

Adli Bishay's Presentation **Sunday 10th May 2009**

Friends and Colleagues:

Building the scientific mind is strongly affected by the environment around us, whether natural or human: individuals or community. As an example, my father had a major impact on the way I started thinking .Because of his background and education , his attitudes were a mixture of upper Egyptian, Cairean and American.

He was upper Egyptian when he dealt with my sisters, while he was Gairean when he dealt with me as a young pupil, and he dealt with me as an American when I became a university student in Cairo University and later a post graduate student in Sheffield University.

In Sheffield, my way of thinking was affected by my British professor : Harry Moore of the glass technology department of Sheffield University ; by Morsi Saad Eddin, the head of the Egyptian Education Bureau in London during the fifties , and later by my Sheffield wife who is still managing to affect my way of thinking in Egypt.

During my tenure at the American university in Cairo (AUC), my way of thinking was very much affected by my students as well as by some of my colleagues. It later became affected by President Sadat's call for "Going to the Desert" as a means for dealing with the problem of increasing population and limited resources in Egypt . It was during this period of my life that I founded and directed the AUC Desert Development Center. It was then when my approach to scientific thinking developed to the "Holistic Approach" :covering agriculture, socio-economics, environment , technology and renewable energy.

This theme was further developed as a result of a visit in 1990 by the UNDP resident representative in Egypt (Pedro Mercader) and his lovely assistant (Nadia Makram Ebeid) who later became our Minister of Environment.

During this visit , the holistic approach applied earlier to Desert Development evolved further to Sustainable Development for future generations. I was fortunate to coordinate the work of 20 top Egyptian scholars to propose strategies for sustainable development in Egypt . This was followed by the foundation of our NGO : Friends of Environment and Development Association (FEDA) through the help of UNDP.

Although the overall mission of FEDA was the implementation of strategies for sustainable development in Egypt proposed by our UNDP group, we soon realized that as a newly born NGO we could not handle the whole of Egypt, and accordingly, our Board of Directors decided to limit our work to Fragile Ecosystems, namely: desert areas (e.g. Wadi Natroun), coastal areas (eg: Rosetta), and historic areas (eg: Gamalia/ Historic Cairo).

After working on these three areas with their residents and local governorates, we collected basic information on each area, community problems and aspirations as well as socio – economic needs, We then realized that while these studies needed thousands of dollars, the implementation of renovations and upgrading would need millions of dollars. Accordingly, we decided- as a start- to restrict our implementation steps to the Gamalia District i.e. Historic Cairo.

During our work in the desert environment , we had to content with natural elements of the environment such as soil, water, wind..etc.,. However, when working in Gamalia , we were faced with two difficult human elements. At the onset, it was the number of governmental agencies we had to deal with in order to secure project approval.

It seemed to us that nearly every government agency claimed that they have something to say before FEDA can start implementing its Gamalia Sustainable Development project funded by the Egyptian Swiss Development Fund.

Thank God, however , the governor of Cairo at that time, Dr. Abdel Rehim Shehata, was instrumental in making it possible for us to start implementation.

The second difficult human element was the owners of the workshops who have opposed- at the beginning – the transfer of their workshops, even temporarily, from their original deteriorated buildings (Wekalas). By the use of the stick and carrot approach, we were able to convince them of these temporary transfers and also move their families to much more attractive and healthy housing units.

Accordingly, as the 1st objective of FEDA we have, during the last ten years, managed to upgrade physical conditions of three wekalas through renovation or rebuilding. Your colloquium will be held at one of these buildings; the Kharoub Wekala, which was rebuilt in 2005 as “FEDA’s Center for Community Development” housing all FEDA’s social activities as well as the Computer Center, Health Unit, and the Naguib Mahfouz auditorium. The Noble laureate Naguib Mahfouz was born in Gamalia .

The second objective of FEDA in Gamalia is to enhance the ability of the community to participate in sustainable human and economic development through creating a local NGO (Sustainable Development Association for Gamalia “SDAG”),and forming a number of specialized committees from community members who present their recommendations to the “District Committee” chaired by the head of the District of Gamalia.

The third objective of FEDA is to improve living conditions of the inhabitants with emphasis on Education, Health, Environment, Training...etc. To work towards the sustainable development of the Gamalia community, we had to concentrate on women and children . This is because more than 60% of the Gamalia women are illiterate, which necessitates initiation of a number of illiteracy eradication programs as well as programs for children skipping school before they can read and write properly. In conjunction, we established the women cultural club, the children's club, the handicrafts training center and, the center for training and technological upgrading which currently focuses on repair and maintenance of electronic devices used at homes and in offices. You will be able to see all of these sites, facilities & activities during the coming few days.

With the present increasing population and decreasing world resources; with the impact of global warming on many locations and basic activities, and with recent bird and swine flu...we need more than ever to build the scientific mind of our children, and to use the scientific mind of our professionals and encourage them to work together to secure a home in our universe.

We look forward, ladies gentlemen, to a most productive and enjoyable colloquium for you at FEDA's home in Gamalia.

Thank You