



The Coptic Orthodox Church
Bishopric of Public,
Ecumenical and
Social Services (BLESS)

We Pray for the Peace of the World



ANNUAL REPORT 2023
ISSUED 2024

Message from His Holiness Pope Tawadros II

There are makers of everything all around the world, from light products to heavy industries. But one type of makers stands out, the makers of peace. The Lord blessed them by saying, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Humans are the only beings among all creatures who can communicate with their Creator, thanks to the gift of reason that God has bestowed upon them. We can then pray, supplicate, and speak to God in silence, with words, and with emotions.

The hard work of BLESS and all its servants, led by the wisdom of His Grace Bishop Yolios, are a prayer for the peace of the world and people everywhere. At the same time, their hard work extends service in different development sectors. Their programs extend to villages and cities serving thousands of Egyptians, without discrimination. They serve with love and dedication for the development and advancement of Egypt and all its people.

My greetings, love, and my prayers for the peace of the world and for this blessed service.

Tawadros II
2024



His Holiness and Beatitude Pope Tawadros II

Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the
Apostolic See of St. Mark the Evangelist

Content

Message from His Holiness Pope Tawadros II	4
Message from His Grace Bishop Yolios	5
Message from Father Rafael Tharwat	6
BLESS at a Glance	7
We Pray for the Peace of the World	8
2023 Key Events	12
The Coptic Association for Social Care	16
BLESS Programmatic Activities in 2023	18
Our Village Stories	48
The Aghaby Program	50
Our Partners	52
BLESS Community Development Program Expenses in 2023	56
2023 BLESS Communities	58

The Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS)



Who we are

The Bishopric of Public Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS) serves as the social development arm of the Coptic Orthodox Church (COC)

Our Vision

Empowered sustainable communities that accept diversity and enjoy living with dignity.

Our Mission

The Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS) is the social development arm of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. BLESS works to improve the quality of life and social equity; empower all community members to achieve their potentials; enhance capabilities; build resilience to crises; and contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals.

Governing Principles

- Our love for God drives us to love and respect human dignity.
- Peace and tolerance.
- Respect for God's Creation.
- Transparency and accountability.
- A belief in people's capabilities, creativity, power to give and volunteering

Message from Father Rafael Tharwat

"We pray for the peace of the world."
Our Coptic Orthodox Church, led by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, plays an active role in promoting peace and unity in Egypt and across the world. Our Church relies on prayers as the key means to achieve peace.

We believe that true prayers do not absolve us from doing our work. Instead, true prayers enlighten us to do our work. Our faith in prayers does not mean we should do nothing, but it guides us to do the right thing. Under the leadership of His Grace Bishop Yolios, we at BLESS, all the servants, pray and diligently work to implement programs and activities that fulfill the commandment of the Lord. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

We pray for every person to live in peace, safety and dignity, without fear or threat of violence. We pray for every individual to have fair and equal access to their needs. We pray for every individual to have opportunities to prosper and grow.

The Lord is able to use us for the glory of His holy name.

Rafael Tharwat



Father
Rafael Tharwat

Bishop's Deputy



BLESS sends Relief to Gaza

BLESS contributed two trucks in support of people in Gaza. While preparatory work took place in 2023, the first truck was dispatched in February, 2024 containing children's clothes, blankets, mattresses and baby bottles. The second truck was dispatched in April, 2024.

