

## EGYPT

### Community Foundation for South Sinai

#### Current situation: Facts and figures from the 2010 CF-GSR survey

Total sum of assets, including endowments, at the end of 2009.	US\$15,053.00
Annual operating budget.	US\$10,573.00 (this was an unusual year, in which we invested in our office and equipment – costs are usually lower)
Amount of the total grants distributed in 2009.	US\$9,820.00
Population of the area your community foundation serves.	80,000 (roughly half of whom are our Bedouin beneficiaries)
Number of paid staff at your community foundation.	1
Number of Board Members/ Trustees at your community foundation.	5

#### Community foundation activity and impact

The Community Foundation for South Sinai brings the following changes to the community through its grantmaking and other programmes:

	Remarkably positive changes	Positive changes	Slightly positive changes	No changes	Some negative changes
Citizens more involved in people-led development			√		
Less poverty/ more equal society			√		
Improvement in the position of marginalized groups			√		
More responsive authorities			√		
Increased awareness of environmental issues			√		
Support to arts and culture activities			√		
More trust within the community		√			
Greater transparency/ accountability		√			
Strong linkages across different parts of the community			√		
Increased charitable giving through the community foundation			√		

*Comment:* The Community Foundation for South Sinai (CFSS) is at a very early stage in its work, and it operates among marginalized people in a strictly-controlled environment. The changes it can expect to achieve will be slow in coming and hard-won when they do. The CFSS is just at the beginning.

**Example:**

CFSS has provided a community olive oil press. This has been a success, with more than fifty families using it to obtain oil from their own olives, at virtually no cost, which they would otherwise not have had. Another family has been supported by operating it, which has restored their traditional livelihood. The area had good rains this year so the demand will be greater this autumn, and hopefully many more people will benefit. Roughly half the working population lives around or below the absolute poverty level of \$1 per person per day, so this initiative is making a real difference.

**Community involvement**

The CFSS involves the community in its work in the following ways:

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>No</b>
Are community activists involved in board/ committees?	√		
Are staff, Board members/ Trustees, or volunteers from your community foundation participating in community issues and discussions led by others?	√		
Do you convene or lead discussions on issues of community importance?		√	
Do you promote the use of volunteers from the community?		√	
Do you provide information about the state of the community to grantees and community leaders (e.g. through Vital Signs or similar research collection)?		√	
Is your community foundation reflective of the diversity of the community?		√	

*Comment:* The community informs the CFSS much more than the community foundation informs them! The Community Foundation for South Sinai has a very active community leader on its board and the informal support of several others. As noted above, the CFSS is young and still developing the trust needed to operate in a marginalized community, but positive feedback from community leaders suggests the CFSS is getting there. Being fully representative is a distant dream when women are largely confined in their houses, but CFSS has involved them in leadership roles, using culturally-appropriate approaches, in projects such as handicrafts and making felt from local wool. The CFSS is one of very few local NGOs with Bedouin staff and trustees.

**Giving voice to local people**

This is very difficult. The Community Foundation for South Sinai does not operate in a western democracy, and all activity deemed political is absolutely banned. The CFSS has undertaken an extensive research programme into community needs and aspirations, and this shapes its grantmaking priorities. At present, this is the best and safest way of showing people that the CFSS has listened and understood.

***Examples of successful grants and/or programs supported by the community foundation:***

Last year's best project was probably the olive press mentioned above. The CFSS also provided a drill capable of dealing with the area's granite rock. People can borrow this, along with a generator that can be carried by camel, to enlarge and deepen their wells. For many years (until 2010) the rainfall has decreased to almost nothing, and the water level has dropped so far that it is impossible to reach it without equipment which most people cannot afford. This means people cannot water their high mountain gardens, which used to provide food for their families and to sell. People are now using the drill to reach their water, which helps them grow fruit and vegetables, as well as drink. They have also used it to improve unsafe mountain paths, which benefits everyone.

**Community foundation income**

**Types of donors who give to community foundations**

1. Individuals
2. Companies/ Corporations

**Types of funds most frequently supported by donors**

1. Unrestricted funds
2. Donor-advised funds
3. Flow-through or Pass-through funds

**Strategies for engaging and servicing donors**

The culture that the CFSS works in is only just engaging with corporate social responsibility. Thanks to Egyptian trustee contacts the community foundation has, several times, distributed goods in-kind provided by companies or individuals. These include food parcels and drinking water to the poorest families, identified with the help of community leaders and NGOs; children's toys; and bedding and household equipment following a disastrous flash flood. Such programmes are highly regarded in the Islamic culture the CFSS works in, and are seen as an important aspect of philanthropy. They enable the CFSS to build relationships with donors which it hopes to develop in future, when the concept of a community foundation is better understood. In future (with government permission), the community foundation also aims to attract support from international and diaspora donors, as many people recognize the exceptional importance of Sinai, but are unaware of the hardship experienced by its indigenous people.

