

Rural Pioneers in the Fiume District of Egypt

The "Rural Pioneers" project aims to create local leaders who can effect the improvement of rural life through local effort instead of relying on outside motivation. It is a form of self-help activity.

Around the year 1970, the Family Planning and Demographic Organization in Fiume, with the participation of the Department of Social Affairs, started training a group of 50 rural pioneers, 5 for each of the units into which the district was divided. They were young women between 20 and 35 years of age, selected on the basis of their ability to read and write. Their level of education was at least that of the elementary certificate. For six months they received a training session in general culture and social work, to which were added a 2-week course in family planning and contraceptive methods. Development projects were also included with the aim of teaching housewives certain skills by which they could increase their family income.

The Rural Pioneers project served as a link and a means of cooperation between the rural population and those responsible for health services and educational work

in the district. Among its results was the organization of training sessions for rural physicians in contraceptive methods.

Another result was the granting of rewards in the form of money to those who succeeded in attracting the largest number of students to their classes for teaching illiterates. One woman pioneer, as an example, was rewarded 90 guineas for her successful efforts in this field.

Other activities: Distribution of motorcycles to facilitate the transportation within local units; helping local administrators to market village industrial products; ensuring the participation of 150 university students in improving health conditions in Toubar village by covering water reservoirs, destroying bilharzia worms in water channels, and preparing six video films on health guidance and contraceptive methods.

(From an Arabic monthly publication on "Family & Population", "Youth's Science and Future", Egypt Oct. 1978-no.3)