



## El Minya youth join “Avian Influenza-free Village” campaign

**Youth volunteers from the Egyptian Scout Federation are teaming up as community volunteers to help neighborhoods protect themselves from Avian Influenza.**



Heba Osman (center), a volunteer from the scouts, won the trust of community members. “We don’t want you to kill your birds. We want to help you keep them safe.”



Sporting events, drew youth and other community members together, giving AI campaign organizers a chance to reinforce messages on AI.



Households in Saf El Sharqeya are increasingly enclosing their birds, to protect an important source of income and food for their families, and their own health.

**Saft El Sharqeya Village, El Minya.** Community leaders from the villages of Saft El Sharqeya and Saft Al Khamar gathered at the local youth center on November 1, 2007 to celebrate the successes of a group of youth volunteers who are helping to protect their communities from Avian Influenza (AI). The event was part of the “Avian Influenza-free Village” Initiative, a program of the USAID-supported Communication for Healthy Living (CHL) project which mobilizes youth to serve as key change agents to promote safe poultry-rearing practices among entire communities.

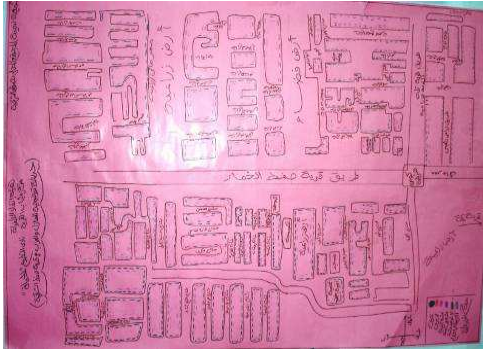
The AI-free village initiative is focused on mobilizing the community to work systematically to protect their village from AI. A key component of the initiative is the involvement of the Egyptian Scout Federation. In July, scouts and their leaders joined CDA volunteers and outreach workers for trainings in safe practices for protecting birds and humans against Avian Influenza as well as communication and community mapping skills. Officials from the Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Information, and Youth Directorate, veterinarians from the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, and representatives of the Animal Resource Development Cooperative are participating at all levels of the initiative. In August, 2-4 person units, comprising a mix of scouts, Raedat Riffayet, and CDA volunteers, began conducting a comprehensive door-to-door survey of all households in the two villages to determine where poultry was being kept and under what conditions.

“At first, it was very difficult to approach the women in their homes,” said Heba Osman, a volunteer scout from Minya City. “They didn’t know me, so they felt threatened and wouldn’t cooperate. But step by step, with the support of the Raeda Refeya, we gained their trust. Now they invite us to see the changes they’ve made in their homes and in their practices with poultry. They invite us to meet their friends and family to discuss Avian Influenza. They even invite us to attend weddings and family celebrations!”

The villages are similar to other villages throughout rural Egypt in that many ducks and chickens are raised by individual householders as a source of food and income. The traditional practices of letting the birds roam in the streets and throughout the house in proximity to family members pose a high risk for transmission of AI. Typically,



# USAID | EGYPT



*The community mapping process shows the safe poultry status of households. It serves as an important tool for the AI campaign volunteers as well as for outbreak crews in case of an incident of infection.*



*Umm Anton was proud of her safe household practices for raising poultry. "I did it to protect my family," she said gesturing at her daughter (bottom left.)*

women are the poultry breeders, as it is often the only work available to them in the village. As children frequently accompany their mothers, unsafe practices can put children at further risk.

The CDA cooperated with the youth center to organize community activities and contests to further spread the word about AI and gain momentum for the changes that needed to be made to make the community safe, culminating in the November 1<sup>st</sup> sporting event with 24 soccer teams. As the surveying period came to a close, an additional fifteen youth from the community had joined in the effort as volunteers on the AI survey squads. The youth center has allocated a column in their monthly newsletter to AI messages and the progress of the campaign. The youth volunteers also act as neighborhood AI watch patrols, tracking down the

owners of free-ranging birds in the streets and market places, and discussing safe AI practices with them. Where as before the campaign, free-roaming birds in the village were the norm, these days, there is not a chicken in sight.

In Saft El Sharqeya, nine AI squads visited all 2137 homes in the village, simultaneously collecting data on household poultry raising and conducting informational sessions with the family members present, usually women and children. The survey revealed that 1836 families—86%-- in Saft E Sharkeya kept poultry, but only 703 of those were keeping the poultry in an enclosed area. An initial analysis of the survey also showed that while cooking procedures are generally safe, most respondents were not as knowledgeable about the risks associated with touching the birds. Volunteers are already concentrating messages covering hygiene, handwashing, and personal protective equipment.

The pilot AI-free village campaign is entering phase two shortly, with plans to build 100% compliance with a checklist of safe practices. The results of the survey will be shared with community members to help establish transparency and build credibility. The CDA along with the youth volunteers are mobilizing community resources

to support households to make the required changes. Once households establish a safe home, they will be promoted as role models for other households in similar circumstances.

Umm Anton is one of the women visited by the youth AI squad. She learned about safe AI practices from participating in a CDA-led discussion group for women as part of CHL's package of community family health interventions, which also include discussion groups for men. "I was happy to see them, and invited them to take a look around. I let them take pictures and everything, because I knew my household and birds were protected from AI. For me, it was easy to decide to protect my family."