**Assessing and communicating impact**

As well as making small grants, the Community Foundation for South Sinai is an operating foundation. It tries to target the small number of interventions that it currently has funds for to address the priorities that emerged from its research (undertaken for the Chair's doctoral thesis). The community can therefore see that CFSS does things that really mean something to local people, because they themselves expressed a need for these interventions. What the CFSS has done so far is very limited, but it has been appreciated - partly, too, because this community's general experience of outside intervention is negative. The letter of thanks from the Jebeliya (tribal) sheikhs that the CFSS received was a first, and gave the management and staff a welcome sense that they are doing the right things in the right way. Communication locally is entirely by word of mouth (the Bedouin network ensures that if someone sneezes in St. Katherine at breakfast it will be known about in el Tur by lunchtime), so the community does that job for CFSS. That

said, the Community Foundation for South Sinai has had articles in the regional and national press so that potential donors can read about it; and its website is proving effective, producing as many unsolicited enquiries as its Board can currently deal with. Probably another way to judge the community foundation's impact is that three communities in South Sinai have decided to set up their own community foundations since they heard about the Community Foundation for South Sinai. This is very encouraging (though they will need help).

## **Networks**

The CFSS benefits very much from national and international networks, but does not have much connection to the other community foundations in the region. It will be important, however, to establish a support network for the emerging local community foundations mentioned above.

## **Sources of support for community foundations**

### **Support organizations, infrastructure bodies, etc.**

The moral and practical support of the Community Foundation Network in Britain, the Transatlantic Community Foundation Network, and the Global Fund has been decisive in helping the CFSS establish itself. The support of the Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support (WINGS) is also helpful. The value of this international support network is inestimable since there are so few local reference points (the Gerhardt Center of the American University in Cairo is a critically important one). There are only a handful of community foundations in the Middle East, and only one other in Egypt. They are all so far away, and their circumstances so different, that there has been little regular contact between them and CFSS. In Egypt the government body meant to support NGOs also regulates them: all the officials that the CFSS deals with are friendly and positive, but it is their job to enforce a draconian bureaucracy that deters an active civil society (there are few active NGOs in South Sinai.) This means that most community foundation experience is so far removed from CFSS that general community foundation advice and training is not always relevant to it. However, CFSS would like to have access to peer visits and networking support, information sharing, and research reports. Convenings with newly-developing community foundations in the Middle Eastern region would also be welcome. Funders who understand the community foundation concept and are prepared to fund in the Middle Eastern region could make a real difference.

## **History of the community foundation<sup>1</sup>**

The Community Foundation for South Sinai (*al mo'assessat al ahliya lijanoub sina'*) was registered in South Sinai in November 2006 after some eighteen months of activity to identify a form of governance appropriate and acceptable to the social and political circumstances of Egypt. The current board members are its founder donors and supporters: two British, two Egyptian and one Bedouin. Its Bedouin trustee is a local businessman and community leader. Three of the others are academic biologists who have worked in South Sinai for 20 years. The Chair is a former community foundation CEO who has recently researched the impact of development on Bedouin life and livelihoods. The community foundation sprang from a collective desire to try adapting the community foundation model in order to tackle poverty in

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<sup>1</sup> 2008 Community Foundation Global Status Report. Researched and written by Eleanor W. Sacks. Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support.

South Sinai. CFSS works with local people to improve quality of life through appropriate small-scale development while building on Islamic traditions of charitable giving.

Whilst there are religious traditions and precedents in Egypt with which the community foundation model is compatible, planned giving is virtually unknown. The NGO sector in general is weak, under-resourced and dependent on government approval. That said, CFSS has generally had a warm reception from ministry officials, who support its charitable aims.

CFSS' key constituency is the marginalized Bedouin population of the area. Its most important task to date has been to build trust in the community, becoming a recognized part of the local landscape. CFSS has seen it as important to establish a track record for this unknown model in securing small-scale community benefits before seeking to promote its merits to potential donors in a wider arena.

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