

Popsicles, Cold Drinks & Ice Cream

Martha Noshe, age 32 lives in Sharona, a rural village in the South of Egypt. At age 16, Martha married Ezzet Hilmy and moved to his parents' house. Ezzat worked at odd jobs and part time tuk-tuk driver for wages that barely covered a meal a day. In May 2019, Ezzet suddenly died from pneumonia leaving Martha and four children, Heidi, Beshoy, Remonda and Amira a small area in his parents' home.

The 400 EGP (\$23) monthly widow pension promised from the government had not yet formalized. Even if the money arrived, it would not be enough to feed and educate. Thus, Martha struggled to nourish her children and could not afford private tutoring (the principal schooling track due to the collapse of the Egyptian educational system).

Martha had no commercial skills. That is not surprising since culturally in rural areas, parents push their daughters into early marriages to save money or gain a dowry. Sadly, these early marriages are a disadvantage to females. Once married, women drop from school, remain illiterate, gain no skills and impair their earning potential for life. Moreover, traditionally, wives move in their husbands' family home. Consequently, the wife's dependence, finances and fate are under the power of the in-laws and husband. With no authority, these women are often subjected to domestic violence and are devalued.

On her own initiative, Martha opened a small home-based store selling snacks. Creatively, she made iced popsicles using her in-law's refrigerator. Although her did make revenue, it was insufficient to feed the family.

When Finding Freedom through Friendship (FFF) and the Council of Services and Development (CSD) met Martha, she expressed a profound desire to expand her kiosk with snacks, cold drinks and ice cream and she especially wanted to advance her popsicle trade. For that she would need a deep freezer.

For 5,000 EGP (\$300) a large capacity deep freezer was installed. For another 2,000 EGP (\$150), the store and the freezer were filled with products. Finally, FFF and CSD secured private tutoring for the children.

Today, Martha runs a successful kiosk that sells chips, sugar, chocolate chips, gum, snack foods, candy, sweet desserts cold juice, ice cream and popsicle. The popsicles are a hit in the community. Martha is turning a profit and is introducing new products. The children are excelling in school and private tutoring.

Martha has confidence, self-esteem, trust, and hope. *Give wings to individuals and they fly. By educating the children, they can metamorphosis into productive and economically independent members of society.*



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