United in One Body, One Lord, One Faith

Coptic Orphans

2017 Annual Report
Dear Friends and Supporters of Coptic Orphans,

I would like to share with you a special story that, to me, exemplifies the ever-present hand of God, and how He guides our children, our staff, and our sponsors.

A young woman was recently considering sponsoring a child from the Not Alone program. She was in the process of researching Coptic Orphans, its work and the Not Alone program, when her mother called to tell her about a strange dream she had the night before. In the dream, the mother was standing out on her balcony and saw a young man in her garden, bent over, tending to her flowers. She was surprised because she didn’t have a gardener. Suddenly, the young man stood up and turned towards her and she recognized his face. He was one of the 21 Coptic men who were martyred by ISIS on that Libyan beach. He handed her a rose from the garden, smiled a smile of reassurance, and returned to work. The mother had no idea why she would dream of this young martyr, and her daughter was just as baffled. The next day, when the young woman called the Coptic Orphans office to proceed with the sponsorship, she was asked if she wanted to sponsor one of the children of the martyrs that Coptic Orphans was now supporting. The young woman remembered her mother’s dream and quickly said yes. To her amazement, she soon discovered that the little girl she was assigned to sponsor was indeed the child of one of the 21 Coptic martyrs. The woman was stunned and humbled having now understood that the rose in the dream was his daughter, given to her to care for and love. She magnified God for the blessing.

I remember the goosebumps and the gratitude I felt when I heard this story from the young woman. This dream that God sent was not just a sign, but a call from the martyrs to carry their faith forward through their children. I’m so humbled by the fact that God has called on Coptic Orphans to be a part of the lives of the children of the martyrs through our Not Alone program. As of today, Coptic Orphans is supporting 47 children of the martyrs in 19 different families. What a blessing to us!

2017 was a year of continued blessings for the rest of our participants as well. Nearly 30% of our Not Alone program participants scored over 85% on their Thanaweya Amma (high school) final exams, while 108 of them earned scholarships to attend the finest public and private universities in Egypt. Following last year’s launch of the Future Leaders Scholarship, we awarded 34 outstanding students the scholarship in 2017.

This year also saw the launch of the Valuable Girl Project, our Big sister/ Little sister mentorship program, across three governorates in Egypt. Over 1,500 young female participants have enrolled in this community-shaping initiative that aims to strengthen Egypt by empowering its girls and young women. Speaking of strong women, Round III of the B’edaya microfinance initiative honored 42 pioneering widows in celebrations across Egypt where they were awarded micro-loans to continue building their small businesses as well as their independence.

I am truly overwhelmed by God’s grace as I see it shining through our children and mothers, through you, our partner stewards in this great service, and through the presence of the martyrs. I thank God for every child we’ve been blessed to serve and every bond of love formed through the work of Coptic Orphans.

One Body in Christ,

Founder & Executive Director

Words of Gratitude

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About Coptic Orphans

When most people think of “orphans,” they think of children in orphanages who have no family members at all. In fact, many orphanages in Egypt are filled with children who have living family members, only because their widowed mothers cannot afford to feed them. This is an injustice. Coptic Orphans is a unique award-winning international Christian development organization that unlocks the God-given potential of the most vulnerable children in Egypt through the power of education. Coptic Orphans works through grassroots partners and volunteer networks to strengthen local communities for sustainable impact. By connecting the Coptic Diaspora with Egypt, we leverage professional expertise and global resources for the benefit of the homeland. Since 1988, Coptic Orphans has reached over 45,000 children throughout Egypt and thousands of Coptic communities globally.

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Top 10 Highlights of 2017

1. **22** families and **53** children of martyred fathers are enrolled in the **Not Alone** program to receive support, counseling, and a secure educational future despite their loss.

2. **856** new children are sponsored in 2017, providing them with additional support, care, and empowerment that only a loving relationship with a sponsor offers.

3. **108** Not Alone program participants earn scholarships to help them qualify for and attend public and private universities in Egypt, including the American University in Cairo and the British University in Egypt.