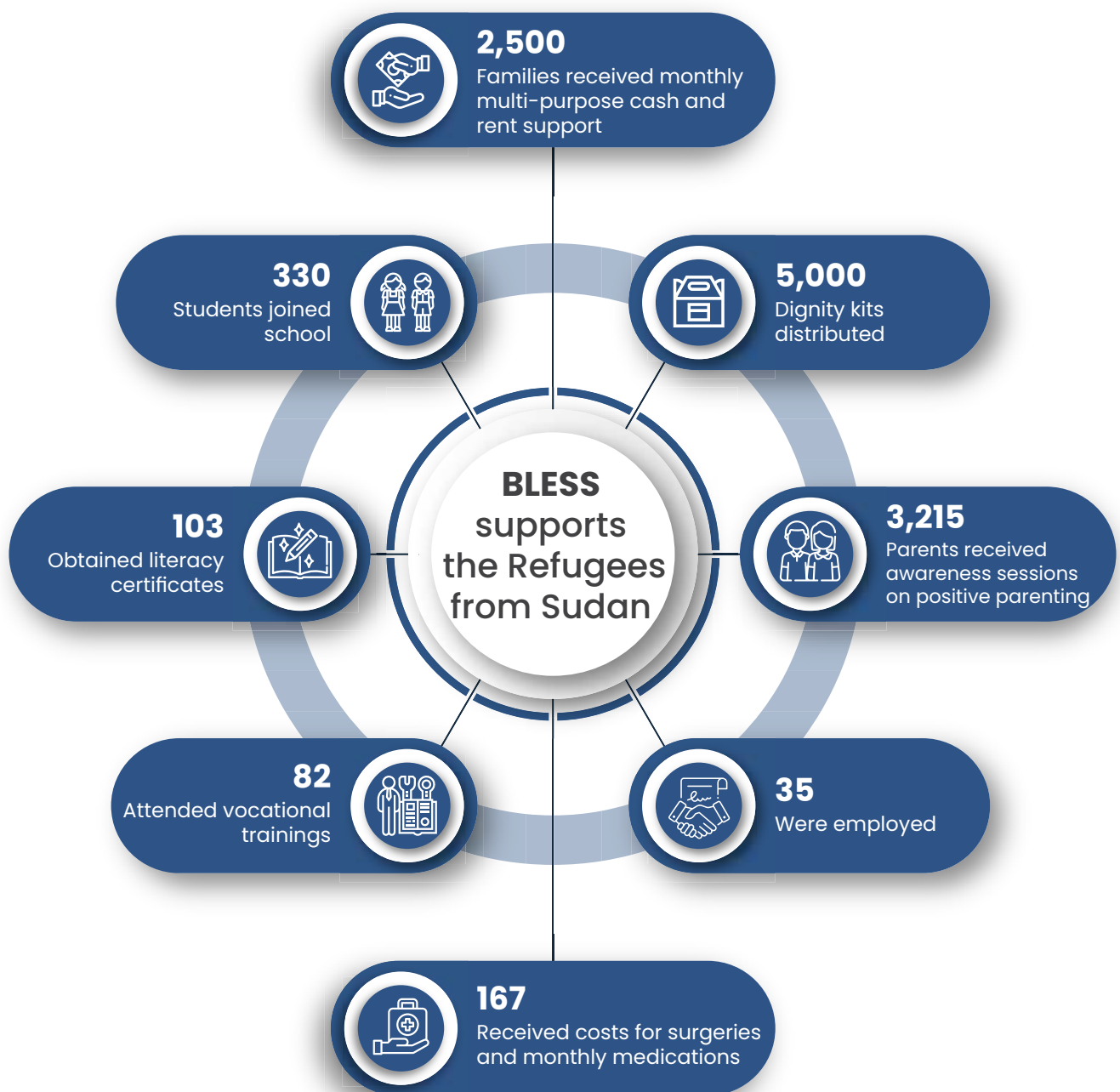


We Pray for the Peace of the World

BLESS takes a holistic approach to peace. We pray for the peace of the world; peace between nations, communities and within families.

BLESS supports People Fleeing the War in Sudan

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan and the influx of refugees from Sudan to Egypt, BLESS provided immediate, multi-sectoral assistance to people from Sudan as follows:



BLESS Works for Peace in the Family

The BLESS “Peace, Love, Tolerance” program provided positive parenting courses for 3,478 parents; psychodrama sessions against forms of violence against children for 2,368 parents and training of trainers workshops for 89 religious leaders improving their knowledge and skills about methods of combatting violence against children and positive parenting. The program is implemented in cooperation with UNICEF-Egypt.

To combat harmful practices and violence against women, BLESS provided awareness sessions to 163 religious leaders and 3,365 church servants. BLESS also provided 158 awareness campaigns and seminars against gender-based violence (GBV) and female genital mutilation (FGM) reaching 7,645 participants. BLESS activities also involved 45 group discussions for 1,385 for elderly women about the harms of FGM; psychosocial support through individual sessions for 340 women. The program also provided training sessions to couples about to get married (196 brides/grooms). The BLESS public declaration against FGM and GBV (issued in 2021) engaged 30,631 individuals throughout Egypt. These activities are implemented in partnership with UNFPA-Egypt.



BLESS Works for Community Peace

The program raised awareness about the importance of accepting and respecting others regardless their religion, culture, social status, or education level through engaging community member in interactive activities. These activities involved children's festivals (ten festivals in 2023); youth clubs, sports activities; women's groups; and meetings involving religious leaders.



1,478

Total Participants



519

Women



716

Children



180

Youth



63

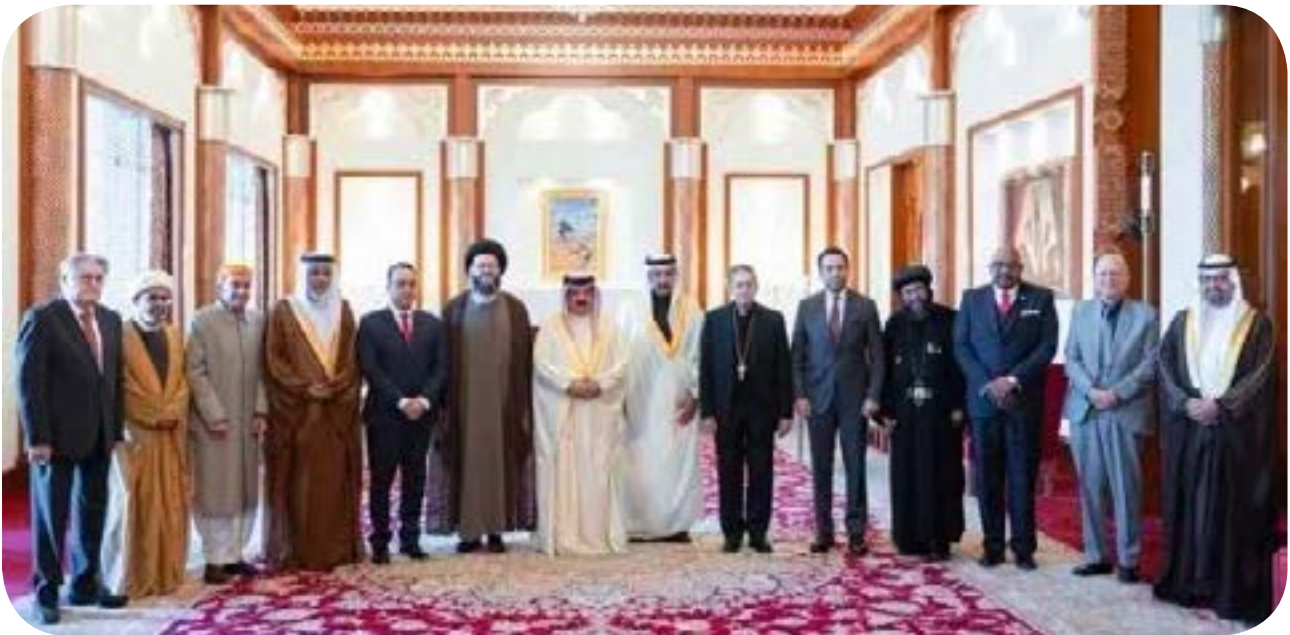
RL





H. H. Pope Tawadros II met the Servants of Refugees from Sudan

On July 31, 2023, H. H. Pope Tawadros II and H. G. Bishop Yolios met with the servants who provide support to refugees from Sudan at the papal residence in Cairo. The purpose of the meeting was to check on the conditions of Sudanese refugees who have come to Egypt due to the ongoing turmoil in Sudan.



Bishop Yolios, Bishop of BLESS, is nominated as a member of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence

On October 31, 2023, H. G. Bishop Yolios was nominated to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence by an official decree from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain.

2023 Key Events



BLESS Participation in the Largest Charity Event at Cairo Stadium

Under the leadership of the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, BLESS participated in the “Shoulder to Shoulder” initiative, on March 17, 2023, organized by the National Alliance for Civil and Developmental Action. It took place at Cairo International Stadium with the participation of 300,000 volunteers from civil society organizations, aiming to distribute over 6 million food boxes to the most vulnerable families across all governorates in the country.



