



Private Voluntary Organizations in Egypt: Islamic Development, Private Initiative, and State Control (International Health)

Denis J. Sullivan

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"A fascinating, intriguing, well-argued, and intelligently conceived study of an important problem. . . . The work leads to a conclusion of significance for all of us concerned with better understanding the political world in which Islam is a dominant factor."--Charles Butterworth, University of Maryland

Public strategies for international aid and development often fail in areas in which private initiative succeeds. Examining the role of Islamic, Christian, and secular private voluntary organizations (PVOs) in Egypt's socioeconomic development, Denis Sullivan shows that grassroots groups are a significant--and largely ignored--part of the development process.

Approximately 14,000 PVOs are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Egypt, including groups affiliated with religious, feminist, labor, capitalist, and human rights organizations. They respond primarily to the needs of individuals and communities that suffer from government mismanagement of the economy and from state control of social and political activities.

After the devastating earthquake of 1992 in Cairo, for example, the state police, bureaucrats, and politicians were all ineffective in efforts to assist the thousands of injured and homeless citizens. Within only hours of the quake, however, Islamic charitable and community organizations (including antigovernment groups) provided temporary housing, food, clothing, and even money to the victims.

Using case studies of individual organizations, Sullivan documents government efforts to undermine and control the PVOs. He challenges governments and international organizations to work with local organizations and suggests that Islam can be a positive force for political reform in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. The book will be of long-term interest not just to Middle East scholars but also to the international business and diplomatic communities.

Denis J. Sullivan is associate professor of political science at Northeastern University and affiliate in research at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He is the coeditor of *Privatization and Liberalization in the Middle East* and the author of numerous articles on politics, religion, and development in the Middle East.

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