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International Fellowship Awarded to Marwa El Daly

Fellowship Report by Marwa El Daly



It was a breath-taking experience to find myself in the middle of Sleepy Hollow, New York, in the old cottage house of the Rockefeller Family that has been turned into a beautiful library gathering valuable archival materials, not only that of the Rockefeller's but also of other philanthropic organizations. The huge paintings of the family members, the Chagall originals on the walls, the peaceful sunny terrace and the researchers in their white dresses and quiet smiles add a certain flavor to the research experience, which by far, is a unique one. I was fortunate enough to have met Dr. Darwin Stapleton, Executive Director Emeritus of the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), and the current President, Dr. Jack Meyers, and both have made my experience a memorable one. I was warmly received

by Dr. Ken Rose, Assistant Director, and a number of wonderful researchers putting all kinds of relevant materials at my disposal and sharing food and drinks with me in the breaks.

It was absolutely remarkable to view the original documents behind the creation of the Rockefeller Foundation and its outreach programs in different parts of the world. The deeds of trust set by early founders, like John Rockefeller and other endowers of his family resembled largely the deeds of waqf (endowment) builders in the Arab Region; however, the set up of the Board of Trustees was a development that lacked in my part of the world, and one that has to a great extent preserved the foundations in the West and led to their growth. In the Arab World, a person had to write a waqf or endowment deed and register it officially by appointing a nazzir or a comptroller. This one-man business led to a lot of corruption and gave governments over the course of history the excuse, in the name of ending corruption, to step in by confiscating the properties or the income-generating businesses endowed until completely nationalized and managed by the Minister of Endowment under the comptrollership of the Minister in the 1950s. The Minister changed deeds, appointed government employees to manage civic endowments and like most government-run businesses in Egypt and in this region, running philanthropic endowed foundations failed.

Searching through boxes containing piles of archival materials of philanthropic organizations, those of the Cleveland Foundation were of special interest to my research topic, which is: Exploring models of Community Foundations (governance, endowment buildings, investment, grant-making, legal framework) in the Western context to provide

learning and possible adaptation to the Arab World with a focus on Egypt. As the concept of community foundation is new in Egypt, there is no concrete scholarly information about the existence of community foundations in their functional sense. For the past three years, I have done extensive scientific research on philanthropy and produced a study that is the first of its kind in Egypt and the Middle East with a representative sample of the Egyptian population and the non-profit sector. One of the strongest findings is the existence of a forgotten culture of institutionalized philanthropy that manifested in civic endowments referred to as waqfs (30 percent of the Egyptians did not know what waqf was and the majority confused it with government property) and the existence of a current philanthropic tendency to give to people inhabiting the same geographical area (more than 70 percent) or those related by kin. Hence, there is a promising potential of the success of the community foundation as a model if properly adapted to the Egyptian culture; especially in a time where ad-hoc, unorganized, charitable giving dominates the culture of giving leading to a waste of local resources with no valuable input to developmental challenges.

In the RAC, there was a section containing books, that were extremely helpful to me and that helped orient me to which archival material would be of special relevance. The archives on the Cleveland Foundation and what its inspiring founder, Goff, phrased arguing for the Living Trust against the Dead Hand concept: "How fine it would be if a man about to make a will could go to a permanently enduring organization - an artificial immortal being.. and say: here is a large sum of money that I shall presently no longer need. I want to leave it to be used for the good of the community but I have no way of knowing what will be the greatest need of the community 50 years from now, or even 10 years from



now. Therefore, I place it in your hands, because you will be here, you and your successors, throughout the years, to determine what should be done with this sum to make it most useful for people of each succeeding generation2 (p.27)". Following this mindset, there was a lot of learning referencing the techniques used to develop a Community Trust plan and others. To our concern, we have established in Maadi, a suburb of Cairo, the first model of a Community Foundation in Egypt: the Maadi Community Foundation / Waqfeya. Like Cleveland, it is a revolutionizing idea, because it is registered as a Community Waqfeya, claiming life to this civic endowment independent from the Ministry of Awqaf for the first time in modern Egyptian history.

The time in New York allowed me to visit the New York Community Trust, the Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society at the City University of New York, the Foundation Center, as well as other philanthropic organizations using diverse techniques for investments and fund management. These all provided me with rich on-the-ground materials that are vital to my work, especially the practical side of it. I also established relationships with research firms in the United States and we will be undergoing a very promising research project that involves the US, UK, Turkey, South Africa and Egypt. I hope by the coming ISTR conference I have good results to disclose at the 2010 International Conference!

Last but not least, I must say that the last Barcelona conference was a great success. The diversity of the participants, the quality of a large quantity of Third Sector researchers was remarkable. I was very fortunate to be part of this significant scholarly gathering and was delighted to present in the workshop of Civic Engagement in the Mediterranean, which was also a good orientation to me on the work done in Italy by Guliana Gemelli and the endeavors of the Bertelsmann Stiftung and their efforts in encouraging community foundations. Also my presentation within the workshop organized by Trust Africa on African Philanthropy was of great input to my work and to our collective publication on African Philanthropy. Finally, I participated in a panel on Community Foundations and the global challenges they face. I was also fortunate to catch up with Rupert Strachwitz, Director of the Maecenata Institute, to which I am a current fellow finishing up my PhD Thesis at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, on Philanthropy and Community Foundations.

Short Biography of Author

Marwa el Daly is the lead researcher of the first national study on philanthropy in Egypt. She holds a Master Degree in Professional Development on institutionalized private philanthropy from the American University in Cairo and is currently a PhD student at Humboldt University, Berlin, with a Thesis on philanthropy, waqf (traditional endowed structure) and community foundations. El Daly is also a former fellow to the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society at the City University of New York and an Ashoka fellow selected in 2007 as a social entrepreneur from the Arab region. Based on, and in continuation to the findings of this study, El Daly recently founded and is the current Chairperson of a pioneering model of a community foundation in Egypt adapting principles and structure of a waqf in an attempt to revive the waqf institution embodied in Waqfeyat al Maadi al Ahleya – Community Foundation registered early 2007.

2. Diana Tittle. Rebuilding Cleaveland. The Cleaveland Foundation and its Evolving Urban Strategy. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data: 1992