4. **235** Not Alone program participants graduate from universities equipped with advanced skills and academic degrees as they enter the workforce.

5. **122** children welcome their sponsors, who have traveled from the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and the Gulf region, for a personal visit at their home in Egypt.

6. A record number of **3,753** mothers learn about volunteerism and how to take care of themselves and others by attending our awareness and skills workshops.

7. Nearly **1,500** local girls and young women enroll as Big Sisters and Little Sisters in the new phase of the Valuable Girl Project educational mentorship program.

8. Coptic Orphans awards the Future Leaders Scholarship to **34** exceptional Thanaweya Amma graduates who demonstrate advanced academic skills, leadership potential, and a service mindset.

9. In a special meeting at St. Mark’s Cathedral, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II blesses our Serve to Learn volunteers who traveled to Egypt to serve our Not Alone children for three weeks of intense transformation.

10. **243,500** EGP in microloans were awarded to 42 Bedaya mothers across Egypt as they launched the second phase of their local microfinance projects.

Coptic Orphans cares deeply for the privacy and dignity of the children and mothers we serve. To protect our participants, all names and images in this report have been changed unless informed consent was given.
While Coptic Orphans recognizes that basic needs such as food, housing, and education are critical and should be provided to ensure the livelihood of any child, we also recognize that, at times, these are not enough. Having faced the trauma of losing a parent and endured the emotional and mental strain of living in poverty, fatherless children need more than just food in their bellies in order to heal, overcome, and grow into strong, whole, and fulfilled individuals.

Over the years, the Not Alone program has grown and established itself as a program that does not focus on quick fixes, but rather aims to do the heavy-lifting of transformational development, seeking positive change in the whole of a child’s life, materially, socially, and spiritually. The multi-layered approach of the Not Alone program is structured to fulfill the five levels of need: physiological, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Through training and the invaluable support of the church, Not Alone Volunteer Representatives (Reps) are invested in the long-term work of healing trauma, offering support, nurturing relationships, raising the family’s awareness of their skills and abilities, and providing opportunities for participants to achieve success. This is why we ensure that our Not Alone Reps understand that it may take years of serving a child and his family before they’re able to shed the often invisible scars of poverty that affect a child’s self-image.

Through quarterly specialized training, staff guidance, workshops in development and child psychology, our Not Alone Reps are equipped to serve participant children, guiding them with love and mentorship. This is never as apparent as in the story of Demiana.

After the death of their father, a family of five sisters and a brother found themselves in a village with no schools, and the only source of private tutoring being offered was at the local mosque. This difficult situation

2017 Highlights of Not Alone’s Impact:

932 new participants joined the Not Alone program.

685 participants marked educational milestones: 454 graduated from 12th grade, 41 graduated with an associate degree, and 235 graduated from university.

5 participants were selected to receive the acclaimed LOTUS scholarship awarded to only 70 students in all of Egypt.

10 participants won scholarships to government universities.

34 participants were awarded the Future Leaders Scholarship based on their academic achievement, leadership, and volunteerism.

17 participants received iNPower scholarships, our “in-house” grants aimed at allowing Not Alone’s highest academic achievers to attend higher-tier universities including Ain Shams, Cairo University, and Alexandria University.

“God bless all of you at Coptic Orphans for your tireless efforts with these children of God. It’s these amazing children, these fighters who succeed through the toughest of circumstances who are heroes. It’s a constant reminder to us to give thanks for so many things we take for granted.”

- Mark, Sydney AUS.
was made even worse after a local Christian couple was killed and tensions rose between the Christians and Muslims in the community effectively banning Christian children from any opportunity to receive an education. Along came the Not Alone program and the Rep inspired them to pursue their education along with providing the necessities for them to do so. Thanks to your support of the program, the siblings were able to find tutoring outside the village. In fact, the Rep’s insistence on finding tutors and resources for the family had the most lasting impact on each of the children.

