



Dear Reader,

anyone working in development aid knows that helping is a much greater challenge than it often seems. What does really help? May I help in any situation? Is it acceptable to accept a smaller problem to get rid of the greater one?

Value-free help that does not always also communicate the conceptions of the one who helps does not exist. International organisations like the Worldbank or the European Union also promote the ideal of the capitalist free-market economy through their financial aid programmes as something recommendable. If this holds true for the African countries, too, may be doubted.

SEKEM has consciously embarked on the mission of idealistic aid. The initiative already communicates values through its cultural and social programmes and its manifold measures to structure the day. These values aim to represent a synergy of values that are often described as „Western“ or „Eastern“, eg. individuality, love for your fellow human beings or gratitude. The Chamomile Children Project aims to respond to the values of the peoples inhabiting Egypt's countryside as much as possible and it accepts that to get rid of a larger problem, it has to accept a smaller one. We would like to show you this month, how that works and why SEKEM and its partners think that it is the better approach to a global issue.

Your Editorial Team

Culture

Suzanne Mubarak
visits SEKEM

Social

Closure of first
Eurythmy course

Economics

Chamomile
Children Projekt

Suzanne Mubarak Visits SEKEM

First Lady Ägyptens visits the SEKEM Farm, discusses
future of Chamomile Children Project



Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak receives a statue of the goddess Maat from Dr. Abouleish's hands

Sunday 12 Mai 2007 saw a visit that had been coveted for a long time: Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, visited the SEKEM Farm. The visit had been arranged on short notice, circumstances that were felt also by German and Austrian friends of SEKEM as Dr. Abouleish had to cut short his attendance of the annual meetings of these national support associations and return to Cairo. Only at a later time could he join the group again in Graz and continue his journey as planned.

The interruption, however, proved to be a rewarding one, particularly for the important guest, as Dr. Abouleish was now able to personally give Mrs. Mubarak the grand tour of the farm's premises.

The protocol had been arranged only Saturday, one day earlier, and had been worked out in the greatest possible detail. Helmy Abouleish had to enter into protracted negotiations to slip in most of the wishes SEKEM and its employees had concerning the stations of Mrs. Mubarak's visit on the farm. Every

Continued on page 2

step was planned beforehand. Mobile phones had been banned entirely just as cameras of any kind. During the visit, it was virtually impossible to move freely on the farm and only selected employees of SEKEM had received badges authorizing them to stay on the premises.

Nevertheless, the protocol was to be enriched spontaneously, as is usual in Egypt, according to situation and to the detriment of the security personnel and fortune of SEKEM employees.

The programme began in the Mahad, SEKEM's adult training institute, with a musical programme that was followed by an introduction into SEKEM's work and the demonstration of the 15-minute SEKEM film by Dr. Abouleish. The room that had seemed so big once was soon crowded with so many people in it as never before seen: journalists with huge cameras and microphones, additional 11 VIP guests, among them 2 ministers, and 32 members of SEKEM. Following the musical start, the programme led Mrs. Mubarak and Dr. Abouleish to SEKEM's Medical Center, the Vocational Training Center and the SEKEM School. The initial reason for the visit had been the Chamomile Children Project whose participants enthusiastically tried to convince the high guest of their capabilities both in the Vocational Training Center and the School through several artistic presentations.

The convoy of about fifteen cars then continued to the „large circle“. Unfortunately, Mrs. Mubarak could not participate in the regular weekly taking leave of the SEKEM employees for security reasons. Nevertheless, she left her car and listened to the recital of the choir whose about 100 voices chanted a very

well-known Egyptian song. A short trip to the firm Hator, where employees had arranged a display of products concluded the visit.

Anyone who has ever visited SEKEM knows that in Egypt a visit cannot be called complete without a good meal together and as the protocol did not foresee anything else Dr. Abouleish

and Mrs. Mubarak took the chance to sit down and talk about several issues of common concern. Thus, in the round house, Dr. Abouleish was able to bring up SEKEM's future plans and also discuss in more personal atmosphere topics like the educational situation of the Chamomile Children and the future opening of the university.

Konstanze Abouleish

Eurythmy Student Teachers Complete Semester with Public Programme



SEKEM's Eurythmy teachers complete a semester with the first public programme

The first public closure of a professional eurythmy teacher training semester was held on 21 May 2007 in the SEKEM Academy. This was the first completion of a professional training course held publicly for the presently 6 student teachers in training (4 male, 1 female Egyptian and 1 European student).

Part of the musical programme were works by Beethoven, Schumann and Tchaikowsky as well as poetry in Arabic translation by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Rudolf Steiner and the well-renowned Iraqi female poet Nazik Al-Malaika. The flexibility and quickness of the movements of the students was one of the most stunning experiences of the event. All students had obviously developed a profound understanding of the challenging music.

The diversity among the students and their personalities could not be greater and can be seen as an enrichment of the course. The female Egyptian student, for instance, impressed by the way of the physical presence of her movements and power to shape them artistically.

All Egyptian students are already working as teachers in the SEKEM School, supported by professional eurythmy teachers. The personal development all the students have been going through in the course of their training is undeniable for anyone attending their performances. The trainers Christoph Graf and Martina Dinkel have succeeded in working for a „first generation“ of Egyptian eurythmy teachers

DOROTHEA WALTER



Dr. Abouleish demonstrates manual works of the participants of the Chamomile Children Programme

The Chamomile Children in SEKEM: An Alternative Approach to Combatting Child Labour

International Media Discover SEKEM's Child Labour Project

On 12 June, the international day against child labour, the world's media interest focused on one particular issue. Millions of children each day have to work under gruesome circumstances to contribute to the monetary income of their parents and families and to secure their survival. The media reported at length on the problem and its roots, for instance German prime time television and news and several audio programmes. They also presented the Chamomile Children Project of SEKEM as an alternative approach to the age-old problem.

In SEKEM, executives from the training programme are happy about the positive echo to their project. At the same time, they feel challenged to develop new ideas. The project certainly is not the ideal environment for children and can on its own not attempt to resolve the underlying problems that make child labour such a prevalent problem in Egypt. But the project managers are confident that the approach is the right one to help affected children quickly and offer them an alternative and a perspective for their personal development. The project approach allows SEKEM's social workers to reach those children whose parents cannot be convinced of any other measures. This way, a sense of responsibility and self-awareness is strengthened in all participating children.

SEKEM's workers do not only work to create a better life for these children when cameras are on but on every day of the year and they have been for many years. They aim to create alternatives that last. The „Chamomile Children“ do actually work on the SEKEM farm, but in totally different circumstances than regular workers: they are educated by trained teachers who are able to deal with the needs of children. Moreover, they receive schooling for half of every day to allow them to eventually receive an official school certificate. This way, their lives begin to have real perspectives.

At the moment, there are about 80 children starting from age 12 being integra-