The Signing of the Protocol with National Alliance for Civil and Developmental Action

On February 28, 2023, BLESS signed the protocol with the National Alliance for Civil and Developmental Action. The aim of this protocol is to establish a joint strategy among the entities of the National Alliance, focusing on comprehensive coordination to empower all targeted groups and provide them with a dignified life.



The Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abbassia illuminated in Blue for World Autism Awareness Day

On April 2, 2023, the Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral was illuminated in blue, "the autism symbol," to show solidarity with people with autism and participate in the global campaign "Light It Up Blue" for Autism Awareness Day, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.



Youth Forum in Logos

On July 23 , 2023, BLESS presented its developmental interventions for communities at the Logos Youth Forum for Coptic Youth with the slogan "Service Week", which was held under the patronage of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II. 120 young people from all governorates of Egypt participated in this event.



A Cooperation Protocol with the Fahem Foundation for Psychological Support

On September 18, 2023, The Coptic Orthodox Church, represented by H. G. Bishop Yolios, the Bishop of BLESS signed a cooperation protocol with the Fahem Foundation for Psychological Support with her Excellency Ambassador Nabila Makram.



Lighting up in Orange in Solidarity with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

On September 16, 2023, the St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral was illuminated in orange to mark the campaign of "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" in collaboration with the National Council for Women and the international community.

The Resilient Productive Communities Project

In partnership with European Union

The project aims to improve the environmental status and maximize the benefits of available resources in three rural and urban communities in Cairo and Beni Suef Governorate. CASC is concerned with the implementation of many other projects that foster development and empower target communities, such as Economic, Rural, Youth, and Education Development.

The project team implemented the project activities in Ezab El Fant and Ezbet Galila in Beni Suef Governorate and Moasaset El Zakaah in Cairo. Three local community teams and three community governorate committees were formed, meeting on a monthly basis. The project conducted 12 workshops attended by 142 participants. Moreover, the project lit 34 main streets and 80 sub-streets, distributed 9,000 LED energy-saving bulbs to 1,728 households, and planted 530 fruitful olive trees. Additionally, six open days were conducted, attended by 1,035 participants.



In 2023, the project has been in the process of installing 100 biogas units, supporting 60 green projects by youth and women; training local communities to launch the three community initiatives; installing 260 LED street LED bulbs; installing 5,000 LED bulbs for households; installing 30 modern irrigation networks.

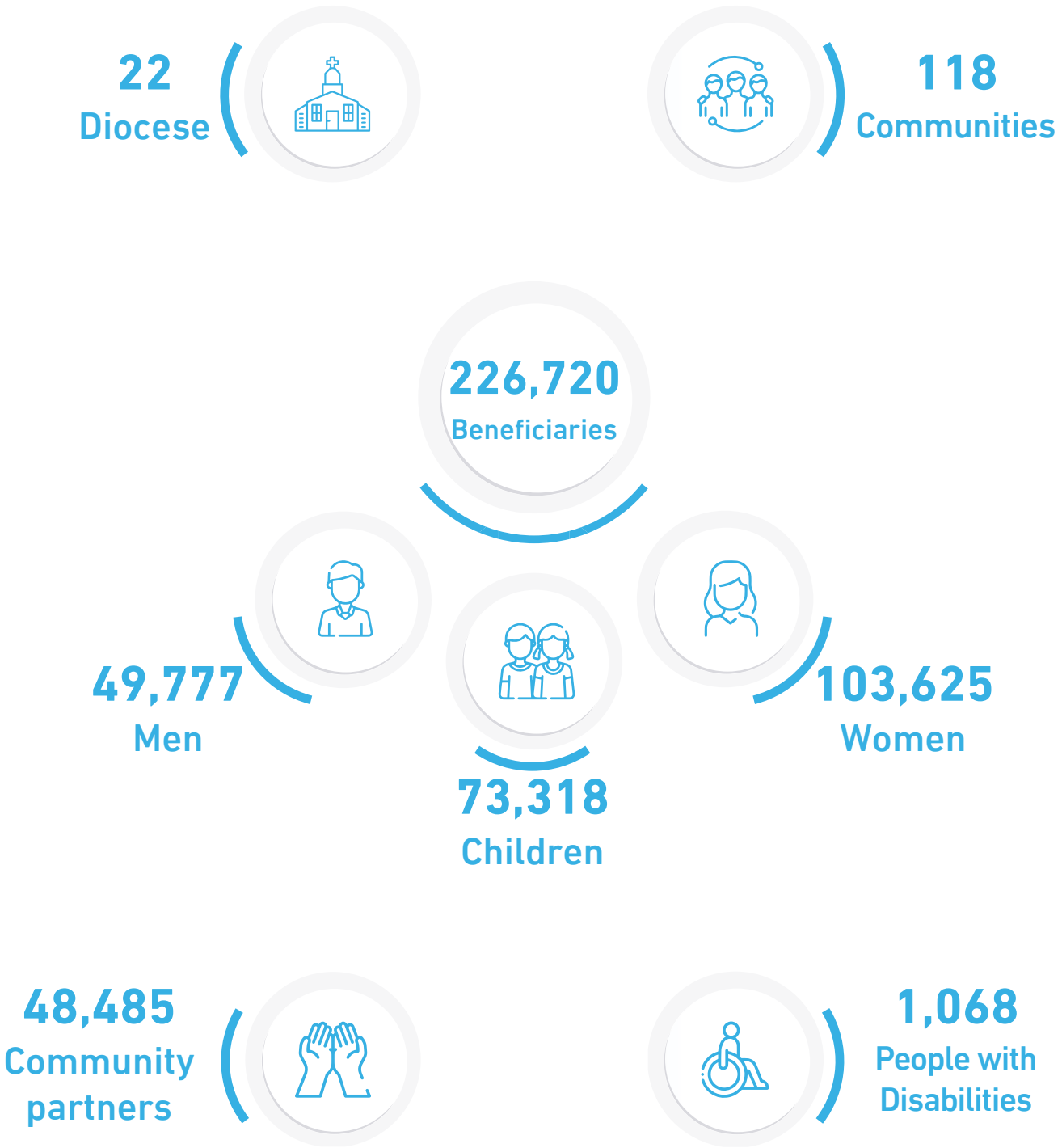
The Coptic Association for Social Care (CASC)

The Coptic Association for Social Care (CASC) was registered at the Central Administration for Associations in the Ministry of Social Solidarity as an NGO in March 1990. It is considered as BLESS twin sister. It aims at expanding community service, as well as targeting all community members in different fields.

