

Enas Al-Shafie Oral History Content Summary

Track 1 [duration: 1:25:07] [Session one: 6 March 2013]

[00:00] Enas Al-Shafie [ES] Born Cairo, Egypt, second of three daughters. Describes father's wish for daughters, ES never feeling discrimination as girl. Describes love of reading from father narrations as child, about history of Egypt, literature. Describes admiration for Tawfiq El-Hakim, read age 12, English literature classics, 'Alghaz', 'Problematic Stories'. Reading of Ihsan Abd al-Quddus prohibited by father. Describes boisterous atmosphere at home with sporty sisters.

[05:31] Exposed to cultural expectations regarding male/female roles, at university, attitude that boys are better. Discusses impact of this, witnessed later at work in Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt, perception of being better denoting more rights, right to practice discrimination. Describes dislike of studying at school, favourite subjects. Mentions father Arabic teacher.

[10:04] Describes feelings for mother, influence of Tawfiq Al-Hakim, influence of ES' communist father, quote from grandfather that, only education differentiates people, no hierarchy between you and farmer's son. Describes knowing maternal grandparents. Story about grandmother's wisdom that 'fear will damage your life'. Describes grandfather discriminating against boys. Describes growing up with cousins of same age, agreement to play boys' and girls' games equally.

[16:45] Discusses religion as private, lack of emphasis at school, local perception that ES Christian. Observes that identity through religion phenomenon of late 1990s. Raised to believe that no difference between Muslims and Christians, father teaching Arabic prop bono in local church. Story about no consciousness of own religious identity at primary school and leaving Islamic class with Christians. Mentions family celebrations of Eid, Ramadan, Eid Al-Adha.

[20:33] Describes parents' meeting and courtship. Describes father's five-year incarceration in solitary confinement as political prisoner age 19. Story about working in data collection relating to Women's Movement, at Forum for Women In Development (FWID), first encounter with Farida Al-Naqash, talked about by father. Mentions Rageh Al-Naqash.

[24:23] Describes father's account of imprisonment, experience at Al-Wahat, desert oasis, Egypt. Describes extremity of paternal grandparents' individual responses, attributing father's respect for women to his mother's action. Describes father's respect for people with principles irrespective of political beliefs. Describes pride at father's political history. Brief description of paternal grandparents' courtship.

[29:17] Describes ambitions as growing up, reading about Rifa'a al-Tahtawi at secondary school and wish to study German at Al-Asun language school. Mentions Goethe Institute. Study of Documentation Science, Cairo, Egypt. Describes university years as wonderful. Story from primary school age 5, tradition of clever students placed in front row, ES working with father at dawn to make it from back row to front, ES' ensuing philosophy to enable those with no opportunities to have choices.

[36:10] Describes first job working in school father worked in, as difficult time, experience of discrimination for being Egyptian, and for being Muslim. Describes study for master's degree in Records Management, introduction to FWID by professor, who later became first Minister of Culture, Egypt. Describes receiving master's a few days before 2011 revolution. Describes background interest in Women's Movement, reading Nowelli Al Sa'dawi, inner meaning of Tawfiq El Hakim's writing. Thesis on Record Management of Non-Governmental Women's Organizations.

[41:38] Describes first assignment at Women's Union in Tagam'o Progressive Party. Describes climate of Women's Movement in Egypt, beginning of formalizing of women's groups, 1980s, impact of United Nations Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994, FWID's role in supporting new organisations, creating collaborations.

[46:34] Describes membership, youth, elderly, diversity of religions, fields, politics from communist to Nasserite, challenges of working with 24 diverse organisations. Describes positive response from society.

[49:30] Describes obstacles, mainly with government and registration, identifying between civil firm, non-governmental organisation (NGO) regarded as union, no more than one women's union allowed in each governorate. Describes NGO law preventing political engagement. Describes first experience of Upper Egypt, 2000 for launch of Egyptian campaign in support of World March Against Poverty and Violence Against Women, 'Roses and Bread' slogan. Discusses poverty causing most suffering to women.

[55:19] Describes change of strategy from awareness raising, to empowerment for change. Realisation that men must be involved in movement, women's issues social, benefits to whole society. Describes attendance of men in workshops on social justice, loans, wider issues than specific women's rights. Describes rewards of seeing change in male attitude, especially among younger men.

[59:36] Gives example of NGOs' influence on women's rights, on campaign, The Right of Women To Citizenship. Mentions Lina Abou Habib, Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD-A). Describes varied initiatives. Comments that never about one organization, change always through collaboration.