While all of them excelled, some reaching as far as medical school, one daughter in particular had to overcome severe anxiety and low self-esteem borne out of the loss of her father. Demiana was intensely shy, vulnerable to bouts of doubt and fear, often suffering from panic attacks. Although she entered the program in the sixth grade, she was still illiterate. Unlike her brother and sisters, she needed special attention, beyond the academic. Thankfully, her Rep was dedicated not only to her education, but to her overall well-being, health, and personal improvement. Over years of close follow-up, dedicated mentorship from her Rep, and exposure to developmental workshops and activities, Demiana overcame each hurdle and was able to score 93% on her Thanaweya Amma (final High School examinations). She was accepted to the College of Education in Minya. More impressive than Demiana’s or her sibling’s academic success is Demiana’s overall emotional, mental, and spiritual improvements. She went from a scared little girl who at a certain point had to be on IV fluids while studying for her exams due to extreme anxiety on her system to being a strong, open, and accomplished daughter, student, and church servant. This reflects the depth of the Not Alone program’s holistic approach to the transformational development of children, rather than the traditionally strict focus on test scores.

By God’s grace, and your firm dedication and support of our children, stories like Demiana’s will continue to be possible. Through your prayers, God will continue to bless the small cups of cold water we offer and turn them into transformative fountains for His children.

In the parable of the talents, Christ teaches us to invest what the Lord entrusted in our care for a profitable return. Imagine if one of the servants in that parable tried to invest their one talent, but was turned away because they could not afford to pay an investment fee. Imagine a brilliant student, with near-perfect test scores and dreams of becoming a research pharmacist or U.N. ambassador who cannot pursue a college education because they just can’t afford it. It’s a crushing injustice that many youths in Egypt face today. Unwilling to burden their struggling families, many gifted youths are forced to bury their talent, turning away from degrees and careers that could change the trajectory of their lives and the future of their communities, to settle for a high school diploma or technical school.

The Future Leaders Scholarship is a competitive scholarship awarded to exceptional Thanaweya Amma (High School) graduates in the Not Alone program who demonstrate advanced academic skills, leadership potential, and a service-driven mindset. It provides the most promising participants with the “extra push” they need to enable them to reach higher, pursue their academic goals, and deepen their commitment for giving back. The scholarship was established in 2016 and was awarded to 15 students that inaugural year. Through the grace of God and your continued support and prayers, the number of recipients for 2017 more than doubled to 34 brilliant students. As faithful servants delivering back to God the investment of their talents, most of the scholarship recipients scored Excellent or Very Good on their final exams of their first academic year. But this would not have been possible without you, our generous donors, who are also servants in this story, investing the talents and blessings you’ve been given by investing in our children, making the Future Leaders Scholarship possible, and opening the paths of opportunity and success for the most deserving. May God continue to bless our brilliant children with talents and show us how to invest our own gifts until the day we hear “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Celebrating the Future Leaders

His Grace Bishop Estafanous with the 2017 Future Leaders Scholarship Recipients
"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:1-6

He had left Egypt for Libya with his young wife and found work as a church guard in Misrata, Libya. The couple lived a simple life, perched on the hope of a new beginning. They were a long way from their families in Kafr El Dawar, but were determined to make a life for themselves and their baby that was on the way. As long as they stayed close to the church, it didn’t matter what country they were in, or how much he was paid as a guard; the job was a blessing.

Then one day a group of men affiliated with ISIS attacked the church. He tried to stop them, so they slaughtered him in front of his wife and ransacked the church. His wife was 23 years old at the time and returned to Egypt while still pregnant with their daughter. Coming home, the young widow had problems with her husband’s family who wanted to take her daughter from her. Her own family wanted her to get remarried right away to avoid rumors and bad gossip. Wishing to honor her martyred husband and raise her daughter, but having no financial means to do so, the young mother was brought to the Not Alone program by her local priest. Through the program, the Rep was able to provide the emotional as well as the financial support. The Rep guided the young widow through her grief, giving her support and time to heal. Instead of the scheduled one visit per month, the Rep visited the family four times per month for the first year, despite the long travel distance between Kafr El Dawar in Beheira where the family lived, and Abees, Alexandria where the Rep lived. The Rep counted it as a blessing to walk into the home of a faithful martyr and serve his wife and daughter. It was a blessing.
Indeed, Coptic Orphans has been blessed with the opportunity to serve the families of our modern Coptic martyrs. With every attack, we must remember that those who give their lives to protect our faith are owed not only our gratitude, but our support for their families. If we are all one body in Christ, then when this young widow lost her husband, we all lost a husband. When that unborn child lost her father, we all lost our father. This young man, when he saw those coming to attack his church could have stood to the side, praying that God step in and intercede. Instead, he offered himself as a sacrifice to protect others. His actions were a living act of worship, communion with the Master he serves. In that same vein, we at Coptic Orphans understand that standing by and praying for the families and children of the martyrs is one thing, but offering care, emotional and financial, is a living prayer, a communion and unity with the martyrs and our Lord.

