the educational system, a student must now attend both public school (by law) and private tutoring (for education) and pay for both. This has created a hardship for the poor in rural villages. So, for Mariam, the children were essentially not getting an education.

When Finding Freedom through Friendship (FFF) and the Council of Services and Development (CSD) met Mariam, she was motivated to revive the livestock feed & vegetable business. She was convinced there was a market since most villagers owned livestock and thus needed enriched feed for their animals. With a grant of 4,000 EGP (\$250), a variety of enriched animal feed was delivered to Mariam. Also, the team secured private tutoring for the children.

Today, the Mariam's kiosk is thriving. On market days, Mariam can be seen purchasing goods. Mariam earns enough profit to cover food and medical care. The children are doing well in their education. Moreover, the family has regained confidence, dignity and acceptance in the community. She has journeyed from hopelessness to self-reliance.

Mariam expresses her thanks to the generous donors who reversed the yoke of poverty, "I am so very thankful to all the donors and individuals who helped me. Your support and willingness to believe in me has transformed my life and the lives of my children. Thank you."

The dedicated FFF & CSD team are devoted to planting seeds of hope, so individuals may grow into something magnificent. Miriam is a seed that has bloomed.



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