[1:01:58] Describes first parallel shadow report on implementation of United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at Egyptian level, 2000. Describes sustained effort by coalition CEDAW Egypt, from grass roots level over four years, law changed 2004. Describes common perception that 'First Lady' law, government's embarrassment in front of United Nations (UN) Committee, and again 2010. Describes education drive through NGOs, to raise awareness among grass roots women, labourers, home workers.

[1:06:00] Describes meeting husband, marriage, children. Describes mother's support to enable ES work during motherhood. Describes culture of work among women on both sides of family. Describes children raised with sister's children, now living as one family since sister's death.

[1:14:11] Expresses frustration for friends who cannot work. Describes phenomenon of late marriage among women in Egypt, impacting right to motherhood. Describes Islamic attitude that can become second or third wife, economic climate preventing young people from even first marriages. Expresses anger at Agriculture Development Bank offering loans for second and third marriage, compromising women. Remarks that against a woman's dignity to know and accept that your husband has another wife.

[1:20:30] Reflects on changes in women's issues over 10-year period of work, marked increase in issues. Discusses damage to understanding of Islam, discrimination against women. Describes main two laws presented to Parliament since 2011 revolution, lowering minimum age of marriage, and allowing men from abroad to marry young girls.

Track 2 [duration: 14:03] [Session two: 7 March 2013]

[00:00] Describes current challenges, common misconception that gains in Egyptian society linked to Hosni Mubarak regime, therefore must be eradicated. Example of impact on Family Law. Government campaign to nurture belief that international conventions like CEDAW against Shari'a. Describes politicisation of much loved Koran Radio as propaganda tool.

[05:03] Expresses hopes regarding country's current constitution, organisational focus on strengthening relations with society, the poor in marginalised areas where manipulated by Islamic powers. Discusses importance of giving women knowledge, then freedom to choose, Islamic powers' focus on obedience. Organisational focus on empowerment for citizenship, people power, working with local councils.

[10:05] Remarks that laws in Egypt against participation. Discusses country's economic crisis, trend of sovereign market, loan of national heritage.

Track 3 [duration: 46:11] [Session two: 7 March 2013]

[00:00] Describes Egyptian government's withdrawal of scheme. Describes increase in number of NGOs in two years since revolution. Explains choice to work with secular organisations only. Describes threat to civil society organisations. Describes work of Feminist Coalition of 15 organizations, organizing demonstrations regarding constitution, since revolution. Describes main demands regarding constitution.

[05:10] Describes implementation of new strategies, direct discussions with youth, to formulate their ideas. Remarks that political events led to unexpected realisation by people that mixing religion and policy not beneficial.

[07:21] Reflects on factors contributing to organisational success, including working with men and women, importance of participatory approach. Sees power of FWID as pursuit of gaps to fill, where others not working. Describes case of 2004 recommended reform programs from United States of America (USA), European Union (EU), Mediterranean, FWID working in 24 of country's 28 governorates to establish Egyptian people's ideas for reform, collected in 'Initiative for the Reform of

Women's Issues in Egypt'. Discusses importance of unity, being part of wider community, understanding that not isolated. Mentions The Group of Eight (G8).

[14:21] Discusses male membership, FWID's role in making them understand substance of power relations. Discusses importance of consistency of application, again and again. Describes strict principles and conditions regarding funding. Mentions United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Gives example of contract upholding sanctions against Iraq, Syria. Describes positive experience of working with Women's Learning Partnership (WLP).

[19:08] Describes encounter with WLP, shared vision. Discusses WLP's encouragement to work with young people, describing as challenging group. Praises WLP material. Describes international exposure and ideas through WLP partners. Mentions Kazakhstan, Malaysia. Discusses methodology of participation and leadership among women, importance of role, discovering popular leaders in society. Mentions Caritas Internationalis. Discusses promotion of individuality and unique qualities among leaders.

[28:55] Discusses work involved in being a movement, new focus on people's movement, not elitist activist movement. Discusses youth working with, surprise at knowledge though less read than previous generations. Describes working through drawing, examples of strong responses.

[36:48] Describes tiring nature of working in Lower Egypt, where women do not have right to work, leaving home only upon marriage or death. Describes women of North Sinai living in danger.

[38:40] Reflects on proudest achievements, ability to change people's thinking and behaviour. Example of working with boys in Ismailia, Egypt.