Through the program, our Rep enrolled the mother in a nursing course and helped with the costs until the young widow finished the course and was able to work in a clinic to help herself and her daughter. The Rep also helped the mother in caring for her young daughter's health, which had deteriorated from the stress and trauma the family faced. The young girl's health improved compared to her weak condition when she first joined the program when she was only one and a half years old.

Yet not only did the program offer immediate assistance for the young widow to care for her child and live with dignity, but the Rep also encouraged her to share her experience, to commune with others, to keep the light of her husband shining. She attended the Giving Back to Your Community workshop for Not Alone mothers in March 2017. Affected and inspired by the workshop, she was given a role to deliver a quick session about first aid to the other mothers.

We are all called to do the work of God. We must be awake to the suffering of our brothers and sisters, and aware of the ways in which we can help them. Our prayers are needed, but they can ring hollow if not coupled with our deeds to make them a living prayer, one that bears fruit. This is the goal of Coptic Orphans: to reach out to children in need with everything we can offer, whether they are the children of martyrs or fathers taken too early.

On the days of their departure, not a single martyr woke up thinking, “Today is the day I sacrifice my life for God.” Yet when the moment came, they did not hesitate to defend our faith with their lives. While they stole a place in heaven in one leap, our path to eternity is a series of stepping stones; daily good deeds anchored by faith. If our martyred brothers and sisters sacrificed their lives on an invisible altar, we believe that we must offer our time, resources, and care on the visible altar of God’s vulnerable children and widows.

By the grace of God and your abundant giving, Coptic Orphans is able to extend its stewardship to the children of the martyrs thereby extending the one living Body of Christ. Thank you for supporting our efforts to carry on the work of the martyrs. And a special thanks to those of you who reached out specifically to sponsor the children of the martyrs. Let us pray to our modern martyrs whose blood spilled in our churches and streets that they may show us how to give abundantly, bearing one another in love, for the ultimate treasure in heaven. May the martyrs look down on us with prayers as we continue in living communion with them. It is a true blessing.

### Caring for the Children of the Martyrs

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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martyrs of sectarian violence and lone attacks</td>
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Empowering Women & Girls

B’edaya Celebrates Fearless Entrepreneurs

Recently, it seems like a women’s movement is taking over the world to empower women, safeguard their rights, augment their voices, and give them more chances to succeed. But while some women march for their rights or demand equal pay, others exist beyond the reach of this movement. Despite the changing times, women living in rural villages in Egypt belong to a generation and a culture that continues to value them as property, something to be owned, protected, and locked away by their male keeper. And when a woman is widowed, she loses her protection, her livelihood, even her right to provide for her family as she faces increased scrutiny and control from her community.

Yet despite all of these challenges, we have seen extraordinary women overcome insurmountable obstacles to start their own business, support their families, and reclaim their personhood. They become their own movement, armed with nothing but a sewing machine or bags of feed, and a little help from the B’edaya initiative.

B’edaya (which translates as “with my own hands”) is a microfinance initiative that provides the most disadvantaged women with interest-free loans, basic financial training, networking opportunities, and quarterly monitoring to ensure their success. Once a mother is selected and her project is funded, she can use the income to expand her project, gain financial independence, and be an example of resilience and a source of pride to her children.

