



The Bibliotheca Alexandrina organizes a debate on “Cultural Change in the Egyptian Countryside”

22 March, 2015 – in collaboration with the European Union, and within the framework of the program *Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt*, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) has organized a cultural debate yesterday, the 22nd of March, under the theme of “Cultural Change in the Egyptian Countryside”. The event was implemented under the theme of Cultural Debates; one of the major activities fostered by the program *Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt*, and was hosted by the Sadat Association for Development and Social Welfare in Monofeya. The debate was attended by a number of intellectuals, experts and community leaders.

The debate was launched by Mr. Mohamed Anwar Al-Sadat; the Chairman of the Association, who emphasized the importance of linking culture to development. He also emphasized the importance of studying the changes that have occurred within the Egyptian countryside, noting that many of them have negative effects. Furthermore, Mr. Sadat stressed the importance of involving the community in the cultural development plans.

The point was further explored by Dr. Sameh Fawzy, the Director of the BA Center for Development Studies, who pointed out that the economic and social changes that swept the Egyptian countryside led to changes in the generic culture, particularly within the pattern of behavior, way of thinking, social relationships and way of life adopted by the society. Dr. Fawzy also added that development is inseparable from culture. He emphasized the significance of the meeting as being one of the cultural debates, organized by the BA in collaboration with the European Union, which mainly aims to recognize cultural institutions and centers in Egypt; and to promote cultural diversity and creativity within the Egyptian society.

Participants also argued that the decline in the productive capacity of the countryside and emigration of the populace either to work in the cities or abroad in Arab or European countries led to drastic changes in the Egyptian countryside. These changes manifested



themselves in the change in lifestyle, excessive materialism, social imbalance, and the emphasis on evaluating social relationships from a materialistic perspective; which is quite contradictory to the inherited culture and traditions of the Egyptian countryside.

Participants also pointed out that the absence of cultural justice in Egyptian society and excessive focus on the cities while neglecting villages and small hamlets, as well as the absence of cultural activities, led to many negative phenomena. The most notable of these phenomena are perhaps, the lack of awareness, extremism and the inability to think critically. Extreme dependence on modern technology, whether through satellite channels on televisions or through the internet also affected social relationships and productivity.

Participants also called for enhancing the cultural capital of the countryside. They argued that this can be done by expanding cultural centers and allocating budgets which can help them in performing their role and in considering the Egyptian countryside from a new perspective which links the cultural development with economic and social development.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina has also provided several of its prominent publications to the Sadat Association as a contribution to the establishment of a public library that seeks to promote culture and enlightenment in local communities.