CASC mission is to work for developing the marginalized communities in Egypt. It has wide experience in the field of development through, cooperation with various of GOs, local and international organizations such as: USAID, UNFPA, Embassy of German and other partners.



BLESS opens its programs to all community members, both Christian and non-Christian. In 2023, BLESS reached 48,485 non-Christian community members throughout its different programmatic activities.



BLESS Programmatic Activities in 2023





5,927
Total Participant



4,352
Women



1,575
Men



8 Decent Work and
Economic Growth



Not to Surrender or Despair

Iman Salah Labib, a widow from Ezzbet El-Nakhl (Cairo), shoulders the responsibility of her children's education and the care of her ailing, elderly mother. She manages a cleaning supplies shop that requires inventory expansion. Seeking assistance for her endeavor, she reached out to BLESS for support to strengthen her business and improve her family's income.

The Economic Development Program of BLESS evaluated her situation and granted her a loan. With this support, Iman diversified her inventory, resulting in a 35% increase in income, effectively meeting her family's basic needs.



2 Zero Hunger



1 No Poverty



Economic Development

Creating income generating channels through program interventions which are,

- Support to 521 income generating projects (owned by 274 men and 247 women). Priority was given to female heads of households, youth, and families of prisoners. This service has expanded nationally to meet the growing demand, particularly in Greater Cairo.
- 88 financial literacy seminars for 3,814 participants (995 men and 2,819 women)
- 35 Entrepreneurship support workshops for 806 participants (53 men and 753 women): the workshops sought to equip them with the necessary skills to conduct business feasibility studies, manage small businesses, conduct market studies, thereby enhancing the likelihood opportunities.



- 31 Vocational training workshops for 309 participants in communities (41 men and 268 women) and 24 vocational training workshops at the “I Can” Center in Cairo, for 220 participants (81 men and 139 women).
- Three Capacity building workshops for 38 local cadres (16 men and 22 women) and one TOT training to 16 volunteers to enable them to carry out the technical trainings in their communities



Cultivating Success Against All Odds

Youssef Riad, a small-land owner and farmer, owns a tiny agricultural parcel situated in the village of Galila, within the Beni Suef Governorate. Youssef cultivates the land and depends on it for his sustenance while confronting life's trials. Despite facing severe weakness and visual impairment, Youssef persists in his efforts.

Youssef participated in an agricultural awareness seminar focused on wheat cultivation, where the importance of incorporating potassium during the grain filling stage to enhance agricultural output was underscored. The remarkable outcome emerged when wheat yield increased from 18 ardabs per acre to 24 ardabs per acre following the potassium addition, a development that brought joy to Youssef and his family.



Rural Development

- 60 Agricultural awareness seminars for 1,076 farmers and 1,178 women (Increasing agricultural productivity by at least 11.78% in targeted communities, particularly in strategic crops such as sorghum, maize, and wheat, has had a significant impact on the income of 1,267 farmers.)
- 63 Field visits (Protected 23 acres of agricultural lands in Abu Jalban village from nematode infestation by employing a variety of control methods to effectively manage nematode spread and reduce the risks of fungal or bacterial infections).
- 10 Pilot fields for farmers (The introduction of new crops that yield high income to enhance the economic status of the farmers in the targeted villages, which were not previously cultivated in these areas, such as (anise, cumin, black seed, potatoes).
- 27 farmers group seminars attended by 501 farmers and 196 women (Building the capacities of four farmers' groups in targeted villages, resulting in their implementation of community projects which include providing agricultural equipment, machinery, and various agricultural production supplies.)
- 61 Animal nutrition seminars attended by 778 farmers and 1,874 women, and A total of 7,991 vaccination doses were administered to cattle, 4,744 to sheep, and 847 to goats, 325 chicken.)
- 60 Income generating projects within the framework of rural women's development initiatives, such as poultry farming, rabbit breeding, etc., to enhance their social and economic conditions.
- 54 Food industries seminars attended by 14 farmers and 1,467 women.
- Five compost and products additional value models for 139 farmers.
- Four visits for Technical support (Providing comprehensive technical support, recommendations, and guidance throughout the farming season until harvest to protect the crops from diseases, as well as to confront unstable weather fluctuations during the agricultural season.



10,664

Total Participant



5,766

Farmers



4,898

Rural women



“Let there be Light”

In the Marj district, the absence of lighting posed safety concerns. Despite initial rejection of street light installation due to vandalism fears, field workers persisted and engaged the local council for support. A collaborative effort between the local council, community leaders, and participants led to the innovative solution of LED lamps encased in sturdy tubes, effectively deterring vandalism and enhancing safety. The successful implementation of LED street lighting transformed the area, showcasing the power of community-driven solutions in complex challenges and fostering positive change.



Environmental Development

- 46 Seminars about safe disposal of waste, improving the environmental conditions, increasing environmental awareness, and how to have an ecofriendly community for by 2,524 participants (132 men and 2,392 women)
- 15 Interactive theatres for 913 participants (36 men, 497 women and 380 children) and 12 Environmental trips for 440 participants (57 men, 169 women and 214 children)
- 31 Cleaning and tree-planting campaigns for 61,107 participants (15,297 men, 16,795 women and 29,015 children).
- 17 Interior lightning campaigns for 6,592 participants (1,342 men, 1,498 women and 3,752 children) and 6 Street lighting campaigns for 32,047 participants (7,108 men, 7,993 women and 16,946 children).
- 32 Recycling classes for 579 women.
- Rationalizing water and energy consumption workshops and seminars for 1,492 participants (38 men and 1,454 women).
- 30 Environmental carnivals for 1,832 kids.



108,118

Total Participant



24,122
Men



31,741
Women



52,255
Children





Healthcare Harmony: Al-Maadi Village's Journey to Health Care Access

Al-Maadi village, located in Qena governorate, has encountered significant challenges in accessing healthcare services and promoting basic health awareness among its population. Through collaborative efforts with the Health Care program and the Health committee, solutions have been implemented.

The villagers now have access to a monthly mobile clinic staffed with doctors from the health unit in Qena governorate. This initiative aims to address the pressing medical needs of residents, particularly in relation to hypertension and diabetes. The impact has been profound, with 44 patients (30 women and 14 men) committing to treatment plans and adopting healthier dietary practices.