After I attended the meeting and saw how the staff worked to motivate us, I became more positive. I knew that I was not the only mother that faced the challenges. I began to see the value of my work and decided to reward myself by tailoring myself a blouse with pendants. — Fawzya, B’edaya recipient

In March 2017, Coptic Orphans launched Round III of the B’edaya Microfinance Initiative in honor of International Women’s Day (March 8) and Egypt’s Mother’s Day (March 21). Celebrations were held for 42 widowed mothers who received 243,500 EGP in microloans for income-generating projects.

During the ceremonies, the entrepreneurial mothers received their loans, took part in basic financial training, and were familiarized with additional details about B’edaya. The events also provided an opportunity for the mothers to network, share experiences, and trade contact information. Previous loan recipients appeared onstage to present their advice and experiences to the Round III recipients.

Despite inflation and unstable prices affecting the quality of products and sales, 75% of the mothers said they were able to cover the rising bills. By May of 2017, 82% of the mothers reinvested the income they generated to expand their projects by buying materials, goods, and equipment.

B’edaya projects range from raising and selling cattle, to running an ironing service or a photography studio. Upon the successful setup and operation of the project, each woman repays the original interest-free loan which then go to a revolving fund. Mothers are required to put at least 20% of their profit into a savings account. Once the mother’s project becomes successful she repays the loan to Coptic Orphans and it is given to another mother to make her dream project a reality. This continuing cycle allows your donation to make many families independent.

We are so proud of the self-made entrepreneurs of the B’edaya initiative who have become their own movement of empowerment, strength, and independence. Thanks to your unwavering support, Egypt’s women will thrive and secure a brighter future for their children through microfinance.
The Value of Sisterhood

In impoverished parts of Egypt, tradition often excludes girls and women from the education offered to boys and men from the same age group. Less education leads to fewer opportunities, fewer opportunities lead to less power, less power leads to being viewed as being less valuable—which leads to exploitation. Viewed as “less valuable,” girls are more likely to be deprived of critical health care and are susceptible to harmful practices including female genital mutilation, child marriages, ‘honor’ killings, domestic child labor, and sexual violence.

To address these problems, the Valuable Girl Project works to empower girls and women by helping them complete their educations, raising their self-esteem and giving them more power over their lives. To do this, the Valuable Girl Project adopts educational one-on-one mentoring relationships between a “Big Sister” and a “Little Sister” to assist with overcoming learning difficulties, provide a role model, and to offer guidance and support that they might be lacking at home. To achieve this, we strive to create a safe space to where girls can develop their sense of self-worth and to develop leadership skills.

2017 was a banner year for the Valuable Girl Project. Not only was the year filled with kick-off celebrations in different governorates across Egypt, but in each region the program was welcomed by government officials, community NGO’s, and locals who saw the potential and impact of such a unique and revolutionary project.

The Valuable Girl Project’s approach involves high school and university-level “Big Sisters” engaging elementary school “Little Sisters” in one-on-one mentoring and a variety of activities that facilitate the development of critical life skills and values, such as leadership, initiative-taking, critical thinking, and citizenship. Each Big Sister receives a stipend towards her educational expenses; each Little Sister receives help with homework as the pair meet two times a week in a quiet, peaceful environment conducive to personal and academic growth and development.

This year, the Valuable Girl Project kicked off in Assiut, Qena, and Cairo. Attending were the Community Development Associations (CDA’s) that partner with Coptic Orphans to implement the project. Each region marked the event with much fanfare, press, and celebration. In Assiut and Qena, the respective governors were in attendance, along with government dignitaries, local religious leaders, representatives of other non-governmental organizations, and members of the press.

They praised the objectives and accomplishments of Valuable Girl Project and wanted to cooperate further with Coptic Orphans to expand and to create real change in the lives of girls and young women in Egypt.

Nearly 1500 local girls and young women have been enrolled in the program. Sessions between the Big Sister and the Little Sister began December 1st across 16 CDA’s.
Sponsoring a child is not about pulling back the curtain to reveal a benefactor. And while there is endless research that proves that sponsorship is one of the most effective ways of helping a vulnerable child break out of the cycle of poverty, sponsorship is not just a transformational development tool. Sponsorship is humbly entering the life of a child to know them more personally, to love them more deeply, and to support them more closely. It’s a mutual commitment where both the child and their sponsor are recipients of transformative love.

