

Two Goats and Two Sheep

Rasha Bollus, age 32, had four children, Ibrahim, Youssef, Veronia and Abunoub. Her husband, Sherif, had a challenging and hard life working at low-paying, physically demanding jobs. They Sherif owned a single room (160 square feet) in his parents' home. The room was bare except for a "blanket" covering the dirt floor. Mercifully, Rasha was allowed to keep her room when Sherif suddenly died.

Rasha had no assets., Her only income is a monthly government widow's pension of \$350 EGP (\$0.75/day). The family's food came from a local church. The dirt floor on which they slept was a source of pathogens and parasites capable of transmitting disease through contact and ingestion. Her children did not attend school, because Rasha could not pay the tutoring fees.

Like many women in rural areas, Rasha had little education. 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.

When Finding Freedom through Friendship (FFF) and the Council of Services and Development (CSD) met Rasha, they determined that raising livestock is best option for a micro business. A month later, for a 5,000 EGP (\$300) grant, two sheep (one male, one female), two goats (one male, one female) and enriched animal feed were delivered to the family. The livestock graze on feed, grass and plants close to the home. When the animals reproduce, they could be either sold or butchered to provide an income. Another \$300 grant provided beds and bedding, a gas stove and paid the annual tutoring fees for the children.

FFF & CSD believe in the holistic approach to instill independence and confidence at both the emotional and physical state so the individual can live to their utmost potential. The regular visits of the CSD facilitators, Marian Gamal and Basseem Wahba, imparted hope for Rasha to overcome her emotional battles. Today Rasha loves preparing healthy meals using her now stove. The children's health and schoolwork has improved significantly. Rasha has regained confidence and self-respect.

"Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us."

~Smiles



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