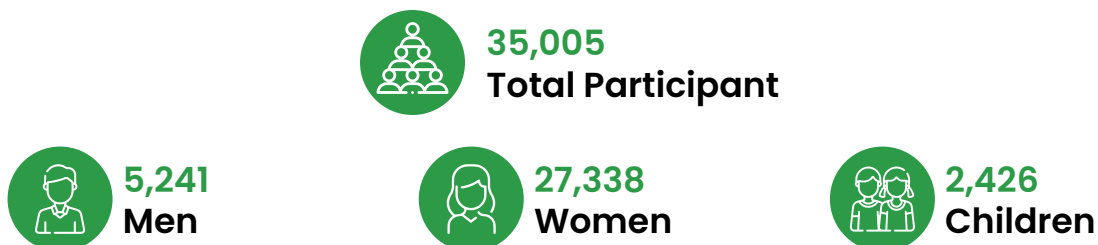
Additionally, the health committee initiated local initiatives by partnering with "Life Lab," which offers a 50% discount on medical tests for villagers. This underscores the pivotal role of the health committee in empowering local leaders to identify community needs and implement sustainable solutions.

By fostering collaboration between local entities and medical institutions, significant strides can be made in improving healthcare access in underserved rural areas like Al-Maadi village.

Primary Health Care Support

The program contributes to enhancing public health among marginalized individuals within Egyptian society, with the following interventions:

- 55 Health awareness courses attended by 1,114 participants (40 men, 897 women and 177 children).
- 32 Nutrition courses attended by 1,243 participants (596 women and 647 children).
- 97 Health awareness seminars attended by 5,301 participants (357 men, 4,907 women and 37 children).
- 41 Medical pregnant women days attended by 804 women.
- 19 Pregnant classes attended by 278 women.
- 33 Family planning seminars attended by 1,618 women.
- 40 Mobile clinics attended by 4,001 (635 men, 2,031 women and 1,335 children).
- 50 Primary medical interventions (glasses) benefited by 402 (79 men, 292 women and 31 children).
- 20 Combating blindness campaigns attended by 1,239 (232 men, 896 women and 111 children).
- 45 Combating breast cancer campaigns attended by 1,339 women.
- Eight Combating Virus C campaigns attended by 286 (66 men, 219 women and a child).
- 22 Thyroid investigation campaigns 1,186 participants were examined (80 men, 1,019 women and 87 children).
- Upgrading two health care facilities.
- One first aid training attended by 20 local cadres and one anti-addiction training for volunteers attended by 35 (15 men and 20 women).





The BLESS New Initiative

to Address Nutrition Challenges Among Children in Egypt

Increasing food prices has negative impact on nutrition, particularly for children in poor areas. Targeting children in the BLESS-supported daycare facilities in eight communities (through different funding agreements), BLESS aimed at addressing this problem by:

- Providing 4,510 take-home boxes of nutritious items for 434 families including 1,039 children with anemia and without, to contribute to supporting their nutrition status, and prevent further deterioration.
- Raising awareness of 554 mothers about importance of healthy nutrition through sessions focusing on nutritional issues.
- The distribution of leaflets on healthy nutrition.



4- Research unit:

Research, statistics, production, and publication of the latest research's on some psychological diseases and various addictions and everything related to them.

- A number of (27 new studies), the most important of which are: (Heated tobacco and its harms) Pills (Yaba) The most dangerous types of drugs / artificial intelligence / black death candy / cognitive development theory / psychosocial development

Second: Therapeutic departments:

1- Outpatient Department:

The center provides support to the addict by providing a good diagnosis of his condition and developing a treatment plan for each individual who applies for treatment as follows:

a. Receiving (469 new addiction cases)

B. Receiving patients who are reluctant "daily" (3,700 patients with addiction) and conducting sessions for them.

C. Receiving new psychiatric cases (307 patients)

D. Receiving mental health patients who visit "daily" (716 psychological patients) and conducting psychological and therapeutic sessions for them.

e. Patients admitted to the rehabilitation home (97 patients)

And the. Missing patients in hospitals (280 patients)

g. Conducting a weekly treatment group for recovering patient's (488)

H. Conducting drug tests on recovered patients during different periods of time.

2- Family Guidance Department:

The center provides support to the families of the addicts and teaches them how to deal with their addict person during using drugs, and during treatment in a rehabilitation home through: individual and family sessions, family counseling sessions, and counseling for families to end disputes between spouses so as not to destroy the family.

(2127 sessions) were held for (975 individuals), and reconciliation and settlement sessions were held for spouses applying for divorce for (2 families), and 8 families are being followed up for this purpose.

3- Behavior modification unit for children:

The center supports children of addicts and psychiatric patients socially and psychologically by organizing groups, individual sessions, and activities to help them overcome their suffering at home.

a. Number of (100 groups) for children for (40 children)

B. Number of (12 sessions) to modify children's behavior.

In addition to drawing workshops and competitions for children.

4- Rehabilitation home in Wadi EL Natron:

The therapeutic program to support those who have stopped using drugs, to prepare them for a new life free of addiction, help them solve their problems, and return them to society, healthy and able to work.

Number of beneficiaries of the rehabilitation home (97)

5- Hotline service (0222626168 - 01275575657)

To respond to emergency cases of addiction and mental illness

Best Life Center for Mental Health and Addiction Control

First: Preventive sections:

1- Awareness, Prevention and Training Department:

The department spreads awareness to discover mental illnesses and addictions. It also trains cadres to work and serve in this field. The total activities and services are:

a. Lectures (181 lectures)

B. Beneficiary parishes and neighborhoods (28)

C. Awareness meetings (149)

D. TV interviews (7)

E. Beneficiaries (21,000)

and the beneficiaries of electronic awareness "films/capsules/posters/inquiries" (240,000)

2- Volunteer's department:

The department formed groups of young volunteers in churches and trained them to include more cadres capable of dealing with addiction cases in (16 parishes), where it was provided.

(66) Workshops and follow-up meetings for volunteer's in these parishes

(46) A carnival for primary and middle school children with the help of church volunteer's

(17) Seminars and lectures for young volunteers

(2) Training course for (145 priests in 2 dioceses)

(2) Training on "Tobacco and Drug Dependence" program in partnership with the General Secretariat for Mental Health and Drug Treatment and the number of beneficiaries (60 priests and ministers)

3- Social Media and Documentation Department:

a. The department publishes electronic awareness tools (photos, videos, written information) on various ways of communication and also follows up on Emails (Send and Receive)

B. The department also creates all Photoshop designs for book covers, brochures, and posters issued by the Center, in addition to documenting all the Center's activities on videos.

C. These electronic activities achieved (62,650 views) and (1,038 shares) of photos, videos, and written information.

D. (41 posters were designed to raise awareness, publicity for the center and the cover of the book "Media Addiction").



Emergency Relief

The Emergency Relief program aimed at raising awareness about disaster preparedness and the necessary skills needed to effectively respond to emergencies through the following interventions:

- **Through networking with the Egyptian Red Crescent**, the program sought to benefit from its experience to enhance the effectiveness of the program's activities, resulting to the following:
 - The program conducted 27 simulation trainings, training 67 volunteers, field workers, and community scouts on disaster preparedness.
 - The trainees received a three-day-practical training on effective response in various disaster scenarios, such as earthquakes, floods, and fires.
 - Additionally, four trainees were granted membership in the Egyptian Red Crescent, allowing them to participate in future disaster response efforts.
- **30 Public meetings were conducted, allowing 1,688 beneficiaries to learn about potential hazards.** The meetings raised awareness on ways to prevent common hazards like kitchen fires, electrical shocks, and gas leaks, in addition to providing informational brochures and videos. Additional three meetings were conducted for 76 beneficiaries, as an initiative upon communities' request to equip them with the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to hazards.
- **Building capacities for 65 volunteers through two basic trainings, offering them guidance on their involvement in the program to be prepared to effectively implement the activities.**



1,963

Total Participants



322

Men

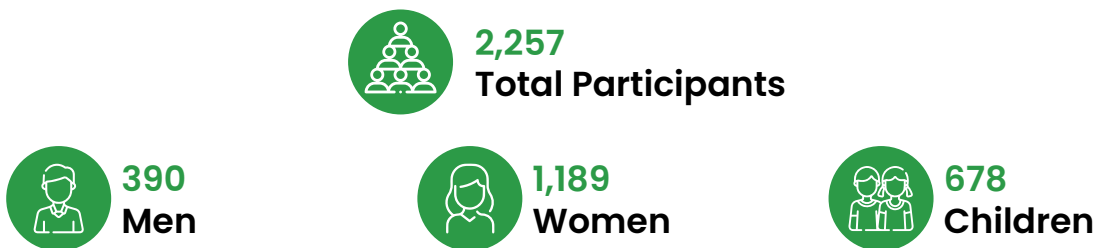


1,641

Women

Housing Improvement

In 2023, the program undertook 112 housing restoration activities, including 11 emergency interventions, benefiting 555 family members by ensuring access to good lighting, clean floors, and well-covered ceilings. Additionally, the program provided toilet restorations for 10 families. The program also furnished 109 homes, including 11 emergency cases, with essential items such as refrigerators, washing machines, stoves, beds, mattresses, and wardrobes. To address water quality issues, the program provided 75 water filters for 370 family members in villages where water contains high levels of salts and pollutants, which cause kidney diseases. Furthermore, the program held 15 community meetings under the “Life is Good”, benefiting 870 individuals by raising awareness about health and environmental issues, including topics like rationalizing consumption and hygiene.





Learning is Empowerment

Growing up in a family that didn't prioritize education and supported early marriage, Maryam faced difficulties arising from this background regarding her education. She is a preserved woman from Al Adaima Village in Luxor Governorate. Mariam managed to start her own small business; a kiosk selling chips and drinks. Maryam mentioned that she faced a lot of issues when it came to managing her business as the following "While I tried to manage my small business, I faced challenges in terms of reading, writing, and basic mathematical skills. It had negatively impacted my small business, and I couldn't manage it well. I struggled with basic calculations when dealing with customers. I got really sad back then, as it was my only source of income, but it was already falling apart."

She continues "As the time passed, I heard about BLESS literacy courses, and I was encouraged by field workers to join, so I decided to pursue my education. They assisted me throughout the process, and after 9 months of joining the courses, I passed the course exam and obtained the certificate. I learned how to read and write and mathematical skills. This helped me manage the finances of my project, and will assist me to expand and grow my small income project."



Adult Education

- 4 Public meetings about the importance of education attended by 2,159 participants (266 men and 1,893 women).
- 105 Literacy classes attended by 1,490 (164 men and 1,326 women), enabling adult learners to master basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.
- 56 Rounds of exams attended by 668 participants (88 men and 580 women).
- 22 Introductory classes attended by 205 participants (8 men and 200 women).
- 38 Continuing education classes attended by 434 participants (38 men and 396 women), the adult learners continued their self-education; nine of them obtained a university degree while 70 of them completed their secondary education.
- 18 Computer courses attended by 204 participants.
- Six trainings of adult education course coordinators attended by 130 (26 men and 104 women).
- 10 Networking activities with NGO's and GO's facilitated the program's interventions.



12,330

Total Participants



1,196
Men



11,134
Women





A chance

Nardine is a bright second-grader hailing from the Al-Adayma community, Luxor governorate. She is frequently found among the top students at her school. However, despite her impressive performance, there was always a crucial element missing from her education. which she mentioned; “Although I was ranked among the top students at school, developing my computer skills was something I needed. At school, there was no prioritization for teaching these skills, and I was aware of how important the computer skills were in the mean-time.”

Determined to bridge this gap, Nardine decided to enroll in BLESS’ computer courses. This decision proved to be transformative, as she acquired essential skills in MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The newfound knowledge greatly assisted her with school assignments, enabling her to effectively utilize these software tools. Moreover, when faced with the task of conducting digital research, Nardine experienced immense joy and satisfaction. Finally, she had the opportunity to learn something that had previously been beyond her reach within the confines of her school.



Improving the Standard of Education

- 31 Life tree courses (student study aid courses) attended by 1,819 children (833 boys and 986 girls).
- 18 Letters of light courses (reading and writing courses) attended by 750 children (362 boys and 388 girls).
- 18 Computer courses attended by 397 children (162 boys and 235 girls) and furnishing 16 computer labs.
- The program provided capacity development for 97 facilitators of the life tree, letters of light and computer courses.