While all children enrolled in the Not Alone program receive support, sponsored children gain a more intimate source of care through the letters, calls, visits, gifts, and financial commitment of a sponsor. Sponsors play a significant role in the healing and growth of a child that has experienced poverty and loss. Sponsors encourage their children to excel in their studies, tracking their progress through Rep reports, and praising their accomplishments. They learn about the child’s likes, aspirations, environment, and receive updates on specific struggles the child or his family are experiencing. Sponsors are in a unique position to provide comfort, praise, and reassurance to the sponsored child the way a parent does. In fact, many sponsored children say that they feel their sponsor is another father or mother God gave them in place of the one they lost. A boy once wrote to his sponsor that receiving such kindness and love from a person so far away helped him understand the love of God the Father; it seems far, but it’s unconditional and life-changing.

Thanks to our committed sponsors, 2017 saw 856 new sponsorships. That’s 856 more children who are now better equipped to overcome the challenges they face and more likely to excel in their studies. We were also overwhelmed by the number of sponsors who travelled to Egypt to visit their sponsor child in their homes. Over 120 home visits took place over the year, one of which you will read about below.

We are humbled by your fierce dedication to our children. It’s truly the one Spirit of God that ignites our sponsorship model, moving through our children, our sponsors, our Coptic Orphans family, and our Church. The life-long bonds forged in sponsorship reaffirm the one body in Christ, who is the embodiment of love. Thank you for sharing that love.

A Building of Hope

The following story is a reminder of how God holds our children in the palm of His hands through the toughest times, and how He uses your generosity as sponsors to orchestrate little miracles for a child or family in need. All names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of our children and sponsors.

During her stay in Alexandria, Jackie from Los Angeles, California wanted to visit two of her sponsored children who were from different families but happened to live in the same apartment building. On her way up the tight stairwell, she heard loud crying coming from a small apartment. She asked the Not Alone Rep what was happening. The Rep told her that a girl, Marina, who lives in the same building was set to undergo surgery to remove a brain tumor that same day and her widowed mother was inconsolable and crying. It turns out, Marina was also a Not Alone participant but did not have a sponsor yet because she had just joined the program 8 months prior. Jackie was so moved, she wanted to walk into that apartment and comfort the mother and tell her that Christ would heal her daughter. She wanted to be a part of Marina’s life. As soon as she returned home, Jackie called her regional Donor Relations Associate and became Marina’s sponsor. Not only did the little girl recover from the surgery, but she now has an extended family in Jackie and her husband who regularly write to her, support her and her mother with love and encouragement, offering a window of hope. But Jackie doesn’t see it that way. She thanks God for letting her be in that building visiting her sponsor kids so Marina could find her. To Jackie, that building is where Christ resides.
Because Coptic Orphans places the highest value on serving the children despite any crisis that might strike Egypt or the countries of the Coptic Diaspora, we maintain a nearly 12-month reserve of operating expenses (listed under “Net Assets”). This ensures we will be there for the children no matter what.

This year, Charity Navigator – North America’s largest independent evaluator of nonprofit financial effectiveness and accountability – again gave Coptic Orphans its highest four-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

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June 16, 2017

To: Mrs. Nermien Riad, Executive Director Coptic Orphans

Peace and love.

With sincere appreciation, we have received the report about the service of Coptic Orphans during 2016, which gives an overview about the programs of Coptic Orphans along with the budget and activities of the Not Alone program that is implemented in 57 dioceses and pastoral areas all over Egypt with full coordination with the reverend bishops and priests and a large number of volunteer Church servants.

As we thank the Lord for this blessed service, we would also like to thank everyone who supports you in implementing these activities and programs in the field of education, which is the key solution for the developmental and social problems in Egypt, and for developing good citizens for their country and church.

May the Lord bless this vibrant service and reward you! With our love for the management and the staff and all the volunteers! May the Lord embrace you with His Providence.

Pope Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark