

July 5, 2008

Dear Supporters,

Our participants are so excited to be gearing up for another summer of our Valuable Girl Project. This summer, we have over 900 participants in 15 locations all over Egypt. I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to see this program help young girls grow and develop over the past few years. In my travels to the various VGP sites in Egypt, I am constantly reminded of the daily struggles which these young girls so bravely face, and I am further convinced of the strength, dignity, and sense of hope which is fostered through the mentoring relationships made possible through the Valuable Girl Project.



A "big sister" and a "little sister" laugh as they read

Fatma is not the only girl whose increased self-esteem contributed to her staying in school and awareness of her social rights due to the Valuable Girl Project. Salwa, in Sohag, was pulled out of school after she completed grade 7. Salwa's parents saw no benefit from their daughter's education and wanted her to help at home. VGP helped convince Salwa's parents to send her back to school and found a special high school that enrolls girls who are older than secondary school age. Salwa is now a 'big sister' and a role model for her 'little sister' Amira. Amira found that she was able to express herself and share her opinions with her 'big sister' because the 'big sister' was trained to be an active listener. One day at school, Amira's teacher attempted to hit her for something she did not do. Amira stood up to the teacher and refused to be hit, clearly stating to her teacher that she did not deserve any punishment. The teacher did not punish her.

In 2006 – 2007 academic year, the Valuable Girl Project had significant impacts on all of its participants: the increased sense of self-worth that the 'big sisters' experienced, and the increased academic achievement of the majority of the young girls 'little sisters.' Girls who participate in VGP include Muslims and Christians. VGP is credited with significantly reducing religious tensions because activities for all participants include themes such as respect for differences, tolerance, and conflict transformation. The project has created a space for positive, peaceful relationships between the girls in this community to work towards the common goal of encouraging girls' education.

It is through your heartfelt contributions that these life changes have been made possible for Fatma, Salwa and Amira, as well as hundreds of girls and young women in Egypt. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Hanan Baky - International Program Director, Coptic Orphans
Coptic Orphans
PO Box 2881
Merrifield, VA 22116