6,816

Total Participants



6,719

Children



97

Facilitators





Small change, big impact

The twin sisters, Rosetta and Georgina, both aged 12, joined the talent school activity where they developed new understandings on how to resolve arguments, regulate and express their emotions.

As narrated by their mother, the two sisters fought a lot at home. After joining the program, Rosetta started talking to her twin sister about applying what they learned to form a good relationship together. They discussed everything sincerely including problem-solving and anger management skills that they learned about. They expressed their feelings appropriately and started communicating, and they even decided to divide household tasks between them. They learned how to express their emotions and manage their anger correctly, thus strengthening their relationship. The program contributed to changing the two sisters' behavior and their dealings with each other more maturely and respectfully.



Unleashing the Potentials of the New Generation

- Establishing six nurseries for 385 children.
- Distributing meals to 519 children (261 boys and 258 girls).
- 10 Medical tests for 482 children (239 boys and 243 girls).
- 15 Medical examinations conducted to 418 children (215 boys and 203 girls).
- Five “Your heart is yours” courses attended by 261 participants (110 boys and 151 girls).
- Supporting seven summer schools.
- Six Talent schools attended by 355 children (144 boys and 211 girls).
- Capacity development for 204 cadres, including nursery facilitators, nursery teachers, new supervisors and project staff.



8,366
Total Participants



7,907
Children



401
Parents



58
Facilitators



“Rise up and Walk” Program for People with Disabilities

- 1,690 Speech sessions attended by 132 children.
- 1,685 Skills development and learning difficulties sessions attended by 100 children.
- Three social activities were held for 443 participants to support their integration in the community.
- Four vocational trainings (embroidery, sewing, making perfumes and accessories) for 41 participants.
- Distributing white canes for 45 visually impaired participants, in addition to carrying out one White Cane Awareness Day seminar for 150 participants (78 men, 58 women and 14 children).
- One psychological guidance for 14 visually impaired (9 men and 5 women).
- One training on the use of technology for 14 visually impaired participants (11 men and 3 women).
- Printing four books in Braille and converting Six Al Kiraza magazines from readable to MP3.
- Providing 59 prosthetics, such as 22 electric wheelchairs, 11 prosthetic limbs, 9 wheelchairs, and 7 paralyses.
- Two capacity development were held for 19 volunteers, 19 specialists and three early detection workshops for 59 trainees.



752

Total Participants



706

People with Disabilities



46

Parents





A dream come true

Struggling with social, motor and speech skills, Robin found it hard to interact with others or get involved in social activities. For these reasons, Robin's family decided to seek support from the Rise Up and Walk center, as the child was being bullied by others for being different. The five-year-old boy's family wished that he could enrol at school on time, in which they were concerned about.



For two years, specialists worked on Robin's main issues and provided him with a tailored plan. The boy received sensory, behavioural, and speech sessions which enhanced his skills, allowing him to initiate conversations and communicate better. The mother noted to the progress saying: "He is now more sociable, and has the ability to express his needs." The project's social activities allowed Robin and his family to feel included in the community; now, his family can go anywhere without bearing in mind the community's perspectives. Robin's community has changed their view of him, and even those who previously bullied him no longer do so. His family was extremely pleased when their dream came true, as Robin will successfully get enrolled in school on time along with peers of his age.



“Please, Support Me” Project for Children with Autism

The BLESS’ Rise Up and Walk center supported 65 children with autism and their families along the past year leading to the following results:

- Enhancing the skills of 65 children with autism, by developing a tailored plan to each of them by four experienced specialists, post the children’s assessment to meet their needs. Additionally, the project implemented 2,338 sensory, speech and behavioral sessions, where each session was implemented 60–70 times monthly.
- Aiming at improving the children’s health, special healthy food items were distributed monthly to 57 children with autism. These included oat flour, corn flour, and casein-free milk. Each child was provided with a tailored plan under the supervision of a nutritionist.
- 30 parents reported that their confidence increased and integration when supporting their autistic children, as a result of various activities directed for the parents to support them, such as implementing four monthly events. In addition, the project promoted the children and their families’ integration and created more inclusive environment through three trips, two social activities and one annual camp.
- The project raised awareness of 228 community members about children with autism through various activities such as The World Autism Awareness Day and early detection workshops for nursery facilitators.



293

Total Participants



65

Children with Autism



228

Community Members



17,715
Total Participants



6,668
Men



10,310
Women



737
Children



Community Empowerment and Sustainability

The program works to enhance the capacity of local cadres to lead developmental interventions through the implementation of the following activities:

- **Four Popular Meetings and 42 Meetings of Local Leaders in New Villages:** These targeted 889 beneficiaries with the aim of introducing new communities to the ICDP methodology and identifying proactive local leaders who participate in raising community issues.
- **14 Volunteer Recruitment Campaigns:** Attended by 432 beneficiaries, these campaigns aim to instill the culture of volunteer work and enhance community participation in implementing developmental interventions in the local community.
- **Meetings of Development Committees, Specialized Committees, and the Development Team:** These meetings are held to implement and evaluate program activities, study new problems, and plan solutions.

The program also works to enhance the capacity of local entities to invest in and innovate opportunities through:

- **Training Local Development Committees:** aims to technically empower them to study problems and planning skills, resulting in the implementation of 23 initiatives.
- **Six Community Dialogue for Experience Exchange:** aims to support and advocate for community issues and exchange experiences, led to conduct seven networks with various local and national entities





Human Resource Development

The program enhanced the competencies and skills of BLESS' employees based on their annual assessments through the following:

- Enhancing self-learning courses online for all BLESS employees: About 129 employee obtained certificates from training courses of KAYA, a free humanitarian learning platform which offers hundreds of training opportunities across a range of key topics, including the humanitarian essentials.
- Twenty training sessions were conducted, including fourteen specialized cascading training for fieldworkers, program coordinators and training for dioceses office local cadres, aiming to reviewing the new strategic plan and the BSDPs program.
- The program built the capacity of 93 fieldworkers in the new targeted communities through the Basic training by:
 - Providing them with skills and knowledge including the history and strategic plan of BLESS, the Integrated Community Development programs, Fieldworkers roles, computer skills in order to be qualified to lead the development work.
 - Developing the life skills and leadership personality of the fieldworkers.
 - Adopting modern techniques in trainings, such as participants conducting online research to cover the topics discussed in the training, which improved their technological skills.
- BLESS Administration establishes the Review and Accreditation Committee with the objective of review the technical aspects of proposed trainings by BLESS program managers, based on effectiveness and efficiency.



El Zoe'r Village

BLESS started its service in El Zoe'r community in Minya Governorate in 2020, implementing a package of nine programmatic components. El Zoe'r is a rural area, with nearly half of its inhabitants working in agriculture as small landholders. The BLESS Rural Development program supported the community farmers to increase crop productivity and preserve animal stock. Environmental awareness was a key component of BLESS activities in El Zoe'r, with focus on water and waste management. The program advocated for street cleaning, resulting in 148 tons of garbage removed from canal banks and streets. A waste management committee from the community was established, leading to the enforcement of waste management fines on those who leave garbage on the streets and in holding cleaning campaigns through networking with the local council. Moreover, the interventions ensured access to safe-drinking water through internal water connections, in addition to providing housing restoration activities and furniture. In healthcare, BLESS facilitated access to services through mobile clinics in addition to providing health awareness seminars and campaigns focusing on child nutrition, breast cancer and other key issues. Education was also prioritized to enhance the academic level of school children through study aid sessions. BLESS also offered adult education courses. With a trained cadre of volunteers and specialized community committees, more community initiatives were implemented in the community addressing key issues through advocacy training and networking with different bodies.



Our Village Stories



Hay El-Salam Village

Hay El-Salam village is part of the administrative center of Tama in Sohag Governorate, Upper Egypt. Since 2020, BLESS has worked in this village to empower the community through various services in health, education, environmental awareness, and economic development. By 2023, the Economic Development Program reached 263 individuals through seminars, income generating projects, entrepreneurship training and vocational training. The Health Care Program reached 609 individuals with medical examination, mobile clinic services, and health seminars, addressing thyroid disorders, blindness, and breast cancer. The Adult Education Program encouraged 135 people to enroll in classes, improving literacy and computer skills for some. The Education Support program helped 377 children enhance their academic performance and computer proficiency. The Housing Improvement Program renovated eight homes targeting 44 beneficiaries and provided furniture to promote cleanliness and energy conservation. The Rural Development Program educated farmers on sustainable agricultural practices and formed farmer groups, contributing to the overall development and well-being of Hay El-Salam.

Success Story

“Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand” (Pslams 37:24)

Our heroine is a distinguished and ambitious young woman who graduated from the Faculty of Engineering, Department of Urban Planning, class of 2022. One day, her fellow engineer, who owns an apartment and will provide most of the furniture for the marital home, proposed to her. However, she was required to purchase the necessary electrical appliances for the marriage, costing around 35,000 EGP. This was, of course, a significant additional expense for her parents, especially since her father, who worked in a fabric factory, had an accident that injured his hand, preventing him from working again. Despite this, he insisted on working hard to support his family, which includes his sick wife and three academically outstanding children at different educational stages. He managed to support his children until they completed their studies with the help of the Aghapy.

Despite the difficult circumstances, the church did not hesitate to assist this family, providing 5,000 EGP, followed by the Charity Committee at the Church of the Virgin Mary in Zeitoun with 9,000 EGP, and finally, the Papal Charity Committee at BLESS contributed 10,000 EGP.

Thanks to these joint efforts and the support, the family received, the young woman and her family were able to bear the wedding costs with dignity, facing challenges with steadfastness and determination. This story represents a model of resilience, solidarity, and success in overcoming difficulties, reinforcing the values of family and community.

The Aghapy Program

Who We Are

Aghapy is one of the departments under BLESS. The program aims to support the needs of underprivileged families by covering costs related to girls' marriages, various types of surgeries, addiction recovery services, treatment of chronic diseases, provision of prosthetics, and care for widows. The department prioritizes collaboration and partnership with specialized doctors and hospitals to perform high-quality surgical operations for those we serve. Additionally, we ensure post-treatment follow-up to guarantee complete safety and recovery. The program also coordinates with our dioceses abroad for financial assistance when needed.





Our Partners



Norwegian Embassy
Cairo





Our Partners



Program	Cost (EGP)
Support to Refugees from Sudan – Food (cash and vouchers)	4,691,130
Support to Refugees from Sudan – Clothing vouchers	3,958,068
Support to Refugees from Sudan – Medical and health care support	660,207
Support to Refugees from Sudan – Cash support	6,980,509
Support to Refugees from Sudan – housing rent support	7,621,868
Support to Refugees from Sudan – house furnishing support	2,725,272
Support to Refugees from Sudan – Education support	77,940
Program Sustainability Activities	1,510,601
Human Resource Development	870,019
Social Research and Community Studies	361,416
Program Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation	843,670
Documentation Unit	342,066
Field Coordination and operation offices	1,302,125
Administrative Costs	20,080,320
Total BLESS Community Development Expenses in 2023	140,824,028

BLESS Community Development Program Expenses in 2023

Program	Cost (EGP)
Education Program	5,558,683
Health care program	4,235,472
Peace Makers Program	498,143
Economic development program	6,517,087
Rural development program	2,286,222
Unleashing the Potentials of Next Generations program	6,703,073
Housing Conditions Improvement program	5,723,782
Emergency and disaster relief program	861,552
Environmental Development program	1,645,700
Reinforcing Youth Capacity	1,004,765
Support to people with disabilities Program	2,254,622
Support to children with autism	774,096
Addressing population growth and family planning issues project (in partnership with UNFPA)	3,432,066
Protecting children from violence practices (in partnership with UNICEF)	691,646
Combating drug addiction (Best Life Center for Mental Health and Addiction Control)	6,258,086
Combating harmful practices and gender-based violence (in partnership with Embassy of Norway)	852,192
Aghapy Program - Healthcare Support	19,007,684
Aghapy Program - Education Support	384,690
Aghapy Program - Marriage Support	10,994,384
Aghapy Program - Emergency Support	3,588,223
Aghapy Program - Support to poor households	4,462,190
Aghapy Program - Support to people affected by disasters	1,064,459



"The peace of God which surpasses
all understanding, will guard
your hearts and minds" (Philippians 4:7)

222, Ramses St, Abbasyia, Cairo-Egypt
+20 2 2682 2299 - +20 2 2682 2215
bleess@blessegypt.org
www.blessegypt.org





2023 BLESS Communities

- 31 ICDP communities
- 62 communities (other than ICDP)
- 25 communities of programmatic activities for combating violence against women

